

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM**

**REPORTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN TABLOID PRESS IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY  
OF THE NAIROBIAN NEWSPAPER**

**BY**

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NAIROBI**

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**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this research project is my original work except for source materials, which were explicitly acknowledged, the same or closely related material has not been previously submitted for the same or different courses.

.....

**Signature**

**Date**

**K50/80537/2012**

I hereby declare that this research project has been submitted for consideration with my approval as the appointed University supervisor.

.....

**Signature**

**Date**

**SUPERVISOR**

**DR GEORGE GATHIGI**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this research project to men and women who continue to contribute to the fountain of knowledge in Kenya. I thank my family, The Karanjas, for pushing me and being my driving force. Of special note is my father, for his support and guidance as I worked to complete this project. All the people in my life who touch my heart, I dedicate this research.

God bless you all.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>GSU</b>	General Service Unit
<b>ICU</b>	Intensive Care Unit
<b>KTN</b>	Kenya Television Network
<b>NCKK</b>	National Christian Council of Kenya.
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>Op-Ed</b>	Opposite the editorial page
<b>Ph.D.</b>	Doctor of Philosophy
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>VAT</b>	Value Added Tax
<b>VIP</b>	Very Important Person
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

## ABSTRACT

The broad objective of this study was to examine how tabloid media in Kenya report sexual violence. It explored the nature of agenda setting, framing and priming of sexual violence in *The Nairobiian* newspaper. The specific objectives were to: explore the nature of agenda setting, framing and priming of sexual violence issues in *The Nairobiian* newspaper; explore journalistic ethics used by the newspaper when reporting on sexual violence. The study employed agenda setting and media cultivation theories. The study employed a mixed research approach. Newspaper articles that covered on sexual violence published between January 2016 and December 2017 in *The Nairobiian* were analysed using content analysis based on key themes generated from the study objectives. Interviews with five editors, two correspondents and one key informant were conducted. Data collected was categorised based on dominant frames, tone, frequency of stories, size of stories as well as representation in terms of gender. The study findings show that while *The Nairobiian* newspaper highlighted sexual violence stories, they were generally not given prominence, with most stories confined to the inside of the newspaper. The study found that *The Nairobiian* newspaper gave more prominence to stories where mostly women were portrayed as victims. Findings reveal that proper and sound journalistic practices were employed in the writing and packaging of the stories. A fairly strong agenda setting and framing of sexual violence stories by *The Nairobiian* newspaper was noted in this study. This shows the role tabloids could play in agenda setting, creating awareness and fighting sexual violence by publishing more lead stories, editorials and opinion pieces on this subject to elicit debate and stimulate discussions on sexual violence. This study recommends that more prominence to be given to sexual violence stories. This will create awareness, embolden victims and stimulate discussion.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0. Overview

This specific chapter offers background information to the study and describes the statement of the problem that anchors this research project. Additionally, it outlines objectives of the study, the research questions, justification and significance of study, theoretical frameworks, scope and limitations.

### 1.1 Introduction

Traditional media plays a key role when it comes to reportage and perception attached to sexual violence related cases. When it comes to setting the nation's agenda and giving attention to important issues, the power of the media cannot be underestimated. As a powerful tool, the media gives the public factual information and also, it attaches importance to different issues depending on the emphasis it gives news items. The public largely depend on the media to be informed, educated and to be kept abreast on current, trending issues. For example, newspapers provide hints or inferences about the salience of the topics that is happening in the news. (McCombs & Shaw, 2003).

In Kenya, there are five major broadsheets newspapers, which include *The Standard*, *The Daily Nation*, *Business Daily*, *The People Daily* and *The Star*. The newspapers adopt a serious view when it comes to reporting issues and more so, sexual violence. The language adopted, tone and general feel is one of perturbation, or uneasiness.

Interestingly, tabloid newspapers, in this case *The Nairobiian*, the only established weekly tabloid and the main interest of this study, seem to take a completely different approach, one which borders unorthodox or unconventional. Tabloids, and *The Nairobiian* in particular, do more than just agenda setting; they set the agenda by reporting news sensationally – reducing the ‘seriousness’ of news by emphasising its entertainment value. This means when tabloid newspapers cover sexual violence, they sensationalise the violence when ordinarily sexual violence should be humourless (Wasserman, 2010). Tabloids, according to studies are seen to flout objectivity, neutrality and the truth and instead, sensationalise their stories. When it comes to reporting issues around women, tabloids have been blamed for publishing pictures of the women when they are scantily dressed, sometimes while topless and project their fascination with sexual matters.

It is due to this reason that the tabloids have received a lot of backlash from academics, critics, the government and media monitoring groups, who argue they have degraded the media profession. (Wasserman, 2010). Therefore, tabloidisation risks legitimating (sexual) violence, naturalising it, a result of the way tabloids report issues – largely sensationalist (Ray, 2010). Indeed, entertainment legitimises violence as posited by (Ray, 2011) - who describes how states have used legitimate violence (*force*) both as a means of punishment but also for entertainment and glorification of state power. Consequently, some forms of violence become naturalised, thus, seen as normal in society. Furthermore, tabloid coverage is a discourse that involves some form of influence that serves to legitimise or delegitimise some practices through sensational coverage and reportage.

As pointed out by Chouliarak (2005), legitimacy is regarded as an interpretation of something that is “legally and morally acceptable”. Thus, discourse on tabloid news has the potential to make some issues ‘common sense’ in society through the way it interprets sexual violence in its discourse, essentially reinforcing the existing social structure, mainly patriarchy – the dominant ways of seeing reality. Domination is exercised through coercion, but on the other hand, hegemony requires consent of the dominated especially from the way social reality is constructed which leads to consensus – seeing issues as ‘common sense’ (Gramsci, 1971). Since society has people of disparate worldviews, ideological struggle becomes a major issue when it comes to achieve permission among the population, especially because people “acquire consciousness of structural conflicts on the level of ideologies” (Gramsci, 1971). Bringing this argument to the context of tabloids, and the way they are organised, their way of reportage, and articulate discourse, particularly on sexual violence, more often leads to consent or contestation of or by the dominated which can in turn (il)legitimises sexual violence by making it seen (un)natural. This comes from the way people perceive the tabloid’s depiction of the issues.

Even though tabloidisation of news is considered lower ‘quality’ journalism, it is an evolution where newspapers seeking to boost dwindling circulation levels, hence it could be argued that tabloidisation is motivated by commercial imperatives. Wasserman (2008) points out, there is equivalence of tabloidisation to newspaper revolution in South Africa, observing that although newspapers in many regions of the world are at a major risk of death or reduction in sales, and introduction of tabloids, for example, *Daily Sun* and *Sunday Sun*, led to drastic increase in newspaper circulation in South Africa. These

tabloids also reduced circulation of broadsheet newspapers, forcing them to include tabloid content.

It can be stated therefore, that the positive side of tabloidisation is the fact that it is among universal remedies to declining newspaper circulation. Additionally, tabloids should be seen as publication with a different mandate from broadsheet. Tabloid newspapers have quite different communicative purposes as a unique form of nature.

In this regard, the discussion on the different journalistic writing between broadsheet newspapers and tabloids is similar to comparing cartoon strips with essays on the globalisation of economic affairs. (Connel, 1998). Therefore, despite tabloids been seen as ‘less serious’ and ‘degraded’, they don’t pretend to be news discourse and hence, there should be no comparison with broadsheet newspapers since they are both complete entities.

*The Nairobiian* is a weekly publication by the Standard Media Group launched in 2013. The newspaper uses tabloid tactics to attract readers. This has significantly increased its circulation by devoting “relatively little attention to *[pure]* politics, economics and society and relatively much to diversions like sports, scandal and popular entertainment” content that has been categorised as tabloid (Colin Sparks, 2000).

A brief assessment of *The Nairobiian* indicates the newspaper has flashy headlines, scandals and frills. This distinguishes it from broadsheet publication through content and design. *The Nairobiian* is credited as the first successful tabloidisation of the news industry in Kenya.

Since its inception in 2013, *The Nairobiian* has been carrying sensational and often scandalous stories. Most of these often touch on prominent personalities like pastors and politicians in sex and child support battles, rape, domestic squabbles.

Despite its perception as being subordinate to the mainstream broadsheets, *The Nairobiian* actively participates in communicating development issues as part of its editorial content. This domain of communication is mostly the preserve of mainstream dailies and is thus not in line with the general nature of tabloid press, whose one function includes but is not limited to sensationalising peripheral issues like sex scandals that excite base instincts of readers. This study thus intends to carry out an exploratory research of *The Nairobiian* as a case study of sexual violence reporting in tabloid press; a new phenomenon in Kenyan media and a pointer to a knowledge gap that calls for analysis to understand underlying dynamics.

It is worth mentioning that prior to its launch the mainstream print media industry was dominated by broadsheet publications like – *The Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, *Business Daily*, *The People Daily*, *The East African* and *The Star*. Rough estimates by the Standard Group put circulation figures of *The Nairobiian* at an average of 100,000 copies weekly (Standard Group Marketing Manager, 2015). This circulation figures are contrary to performance trends of broadsheet newspapers whose circulation has been plummeting despite the fact that they have been in existence for years.

### **1.1.1. Tabloid Press in Kenya**

Tabloid press in Kenya dates back to 1964. The National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCCK) introduced the first two periodicals namely *Target (English)* and *Lengo* (Maoggi



& Tessier, 2001). These two publications carried purely religious content with their combined circulation reaching 7,000 copies before the stewardship of Reverend John Schoffield saw the introduction of political and stories on social issues which buoyed its circulation to over 20,000 (Maoggi & Tessier, 2001). These two were the forerunners of tabloid press for the media in Kenya.

The Constitution of Kenya has ensured the media enjoys freedom to report on various issues, making it possible for media houses in Kenya to diversify their products including the publication of tabloid newspapers. Despite enjoying this protection from the constitution, freedom to publish tabloid newspapers for mass consumption in Kenya has not been successful. For instance, the Standard Group tailored its flagship title, *The Standard*, as a juicy tabloid for the first time in April 6, 1977 and again in the mid-1990s. While readers were excited with its fresh boldness, it reverted to a broadsheet in the face of dwindling advertising revenue, the mainstay of print media publications (Standard Group Marketing Manager).

It would later refashion as a tabloid newspaper in 1995 with headlines such as, *Got You!* It however, reverted to a broadsheet before becoming a tabloid again in 2009. While readers were attracted by such shocking stories, advertisers were not keen to have their products and brands associated with gory and sex scandals leading to a drop, again, in advertising income and hence the reversion to its former broadsheet format (Standard Group Marketing Manager, 2015). The Nation Media Group launched the *Daily Metro*, a tabloid, in 2007 to counter the entry of *The Nairobi Star*, today *The Star* newspaper, which is published by Radio Africa Group. The *Daily Metro*, tailored after UK's *Metro* newspaper and meant to be a quick tabloid read for busy urbanites, folded in 2009 due to

dwindling readership although its Sh20 cover price was half what it cost to buy the *Daily Nation*, a broadsheet. The entry of *The Nairobiian* in May 2013 saw the Nation Media Group launch *Nairobi News* in November 2013. It, however, closed down in March 21, 2014 after just six months. Its farewell message read: “*Our brave efforts breaking ground in Kenyan journalism has foundered on the rocks of crippling economic times. Little advertising and slow growth at a time of rising costs made Nairobi News survival impossible*” (*Nairobi News*, 2014).

It is instructive to note that tabloid media revolution in modern Kenya began properly in the late 1990s with the resurgence of local music as an urban hip-hop force and with it, musicians who became teen idols (Omanga, 2010). This scenario spewed a homespun celebrity culture that coincided with the emergence of FM radio stations and the resultant symbiotic relationship between hip-hop artistes and broadcast media created a near cult following from urban youth (Omanga, 2015). An independent market audience research carried out by Consumer Insight Africa in Kenya in 2005 indicated that the youth wanted to read more about local celebrities such as actors and musicians and not serious stories even if they were pegged on entertainment. The Standard Group used this research to improve its Friday *Standard* readership by replacing a magazine called *Friday* with *Pulse* as a magazine pullout in 2005 to tap into these hitherto ‘evasive’ youth audience (Omanga, 2010).

### **1.1.2. *The Nairobiian***

According to S Brown, the Standard Group Marketing Manager, (personal communication, March 13, 2017), the idea of *The Nairobiian* was mooted in 2012, but

was officially launched in March 2013. The idea of publishing *The Nairobiian* as a tabloid newspaper was borne out of market research showing that there was a huge, untapped market of young readers who had had enough of the political news in mainstream dailies and wanted easy, interesting and captivating content without heavy political reportage. Its target audience was identified as the unserved and the underserved; people who lived in the lower cadres of life, but who never seemed to get a kind of news that addressed their needs. These were mostly people who lived in slums; whose understanding of the English language had locked them out of the news chain given most spreadsheets appeared to address the upper class and the middle class.

Published every Friday of the week, *The Nairobiian* would first target residents of the capital, Nairobi, which again informed its choice of name. The paper was to have well-structured and defined sections capturing happenings in the courts, mostly stories that would never get a space in the spreadsheets. Other stories would revolve around soft feature stories on insecurity and social life, plus other sections on news, entertainment gossip, sports stories that go beyond reporting scores on the pitch, to telling stories about sportsmen and women; their struggles with small things like paying rent, family issues etc. The Nairobiian was also set to carry political stories that could not get their way into the spreadsheets. Furth, it would have interesting personal interviews, investigative pieces touching on the life of the common man coupled with, regular columns on health, spirituality, a tinge of humor, fashion and culture.

*The Nairobiian* also has a page in Kiswahili - *Story za Mtaa*, which tell estate stories in sheng language as well as formal Kiswahili. Like most tabloids, *The Nairobiian* presents serious stories in an easy, playful and almost emotive language. This includes

stories that touch on serious issues like sexual violence. It is true that the market for broadsheets, which communicate government policy and sets the development agenda besides keeping the government in check while informing, educating, entertaining, persuading, warning and providing channels for socio-economic and political ‘surveillance’ has been shrinking. However, that of *The Nairobiian*, which also does the same, has been expanding. There is therefore a need to understand the role and nature of development communication in relation to tabloid press in Kenya with a view to roping in policy makers in government, development agencies and investors in the media industry on the power of tabloid press in national development more so, reporting of sexual violence related issues.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The role of reporting serious issues such as sexual violence in tabloid newspapers is relatively new and incongruent to the nature of tabloids, which are mostly concerned with sensational scandals stories. Sexual violence is a global problem and has not been addressed using the necessary political action, commitment, and resources. While significant efforts towards addressing the issue have been put in place, the media, which has a major impact on the general public view, including in shaping public opinion and attitudes, has not been actively involved in highlighting and fighting such cases. The Kenyan print media has inadequately covered sexual violence, and has failed to give the problem the ‘urgency’ it deserves. This has resulted to cases going unreported. While *The Nairobiian* newspaper has taken up this role of reporting sexual violence issues, it has also been seen to sensationalise such issues, making the stories ‘less serious’ and to some

extent, there is a titillation and pornification of victims of sexual violence. The portraying of the victims as objects of sexual fascination prevents or hinders the public from viewing it as a 'crime against humanity' (Skovsgaard, 2014). There is a link between the media and sexualisation, creating an environment in which violence against women becomes rampant, which has made it a critical issue with heightened research interest.

As a result, sexual violence remains a major societal problem, but one which the traditional print media has failed to address beyond just reportage of news.

The current gaps in dealing with the problem evident, which begs the question as to whether the media can effectively play a leading role in preventing such violence either by its agenda setting role or simply by highlighting each and every case of sexual violence.

When it comes to reporting sexual violence, broadsheet newspapers like *The Standard* and *The Daily Nation* does not necessarily paint the actual reality of sexual violence cases. As a tabloid newspaper, *The Nairobiian* conveys sensational and scandalous stories, yet, in its deferential nature also communicates sexual violence matters, but in a different manner from the one applied by mainstream newspapers like *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. It is prudent to understand the role tabloids newspapers when reporting sexual violence.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The general objective of the study was to explore the nature of reporting sexual violence in *The Nairobiian* newspaper.

### **1.3.2 Specific objectives**

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To explore the nature of agenda setting, framing and priming of sexual violence in *The Nairobiian* newspaper.
- ii. To explore journalistic ethics employed by *The Nairobiian* newspaper in reporting sexual violence.

### **1.4 Research questions**

- i) What is the nature of agenda setting, framing and priming of sexual violence in *The Nairobiian* newspaper?
- ii) What journalistic ethics does *The Nairobiian* newspaper employ in reporting sexual violence?

### **1.5 Justification of the study**

This exploratory research of *The Nairobiian* newspaper as a case study on the reportage of sexual violence in tabloid stems from the fact that the problem is a major social issue. This study is important because *The Nairobiian*, a popular tabloid newspaper, has defied market trends to post growth in readership, and still churns out sexual violence stories. Various studies have been undertaken on reporting of sexual violence in print media, but few have focused on how tabloids, in Kenya have reported the issue.

Indeed, understanding how *The Nairobiian* newspaper reports on sexual violence can help set the agenda and highlight these cases, which continue to be a major concern in the public domain.

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

This study is significant in understanding the success of *The Nairobiian* newspaper, which combines sexual violence related stories in its tabloid content and the cardinal role such a blend of stories plays in development communication.

This study will stir debate in this area of study contributing to growth of scholarly materials through objective research. Further, findings of the study will be prudent to policy formulators, both in the newsroom and at public policy level on ways through which print media can address sensitive contemporary societal problems, traditionally not spoken about openly in the African cultural set up. This includes applying the media in setting public agenda on such issues.

Additionally, findings of this study is important to the journalism profession-news editors, reporters and publishers - and the government policy making organs as well media regulators. They will be in a better position to understand how to report on sexual violence stories. To the journalism profession, the findings, if adopted, will help understand the role of tabloid reporting in setting agenda on sexual violence in Kenya. Further, how journalism as a profession and other stakeholders can play its role better.

## **1.7 Scope of the Study and Limitations of the Study**

This study focused on reporting of sexual violence among tabloids newspapers in Kenya and specifically, *The Nairobiian* newspaper. This newspaper was selected for this study because of its wide readership, different packaging and editorial style. According to figures availed by the publisher, *The Nairobiian* is a national tabloid with an average circulation of 100,000 copies, based on circulation (Standard Group Marketing Team),

but the newspapers copies are read by many readers, and hence, the actual readership is much higher.

Selection of samples was limited to 40 issues of *The Nairobi* newspaper since the paper has only been in circulation for six years and therefore, two years of randomly selected editions, from January 2016 to December 2017 is a representative sample. It will not be possible to cover a more extensive period because of the sheer volume of data that would require collection. Further, this is due to the financial, personnel and time constraints.

### **1.8 Operational definitions**

**Tabloid:** Journalistic publications that emphasise sensational issues like gossip about personal lives of celebrities and sensational crime stories.

**Tabloidisation:** Increasing the tabloid content in a publication.

**Mainstream:** Journalistic publications which emphasis serious news discourse.

**Broadsheet newspapers:** Publications perceived to be more intellectual in content. They examine stories in more depth while carrying less sensational and celebrity stories.

**Print media:** Transmitting information via books, newspapers, magazines and comics.

**Sexual violence:** Any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by violence or force, sexual comments or advances that are unwanted, acts directed against a person's sexuality, regardless of the relationship to the victim.

**Sexual violence victims:** Persons who have suffered sexual violence acts.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Overview**

This chapter reviews literature on tabloids, tabloid journalism and issues that surround tabloid journalism, particularly newspapers. The chapter looks at the politics of space and contestation over the relevance of tabloid content in the contemporary society. No doubt, journalism has evolved due to innovations, audience trends and economic imperatives. Interrogating arguments advanced by diverse scholars on the issue of tabloid journalism, this chapter takes the cultural studies perspective where audience are conceived as active recipients of media content.

Tabloids, the literature argues, bring issues that would have otherwise remained private, hence availing an alternative voice not found in the ‘mainstream’ newspapers. Thus, the chapter interrogates the role of tabloid with regard to sexual violence particularly its construction and depiction of women, as well as ‘objectification’ of women. On the theoretical literature, the chapter discusses Agenda Setting Theory and Media Cultivation theory and how they apply in this particular study.

#### **2.1 Tabloid and mainstream Journalism in Kenya**

Tabloid journalism is a term used in reference to a new form of journalism, which is inclined towards sensational issues like gossip about personal lives of celebrities and sensational crime stories. Accordingly, Conboy (2006) refers to the way of writing to define what a tabloid. He points out that tabloids use casual, concise, and sensationalist tone and language in its reportage, as opposed to the broadsheet newspapers which is

serious discourse that seeks to keep the public informed through use of serious tone and language (McLachlan & Golding, 2000). According to Esser (1999), tabloidisation is at two levels – micro and macro. This entails the changes that have happened in the formats of the newspaper because of audiences’ preferences due to commercial imperatives.

According to Gripsrud (2000), tabloidisation has come to be associated with lowering of the quality of journalism which somewhat undermines the function of journalism in liberal democracies. In fact, McNair (2001: 44) observes that tabloidisation has been regularly referred to as “dumbing down” of news.

Thus Sparks (2000), notes that tabloids mainly focus on the infotainment field for print media as, emphasising on individuals’ private lives, specifically the scandals, sports and entertainment. Consequently, Brooks (2000) argues that tabloidisation seeks to appeal to the mass market hence boost circulation of the newspapers. In contrast, mainstream publications or “qualities” are heavy and often with elaborate in news coverage and editorials. Fundamentally, the media has gone slow when it comes to reporting hard news and instead gives more prominence to soft news that mainly focus on on people’s private lives – especially popular people, celebrities as well as ordinary people – and feminisation of the newspaper content (Sparks 2000; Pantti 2005; Bird, 2008). Thus the question that begs, what is the efficacy in terms of the way that it covers sexual violence, bearing in mind its circulation, to set agenda on sexual violence in Kenya, and issue that is often times not publicly discussed?

Accordingly, Pilger (1991) points out that this trend in newspapers has seen the emergence of a crop of journalists who have become convinced that they have to give people the kind of content that they want, which is mainly racial, sexist, voyeuristic,

sometimes ridicule and fabrications. (Franklin, 1997) contends that tabloid journalism has an emergence of a phenomenon known as newzak, which means conversion of hard news to entertainment.

## **2.2 Tabloid journalism and the politics of space**

From a cultural studies perspective, Wasserman (2008) argues that tabloids “articulate the politics of the everyday for those readers for whom formal politics are often far removed from their lived experience”. Accordingly, Wasserman contends that tabloids “construct an alternative political discourse to that of mainstream newspapers”, especially the segments of society that is not often given prominence in the mainstream newspapers. Additionally, Fiske (1989) is of the opinion that tabloids newspapers play a big role by contributing to the public sphere by ‘democratising’ the media space largely dominated by elites, as they offer an alternative point of view from what is to be found in the ‘quality’ newspapers. Accordingly, through sensational reporting found in tabloids (Fiske, 1989) posits, the dominant social standards are interrogated, in essence questioning the “excessive failure of the normal”. Instructively, this brings a contestation about social reality and how that reality is constructed and represented in the tabloid newspapers. In fact, Gripsrud (2000: 297) also argues that tabloids “provide the audience with existential and moral help, and support in the daily struggles to cope with an everyday life marked by the uncertainties characteristic of modernity”.

As stated above, Pantti (2005) posits that tabloidisation has feminisation hence introduction a confessional media culture—where audiences express deeply rooted, personal and complex problem where advice is extended from ‘experts’, who are often ill

informed and mostly unqualified. Instructively, this gives openings where personal information becomes mediated and their meaning and implications become contested in the public sphere. According to Aldridge (2001), the confessional media culture brings about contention, and potentially weakens the patriarchal structure in society with the attendant domination. For one, personal issues are brought to the realm of the public sphere. As already argued above, these stories can only find expression in tabloids as opposed to serious broadsheet newspapers.

In the mediated public sphere, people competently discuss issues and make decisions on the various issues that are on the public agenda. However, the confessional media culture and quasi-expert advice availed through tabloids, and as already pointed out the mediated public sphere becomes negated, as the *modus operandi* of tabloids works against competent as well as rational deliberations (Habermas, 1989). Deliberations should work towards “general truths, general principles” which would lead to proper function of society especially with regard to tabloids (Gripsrud, 1992: 89). The net effect of this, according to Franklin (19997: 5), people in society become less informed factually thus “democracy [becomes] improvised and at risk”. Concomitantly, as the audiences read tabloid media content, a reality is created which people use to make decisions. According to some scholars (Link, 1986; Küchenhoff & Keppler, 1972) tabloids have lowered the professional standards of journalism hence the quality of discourse in society. Having said that, tabloids essentially impact the readers, particularly how they come to make decisions, drawing from the discursive practices employed, hence some people become uncomfortable from the style of coverage (Bebber, 1997).

On the contrary, and according to Turner (2003) and Storey (1993), and as already postulated (Wasserman 2008; Fiske 1989) above, cultural studies perspective extends argument of active audiences, which has brought about intellectual academic endeavours where popular culture is looked at as a form of lived experiences, including ‘the trivia’ and other elements of societal culture, essentially, the alternative way of looking at society and contesting how reality is constructed and represented in the media. Skovsgaard (2014) attaches significance of the tabloid to the society. According to (Driscoll, 2013) tabloids have played an important role in integrating readers as well as bringing to light the challenges that encompasses the political and social sphere of the nation. This is given the reality that the tabloid papers have established a significant niche in popular as well as civic culture, which has been in the past greatly ignored by the mainstream media as well as the formal political channels.

Further, Wasserman (2010) posits that tabloid journalism was born due to most government failure to address, solve and offer its people security in various spheres of their lives. This is supposed to be the basis for understanding of the rise and effectiveness of tabloids in Kenya and world over (cf. Jarso, 2011). Consequently, Skovsgaard (2014) argues that there is evidence that the mainstream media have failed to talk about the interests of public, the poor and middle class, motivating the rise of alternative voices of the people. This has led to the increasing popularity of the tabloids, filling the gap of news which resonates with the masses.

### **2.3 Tabloids as an alternative voice in society**

Many people, especially the poor and middle class as well as the marginalised groups, including women, are embracing tabloid newspapers as they appear to present news from their perspectives. Wasserman (2010) is of the opinion that tabloids provide the most marginalised individuals in a society. In support of the argument that the meanings of tabloids are contingent, Wasserman applies the coverage witchcraft in South Africa to compare how the journalistic standards was applied and whether the media reported facts and whether the debates were rational. Wasserman evades a simplistic analysis of the coverage as being “true” or “false” or as a pointer of African provincialism (Jarso, 2011). To a certain extent, the argument presented is that readers’ consumption of witchcraft stories reveals that the poor and working-class black South Africans create meaning out of the enduring inequity in the post-apartheid South Africa.

Driscoll (2013) challenges the idea that tabloid journalists are the rejects of the mainstream journalism community. From a survey of the consumers of tabloid content, Wasserman (2010) complicates a single dimensional reading of tabloid journalists, identifying factors which distinguish them from their counterparts in the mainstream media. Wasserman finds out that entertainment and celebrity coverage seems far less in African tabloids. Accordingly, in the recent past, there has been a greater focus on investigative journalism, which suggests dealing with problems faced by various communities, including violence against women and girls.

Consequently, tabloid journalists are often seen as leaders as well as trusted advisors whom the audience is convinced can depend on to speak about news pertinent to their day to day lives. In other words, the journalists can set agenda on issues that were

largely considered private, personal, mundane, trivial and bringing them to the realm of societal discourse. Ehrlich (1996) in effect argues that the public often has extensively diverse standards due to its disparate nature, compared to professional journalists, who are codified and standardised hence removed from societal or audience contexts. Thus, tabloid journalism has potential to impact audiences and ultimately the society from the way the cover issues are often considered controversial.

In the past, politicians and political leaders have failed to deliver to their promises to the public. All the while, the mainstream media has been working as the agenda setting tool and in forming the opinion of the audience. However, in the recent past, this narrative has changed because of the rise of bloggers, citizen journalists and tabloids press (Wasserman, 2011). Thus Tabloid journalism has exceeded public expectations. In a few years, according to Wasserman, the voiceless people have gotten the chance to speak out; most notorious criminals have been arrested due to the fearless reporting; and generally, the society has changed in a way that was not possible in the era of conventional media, including print and electronic.

However, Wasserman (2010) suggests that as tabloid journalism is celebrated by a section of the public, as already pointed out above, other people argue it is still the lowest form of journalism. Understandably, emphasis by tabloids on sensational crime stories and a focus on sex means that tabloids largely exist outside what has been considered quality journalism. Nevertheless, (Wasserman, 2011) argues that unlike the mainstream newspapers, tabloids have taken a major role in reporting issues that affect the poor and the working-class in society, who cannot voice their concerns.

## **2.4 Tabloid journalism as an intellectual arena**

A study by Nyabola (2015) has shed more light on tabloids as a subject of scholarly analysis as well as a challenge to the mainstream journalism community. The research renders a valuable contribution to the continuing debates and discussions about changes in culture and society in the recent years. The dramatic growth of tabloid journalism in Kenya and other countries in the world cannot be ignored in the modern research on media. Wasserman (2011) suggests that the socio-political changes that have been witnessed in the recent years has resulted to the popularity of tabloid journalism. He argues that the change to a more democratic environment in the country has continued to encourage more open, honest, liberal reporting. After all, the argument is that Kenyans no longer give much attention to newspapers, especially when they are viewed as being less and their sales numbers dwindle. Wasserman (2010) speaks about development in alternative press, which has challenged various political and social structures and institutions, challenging them for failing to protect the people.

Recent studies carried out on the opinions of the readers on the impact of tabloid journalism provide the most compelling aspects of this topic, as well as the argument that it is prudent to consider the views of those who buy and read the tabloids. A study by Malinen (2013) revealed that some tabloid readers tend to discriminate other readers with their personal set of standards for how they interact with the content of the media. This idea counters the generally expressed idea that readers of tabloids include the uncritical and uneducated segment of a given readership. Additionally, coverage of tabloid as well as consumption of the content are not stable concepts, but they are variables which depend on various conditions including the reader, the kind of tabloid, the environment,



and the sort of stories which are presented. Accordingly, a study of tabloids must consider the contexts in which they are produced and consumed (Pickering, 2008). According to Fowler (1993 also see Fairclough 1995; Van Dijk 1988), scholars have studied tabloids, particularly how they represent gender and ethnic minorities, by interrogating diverse aspect such as newspaper texts linguistic styles, noun phrases, headlines or narrative structures. This can be in terms of the tabloids coverage of issues relation to broadsheets, prominence given to some kind of stories and treatment given to the news subjects in the coverage of the newspapers.

## **2.5 Tabloids and sexual violence coverage: Is the media objectifying women?**

Mainstream media, including tabloids cover sexual violence. Scholars, Easteal, Holland & Judd (2015) are of the opinion that the media narrates or tells stories “within a gendered societal landscape through the cultural images of masculine”. Thus in a patriarchal society, dominant gender biases influence the way stories are told.

The argument is that the media to some extent downplays the feminist viewpoint, instead taking a dominant view, while keeping a social narrative about violence against women that creates myths and stereotypes around it. Essentially, how tabloids report on violence against women by tabloids is exaggerated, mostly presenting women as sexual objects meant to entertain readers. Given the sentimental nature of tabloids, some women are revealed as conforming to the physical standards idealised by the media, a media which is patriarchal (Easteal et al., 2015). Countries such as the United Kingdom have taken the reportage of sexual violence seriously. Studies by Dr Linda Papadopolous, ‘*The Sexualisation of Young People Review*’ (2010) and the Bailey Review of ‘*The*

*Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood* (2011) were commissioned by the UK government, to explore how the media instigates violence against women. From the studies, it was evident that the media objectifies women and media plays a role on sexualisation.

Some of the cases that were highlighted revealing that tabloids sexualises violence against women was the reporting of how Reeva Steenkamp was murdered by her boyfriend, Athlete Oscar Pistorius. After the shooting of Steenkamp on Valentine's Day, the media was awash with stories related to the incident, with the coverage by media reflecting and refracting the public understandings of sexual violence against women.

The coverage of the story was international, with among the tabloids covering it being, *The Sun*, a United Kingdom tabloid. Steenkamp was presented by the media to the public, not as the victim she was, but as a sexual object to entertain the audience. Her race and appearance particularly played a critical role in showing how she conformed to the physical standards idealised by the media. Her death received a high level of attention than any other case involving sexual violence against women, internationally. Palazzolo & Roberto (2011) have especially focused on the coverage of the South African case of violence against women, revealing a great deal of sexualisation of women by the media. Skovsgaard (2014) supports the argument, suggesting that there is a titillation and pornification of the victims. The portraying of the victims as objects of sexual fascination prevents or hinders the public from viewing it as a 'crime against humanity'.

The media, evidently, instead of fighting the crime, it has resulted to the increase of such cases majorly because it applies sensational reporting and hence losing the

seriousness of the crime. This has resulted to an environment where the violence against women thrives and goes unreported, which has made it a critical issue with heightened research interest.

Cuklanz (2000) in his study has revealed inaccurate reporting, intrusive reporting as well as the skewed, narrow, and sensationalist range of stories on violence against women. Palazzolo & Roberto (2011) suggest issues with the language applied in reporting the cases, such as implying that the victim somehow provoked the violent act or blaming the victim for the unfortunate act. The supporting ‘experts’ as well as quotes reported in some cases suggest that a certain crime is ‘cultural’ or religious and thus is either somehow inevitable or less serious. Such reporting, (Meyers, 1997) elucidates, amounts to placing the blame on the victim, dehumanising women and eroticising violence against some women.

## **2.6 Media and prevention of violence**

Regional as well as international legal instruments have made clarification on the role and obligation of the state in bringing to book culprits of violence against women and girls, preventing such cases and eradicating them.

For years, through various campaigns, The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) demands nations that are part to the Convention assume suitable measures and take necessary steps in ending all forms of violence.

Hatcher et al. (2013) however suggests that there is on-going prevalence of the crime revealing that the global plague of alarming scope has not been effectively

addressed. However, while some nations have made significant efforts towards addressing the issue, there are various political and social institutions that could be even more effective in preventing the violence. These include the media, which has a major impact on the public, including in shaping public opinion as well as attitudes.

With the current gaps in dealing with the problem evident, the big question is whether the media, in general can play a role in preventing the violence meted on women and girls. (Capella et al, 2010) presents the argument that agenda for the media begins from the perspective of liberation from dominant power structures. Production as well as interpretation skills achieved through the participation in media would allow people to become more discriminating in their attitudes, opinions and views. It would provide them with a voice to talk actively on the issues that affect their day to day lives.

From such a perspective, the media ought to be subversive to any group, individual or bureaucracy, who feels threatened by a coalescing of grassroots consciousness. By reporting on the problems that affect women as well as advocating their rights, the media would work well towards their empowerment.

Applying the theoretical perspectives of power and media, would reveal how bringing Violence against Women (VAW) into the alternative public sphere such as tabloid journalism would contribute towards preventing and ending violence against women. Malinen (2013) argues the only way to prevent, and even stop violence is by changing the various deeply held attitudes and beliefs. In all its forms, the media is a critical creator, reflector as well as enforcer of the attitudes.

From the same perspective, those operating within the media are conscious of the problem and can strive to stop reproducing such attitudes. The media, through the ability

to form public opinion hold the power to end the vice, but more research should be conducted to understand if this is possible. (Capella et al, 2010).

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

This study adopted the agenda setting and media cultivation theory to understand the depiction of sexual violence in print media. The two theories are discussed below and their relevance and application in this study articulated.

### **2.7.1 Agenda Setting**

This theory argues there is a strong relationship between the emphases that mass media places on certain issues (for example based on relative placement or quantity of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Scholars Hastie and Park have also argued that the agenda setting theory applies the memory-based models of information processing, which argues that people make decisions and form attitudes based on what is the most salient or rather, most accessible information. It can further be argued that peoples' judgment on an issue and their attitude formation are directly correlated with "the ease in which instances or associations could be brought to mind" (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973: 208).

Further, the theory, it is argued has brought into light how the media reports on certain issues, directly influences how the audiences will draw conclusions and understand it (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007: 9).

Goffman (1974) and other scholars supported this foundation, arguing that understanding the world is difficult and therefore, people struggle to interpret their life

experiences to make sense of the world around them. To efficiently process new information, Goffman argues that the audiences applies interpretive schemas or “primary frameworks” (Goffman, 1974: 24) to understand information and interpret it in a manner that makes sense to them.

Goffman (1974) adds that agenda setting theory has two levels; macro-level and a micro-level construct, (see Scheufele, 1999). When it comes to macro-construct, the “agenda setting” basically is anchored on the modes of presentation that newsmakers, journalists and other communicators attach to present information in a manner that the audience can resonate with under the existing underlying schemas. (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This, however, does not mean, that journalists try to change a story or deceive their audiences. In fact, agenda setting, for journalists is an important tool to reduce the complexity of any issue at any given time, bearing in mind the constraints of their respective media related to airtime, (Gans, 1979). The argument put across then is that frames are important tools for reporting complex issues, such as stem cell research, and hence, enable the audience to draw conclusions because they play to existing cognitive schemas. Under the micro-construct level, framing explains how the audiences apply and use information presented to them as they try to create impressions (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Therefore, the Agenda setting theory tries to expound and explain why and how the audience will attach importance to some issues and ignore others depending on how the mass media will create emphasis on the matter. In this study, the theory was employed to describe how tabloids newspapers report on sexual violence. The argument presented was that there is a strong link how the media gives certain issues prominence

(in this case sexual violence) and how the audience attach importance, understand and perceive such issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007:11) argue that the strong link between sexual violence framing and importance attributed to the issues by readers is based on empirically proven studies that media effects are memory-based. Therefore, by making sexual violence more prominent in the audiences' minds, the media can create, shape or change the peoples' considerations when making judgments about sexual violence. According to McCombs & Shaw (1972: 176), "people learn from the media what the important issues are." Cohen (1963: 13) is of the opinion that the media is the "purveyor of public information [hence it is] stunningly successful in telling readers what to think about". Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007) that the theory holds importance when it comes to understanding factors related to frame building and agenda building (ibid, 12).

Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007) argue that the agenda building theory is more about macroscopic mechanisms that explains message construction rather than media effects. Used in this context, agenda setting "examines the factors related to frame building and agenda building." The argument brought forth, therefore is that journalists, government and policy makers who want to shape media agenda have a major impact on the character of the news message and how it will be constructed among the audiences. Thus, there may be some potential overlap in how researchers conceptualise and study the phenomena here...[m]echanisms by which the public and news media may jointly build frames around politically charged issues. Ultimately, they find that public framing of an issue exerts substantial influence on news messages in the context they study.

This theory was applied in this study to interrogate to what extent *The Nairobi* newspaper has set agenda on the issue of sexual violence through the prominence that it gives such stories. This is important because, according McCombs and Shaw as well as Cohen, the salience of an issue in society is determined by the prominence the media gives an issue, ensuring it remains in the public eye. The effect of changes in coverage of sexual violence is increased accessibility of information on the issue. As suggested by Price & Tewksbury (1997) agenda-setting argues that there is an impact on how the audience perceives an issue (in this study sexual violence) just by looking at how the media treats the issue or report on it. Hence, it is not the topic of the day that has the effect, but rather, the attention and amount of time that the media gives it that has an impact on the audience (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

However, it should be noted as argued by Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007) that second and third uses of agenda setting are: (a) to shed more light on research on how news messages that set the agenda, are processed by the audience ; and (b) The third central question in agenda setting research, argues (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007) is the cognitive effect of news. Therefore, research focuses on how the audience perceive and process the information highlighted in the media and how the audience store it in their memory. This study employed the agenda setting theory, but based on the argument put forward by Scheufele and Tewksbury. The study was on agenda building - how the news media reports sexual violence.

### **2.7.2 Media Cultivation theory**

The cultivation theory alludes that we live in a mass mediated society where the media is prudent in our lives since they take up the role of social agents, create our social



perceptions and attitudes. This influence by the mass media is what scholars refer to as cultivation.

The seminal cultivation theory research was conducted by Gerbner & Gross (1976) who concluded that distortion of reality can be linked television content that the audience feeds on. Scholars argue that occupations such as those of doctors, judges and police were exaggerate by the media and this was done by the large amount of airtime that they were given, contrary to reality. (Weimann, 2000). The central hypothesis of this theory, called *cultivation hypothesis*, that was brought forth by some scholars argue that that people who spent more time watching television are more likely to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most common and recurrent messages from the television, as opposed to people who watched less. (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli 2009). For instance, if there is an overrepresentation of surgeons on television, heavy viewers should overestimate the real-world incidence of surgeons.

Despite the original formulation of the cultivation hypothesis focusing more on the influence of overrepresentations on television, several studies have brought forward the cultivation effect of newspapers on the masses (Arendt, 2008, 2009; Bauer, 2005; Grabe & Drew, 2007; Hicks & Lee, 2004; 2004; Reber & Chang, 2000; Reimer & Rosengren, 1990). The focus on television was not because of limited newspapers influence of newspaper content, but as stated by (Gerbner & Gross, 1976), it was due to the influence of television the American society.

However, there is need for studying the cultivation hypothesis in Kenya where newspapers have as much influence as television. No studies have proven that television is more important than newspapers in Kenya, unlike the American context studies by

(Gerbner & Gross, 1976) Indeed it has been noted that “the specific media structure of the country and context that is being studied is of major importance” when analyzing media cultivation (Arendt, 2000:148). The author notes countries where newspapers are more important than television, for example in Austria, where research has revealed that more than 75 per cent of the population reads a newspaper on a daily basis, however, on the contrary, only 63 per cent of the population watch television on a daily basis. Therefore, the omission of newspapers from a cultivation research in such countries would be illogical.

Newspapers are an important news channel in Kenya. Mugasa (2013:10) emphasizes that “Kenya’s newspaper sector is resilient and set to expand” even with the advent of new media. The newspaper advertising revenue has grown from Ksh 4.2 billion in 2008 to Ksh 14 billion by 2012. In addition to studying newspapers, it seems appropriate to study the effect of tabloid newspapers because they are a news introduction in Kenya. Arendt (2000) argues that how realities are created by readers differ from newspaper to newspaper. Scholars who supported the *content-specific cultivation* research, who include Bilandzic & Rössler (2004) criticized Gerbner & Gross’ (1976) assumption regarding the homogeneity of the media content. Arendt (ibid) found out similar differences in newspapers within the same country. According to the author, there are “too many differences among, for example, *Der Standard* (quality newspaper, leftist), *Die Presse* (quality newspaper, conservative), and *Krone* (tabloid, opportunistic / conservative) with regard to constructed realities (Berkel, 2006; Stark & Kraus, 2008).

Cultivation research starts by finding out differences in media content, then comparing these differences to reality to find out if the mass media reconstructs or

represents the reality. This study engaged cultivation studies by finding out how *The Nairobiian* newspaper reported sexual violence.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The chapter has looked at issues that surround the tabloidisation of newspapers and the attendant consequences. The literature argues that despite tabloids being looked at by a section of scholars as low quality journalism, others especially from cultural studies argue that they give voice to the voiceless. If well harnessed, tabloids can set agenda and cultivate reader's attitudes on feminist issues but it will take the active elements in society to appropriate the portrayals of women and the attendant contestation of the female gender from 'objectification' often found in tabloids. What's more, the chapter finds out from studies from South Africa that African tabloids do not focus on mere entertainment but sets agenda on serious societal issues. Accordingly, two theories to anchor this study were articulated and how particularly they relate to this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0. Overview**

This chapter discussed the methodology employed in this study. It looked at the various methodological approaches and their suitability in light of the objectives of this study and goes further to discuss the research design. Additionally, the chapter looked at the sampling procedures used and data collection techniques employed to this study. Of utmost relevance in this regard are the sample size, selection and the coding techniques style employed.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design used in the study was descriptive. Taking this approach, a review was conducted on sexual violence stories published by *The Nairobi* newspaper between January 2016 to December 2017. Key informants interviews with editors and correspondents was conducted. The study investigated how *The Nairobi* reports on sexual violence stories and journalistic ethics they employ when reporting such stories. The findings from the study were analysed and presented both qualitatively and quantitatively.

#### **3.2 Research Approach**

This study adopted the mixed method research approach. In mixed method research, the researcher combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding of the subject.

A mixed method design is appropriate for answering research questions that neither quantitative nor qualitative research methods can answer alone.

### **3.3 Research Method**

The research method for this study was a case study of *The Nairobi newspaper*. Case study is a form of qualitative analysis where careful and complete observation of an individual or a situation is done which enables the researcher to understand the behaviour pattern of the concerned unit. Case studies, thus, enable the generalised knowledge to get richer and richer. In this study, the research examined how the *The Nairobi newspaper* reported sexual violence from January 2016-December 2017.

### **3.4 Population**

For this study, the population included articles from *The Nairobi newspaper* that were published from January 2016 to December 2017. The total number of copies were 104 spread in the two years of study. The study population also included editors and reporters who wrote and edited stories on sexual violence during the study period. Six journalists were interviewed.

### **3.5 Unit of analysis**

The research analysed 50 articles on sexual violence published during the study period. The unit of analysis helps one to define the subject of study as well as what aspects are being studied. It provides guardrails to know what is in the scope of your study while describing the level at which the study is being conducted.

### **3.6 Sampling Frame**

The researcher sampled 104 issues of *The Nairobiian* newspaper to identify sexual violence stories published from January 2016 to December 2017. The research identified and analysed 50 articles on sexual violence drawn from the sampling frame. Purposive sampling was used and participants selected according to the needs of the study; stories/articles that did not focus on sexual violence were not analysed.

### **3.7 Data Collection Methods**

In research, data collection involves collecting and measuring information on the subject of interest to answer certain specific research questions. This research used multiple data collection approaches to improve reliability. The researcher conducted interviews with five editors, two correspondents and one key informant. Further, content analysis for the articles focusing on sexual violence that *The Nairobiian* published from January 2016- December 2017 was done. 50 articles formed the sample size for this study. The articles were categorised based on tone, theme, size, prominence and gender. A code sheet schema was developed where the selected variables were recorded. Data obtained from the study was analyzed qualitatively and was presented as descriptive narratives, graphs, charts and tables. This research was guided by World Health Organisation (WHO) (2015: 149) definition of sexual violence; which includes any type of rape; sexual abuse of children, mentally and physically disabled people; sexual harassment; unwanted sexual advances; forced marriage or cohabitation even among young kids; forced abortion; denial on the use of contraceptives or to adopt other measures to protect against sexually transmitted diseases.

### **3.7.1. Content analysis**

Content analysis of articles on sexual violence published in the *The Nairobi* newspaper between January 2016-December 2017 was conducted. The design and structural differences of the articles formed the basis of the coding sheet design. The articles were considered separately each day and assigned a category based on structural differences. This entails a content analysis newspaper accounts which were analysed. A code sheet schema was developed where the selected variables were recorded. The data obtained from this study was analyzed qualitatively and presented as descriptive narratives as well as charts, tables and graphs.

### **3.7.2 Interviews with journalists and key informants**

The researcher interviewed five editors who included the Content Editor, Associate Editor, the Revise Editor, two Sub-Editors and one key informant who worked with *The Nairobi* during the study period to identify journalist ethics that they employ when reporting on sexual violence. The interviews adopted an unstructured format to grant the informants adequate latitude on the case.

### **3.8 Data presentation and analysis**

Content analysis was applied to analyse the data collected, which was based on key themes obtained from the objectives and information reported by key informants. The unit of analysis was based on; whether it was a story from the courts, feature, editorial, opinion, column, letter to editor or commentary - whose content was examined in terms of parameters such as prominence of stories on sexual violence, type of tory,

tone, sources from which the stories were obtained, theme and size of the story. This information was then presented in narrative forms as well as in graphs and pie-charts.

The parameters are presented below:

- i. Number of articles on sexual violence published during the study period.
- ii. Size in terms of whether they were high or low focus.
- iii. Type of story; whether they were court news, general news, features, opinion, editorial, feedback)
- iv. Placement (were the story placed at the front page, page 4, page 5, other inside pages, special feature or back page).
- v. Source of news: whether from correspondents, victims themselves, family members or relatives, or just third parties.
- vi. Author of article - (writer/reporter, anonymous, columnist)

This research also analysed text on the basis of stories published within the specified period in *The Nairobiian* qualitatively, with content analysis as the method of research looking for patterns inherent in communication to answer the classic communication question who said what, to whom, why, how and with what effect. Interviews with editors, journalists and writers was also done and their responses included in the study.

### **3.9 Data Validity and Reliability**

This refers to the degree to which an assessment tool gives consistent results. Validity, on the other hand, refers to how proper a test measures what it is required to actually measure. This research analysed 50 articles related to sexual violence published



in *The Nairobiian* between January 2016 and December 2017. This is indeed adequate since *The Nairobiian* has existed for six years, and as such, the results of this research is a fair representation of what it set to realise in the problem statement.

### **3.10 Reflexivity**

According to (Etherington, 2004), reflexivity in research is the process of continuous reflection about the role of the researcher and how his/her personal experiences and assumptions have an impact on research decisions. In the case of this research, reflexivity is important considering that the researcher works as a sub-editor at the Standard Group which publishes *The Nairobiian*.

My personal experience as a newspaper editor in a fast-paced news environment may have had tremendous effect on my approach and reflection on the subject of this research. Having worked in both the mainstream newspaper and tabloids, my step-by-step reflections on various issues bordering on journalistic ethics, and general principals of objective writing came into play. As an editor, and a woman for that matter, it was vital that I maintain a level of unbiased view – and level headed approach to the subject of study. I detached personal feelings and emotions that would have otherwise lead to a biased study. *The Nairobiian* was not on trial. I had an opportunity, as an insider in the newsroom, to be familiar with the subject of research and get a better understanding of some aspects of the study. However, there lingered a sense of curiosity on just how *The Nairobiian*, a tabloid paper covered sexual violence issues, and whether it set the right tone.

### **3.11 Research Ethics**

This project was presented, defended and approved as a proposal before the researcher was given the go ahead to conduct the research. The researcher was issued with a certificate of Field Work as shown in appendix V1 to allow her to proceed to collect data for the study. Research participants were informed about the study and how they were required to assist by providing crucial, unbiased information to support the study before gaining their informed consent. The final project was subjected to a plagiarism checks. The project passed the minimum acceptable similarity index of 15 % by attaining 8 % as shown in appendix IV (Certificate of Originality). The complete project was also defended before a panel of teaching staff from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at The University of Nairobi. The recommendations of the defence panel were duly incorporated as shown in appendix V (Certificate of Corrections).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.0 Overview

This chapter looked at data analysis, interpretation and presentation. The purpose of this research study was to explore the nature of agenda setting, framing and priming of sexual violence issues in Kenya while focusing on *The Nairobiian* tabloid. Further, the study focused on exploring journalistic ethics employed by *The Nairobiian* in communicating sexual violence issues.

The study examined extent of coverage and priority given to sexual violence stories. The analysis covered all sexual violence stories in *The Nairobiian* between January 2016 and December 2017. A total of 104 copies of *The Nairobiian* newspapers were thoroughly scrutinised for sexual violence content and a total of 50 stories analysed and formed part of the basis of this study. A code sheet scheme was developed and selected variables recorded.

Sampling was conducted to establish the type of sexual violence stories published, prominence of stories, tone adopted, prominence given to stories and page size and dominant frames employed.

Interviews were conducted among editors, sub-editors and journalists who worked in the same study period and content analysis done to determine trends of sexual violence articles published checking for characteristics like the type, size and sources of stories.

#### **4.1. Sampled stories**

This study sampled and analysed 50 stories, which focused on sexual violence. All the articles/stories were published between January 2016 and December 2017 in *The Nairobiian*. Among those interviewed at *The Nairobiian* production desk were *The Nairobiian* Associate Editor, Content Editor, Revise Editor, Sub-Editor and a reporter. The three key questions the interviewees were asked touched on the subject matter of this study; what sexual violence issues are covered by *The Nairobiian*, how the paper sets the sexual violence agenda and finally, what journalistic ethics are employed in communicating stories on sexual violence.

#### **4.2. Frame Analysis**

Scholars have defined a frame as “a broad organising theme for selecting, emphasising, and linking the elements of a story such as the scenes, the characters, their actions, and supporting documentation” (Bennet cited in 2002: 42 cited in Boykoff 2008). A frame, in practice, is a conceptual lens that brings certain aspects of reality into sharper focus while relegating others to the background. Framing simply refers to the way in which information is presented to its audiences. Frame analysis was used to examine the ways in which *The Nairobiian* frames sexual violence issues. This revolves around dominant themes, placement, language adopted, common patterns, and depiction of sexual violent issues in the kicker and headlines. Also investigated was how sexual violence stories in *The Nairobiian* were given space.

The prominence of placement of sexual violence related stories in terms of where exactly they appeared in *The Nairobiian* and what size of page they were accorded.

Often, front page is more prominent compared to inside pages, and while opinions of professionals on the matter of sexual violence set the pace as features and investigative pieces set the agenda on important sexual violence. In addition, in the frame analysis, we delved into the type of sexual violence stories, whether they were hard news, opinions and features, and how *The Nairobiian* presented this issue.

### **4.3 Type of stories**

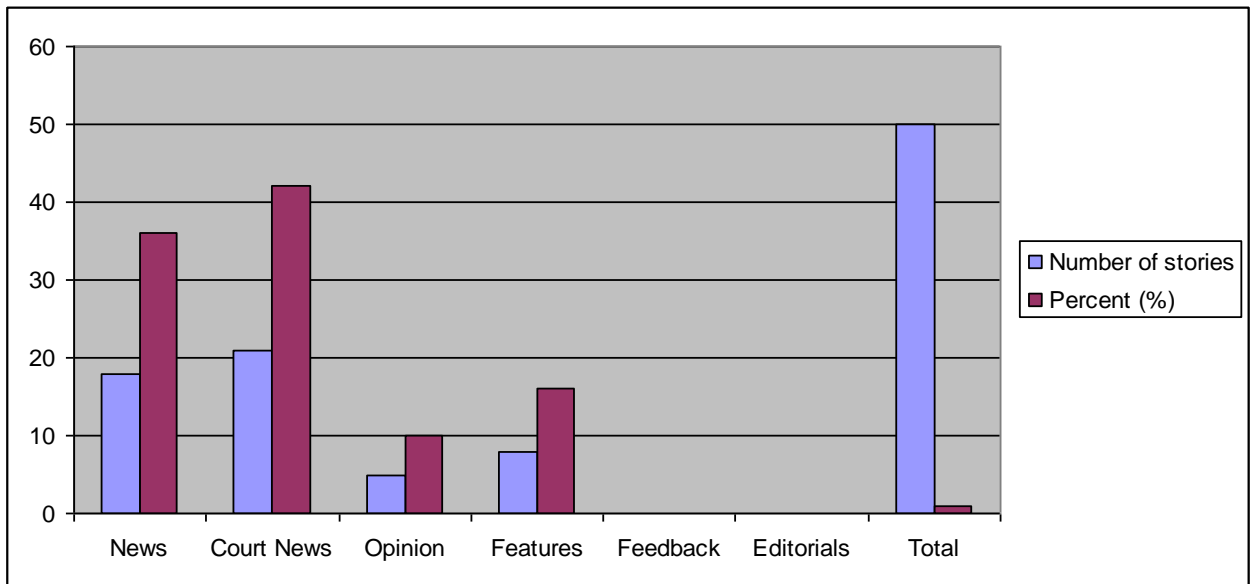
The type of stories published by *The Nairobiian* was analysed and split into the following groups: court news, news features, editorials, opinions and feedback from readers.

The results indicate that a majority of 42.0% (N=21) were drawn in the court news category while news constituted 36.0% (N=18) only. This means *The Nairobiian* adopted a straight news reporting style reporting the events as they occurred or were reported from the courts. The results indicate that *The Nairobiian* did not contain any sexual violence related stories in the editorial category. The result indicated that opinion constituted 10.0% (N=5) only, News features/analysis constituted 12.0% (N=6). Feedback from readers constituted 0.0% (N=0) only, while Editorials constituted 0.0% (N=0) only. Editorials are the heart and soul of any newspaper since it is the only section where a newspaper can state its own opinion on various issues. From the findings, *The Nairobiian* did not allocate time and space to voice its own opinion on the issue of sexual violence through editorials, which means it failed in the setting the agenda on this issue. The type of stories published in *The Nairobiian* were illustrated in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Type of stories**

	News	Court News	Opinion	Features	Feedback	Editorials	Total
Number of stories	18	21	5	6	0	0	50
Percent (%)	36	42	10	12	0	0	100%

**Figure: 4.1 Type of stories**



#### 4.4 Placement of the stories

*The Nairobiian* has two covers, the front and the back cover. If valued for advertising, the front cover is usually the most expensive premium position since it attracts more attention. Readers are more exposed to the front page. Further, the back

page is equally prominent especially when the newspapers are on display. The inside pages vary with the first pages being more premium, reducing in value as the readers' approach classified advertisements sections. It is however important to note that a story may be given prominence in terms of size – a spread – but is still tucked either in the middle of the newspaper, or towards the back page. This analysis lends weight on placement of sexual violence stories as headline stories. Prominence in terms of page size were covered in figure 4.5.

To help in analysing the placement of stories, four subheadings were derived: Lead story; pages 4 and 5, inside pages (Page 6 to page 30) and back pages (Page 46-47). Analysis of these areas shows that 10.0% (N=5) of the items were lead stories, 2.0 % (N=1) were placed on pages 46 and 47 while a majority of 88.0% (N=44) were put inside the pages (Table 4.4). This means that majority of sexual violence related stories covered in *The Nairobiian* were mostly carried inside the newspaper (page 6-30) followed by lead stories with only one story appearing on the back, largely because it was a sports story.

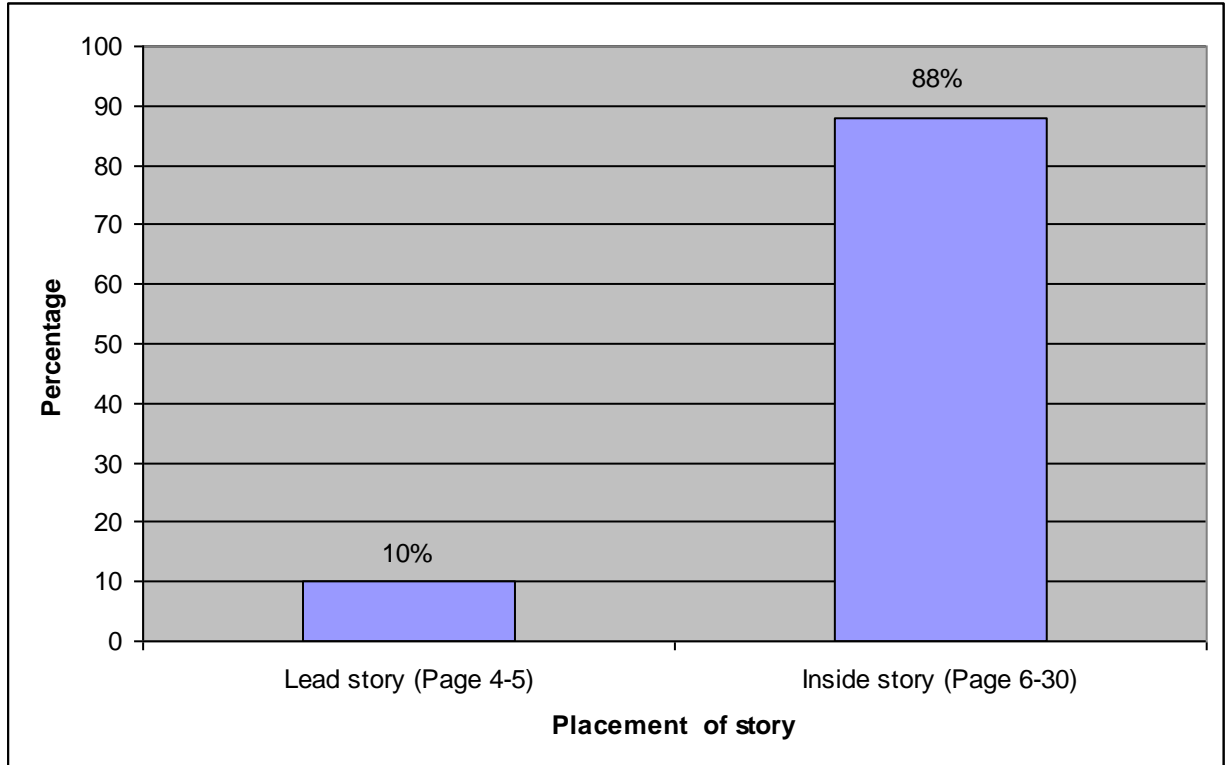
As explained by Iyengar & Kinder (1987), sexual violence is more salient in readers' minds when placed on more visible pages. This placement has an impact on how the audience makes judgments when it comes to issues revolving around sexual violence. It has been argued by McCombs & Shaw (1972:176) that “people learn from the media what the important issues are” based on how media channels emphasis different issues. Additionally Cohen (1963: 13) is of the opinion that the media is the “purveyor of public information”, like in this case information on sexual violence. From the findings, it is clear that *The Nairobiian* failed to give sexual violence stories prominence in terms of placement. Most of the stories were tucked inside the paper, with only a few making it to

the lead pages. Most of the articles published on the lead pages were more about famous politicians and celebrities which revealed a level of discrimination when it comes to victims being portrayed in the newspaper. The sections in the newspaper where the stories were placed were illustrated in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2

**Table 4.2: The sections in the newspaper where the stories were placed**

Placement of story	Number of stories	Percentage (%)
Lead story (Page 4-5)	5	10
Inside story (Page 6-30)	44	88
Back page (Page 46-47)	1	2
Total	50	100%

**Figure 4.2: Placement of stories in *The Nairobi* newspaper**





#### 4.5 Space and size of articles

In an article published by JNR, “The articles’ size matters. Longer articles and special reports have more space to present a broader range of actors and views, the results show”: Length of articles and size of newspapers affect diversity of content.

It is not only the quantity of coverage that influences value of news, but also, the size of coverage. The results indicate that the space allocated to the stories on sexual violence related stories were relatively small.

The analysis indicated that in terms of space, only 12.0% (N=6) of the articles on sexual violence covered three-quarters of a page, 10.0% (N=5) half a page and another 20.0% (N=10) a quarter of a page, 30.0% (N=15) less than a quarter of a page, 0.0% (N=0) one paragraph, 18.0% (N=9) in full page and 10.0% (N=5) two pages (spread). This was illustrated in Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3.

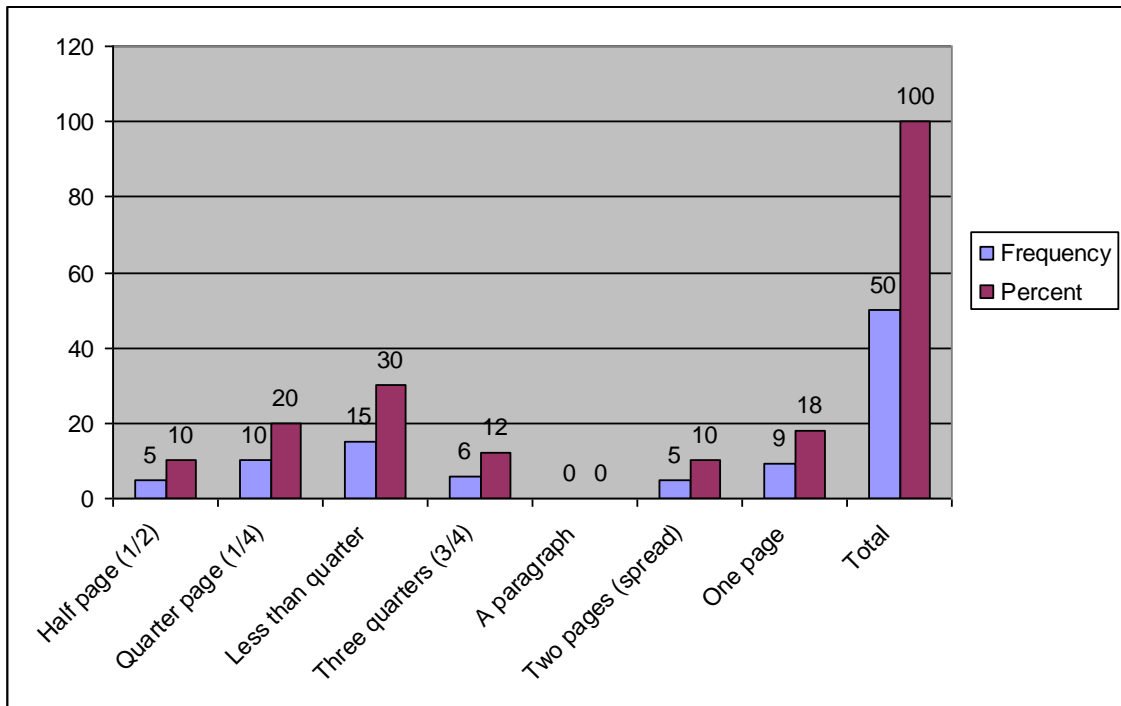
The size of the article was the second measure of prominence given to sexual violence news. Larger articles give more prominence to a news item than smaller article. It was found out that for *The Nairobiian*, page 6 had the lowest average size of articles on sexual violence at 39 cm<sup>2</sup> while the highest average size of articles was on page 21 at 584cm<sup>2</sup>. The mean size for articles appearing in *The Nairobiian* was 164 cm<sup>2</sup>. In addition, even distribution of articles across pages, the lack of relationship between placement and the type of article means all sexual violence articles are given equal weight by *The Nairobiian*. The tabloid publication gave equal weight to sexual violence stories. Indeed, the space allocated to sexual violence articles, just as pagination explained earlier shows that tabloids, in this case The Nairobiian, puts more emphasis on sexual violence stories.

This could be attributed to the fact The Nairobiian gives equal prominence to stories around rape, sodomy, incest, forced sex at the workplace instigated by men in authority, use of drugs/alcohol by both men and women leading to forced sex, forced abortions, sexual harassment at the work place, cheating between spouses, especially where men bring mistresses to their marital homes.

**Table 4.3: Space of the articles**

Size	Half page (1/2)	Quarter page (1/4)	Less than quarter	Three quarters (3/4)	A paragraph	Two pages (spread)	One page	Total
Frequency	5	10	15	6	0	5	9	50
Percent	10	20	30	12	0	10	18	100

**Figure 4.3: Space covered by the articles**



#### 4.6. Source Analysis

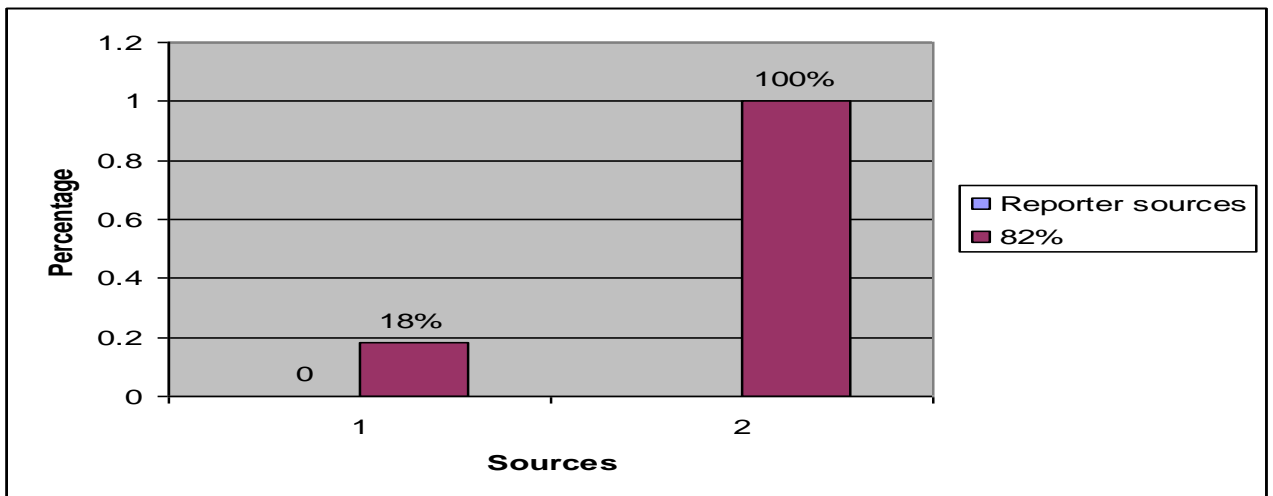
Reporter generated sources comprised the majority at 82% (N=41). The reporters also relied on the constitution – The sexual offences Bill - research and statistics from relevant bodies as well as speaking to victims themselves. Other relevant bodies quoted include Office of the Ombudsman.

Non-reporter sources comprised 18% (N=9). The generated stories were mostly articles written by columnists who are experts like a doctor who lectures Philosophy and Religious Studies at Kenyatta University. Another columnist is a lecturer at Riara University and has been writing for *The Nairobiian* since its inception in 2013, a Mombasa based columnist who writes more on relationships, and whose articles appear on Page 17 of *The Nairobiian*, a columnist who writes about women issues, and has been writing for *The Nairobiian* since 2013. These writers have vast experience and relies on their training and experience to offer opinion on sexual violence. This shows that most of the stories related to sexual violence are done by *The Nairobiian* reporters and correspondents, meaning the sexual violence agenda is set by the tabloid newspaper and not external interests, which include the Government, Civil Societies, Churches and Non-governmental Organizations (NGO). Source of sexual violence stories generated in *The Nairobiian* is illustrated in Table 4.4 and Figure 4.4

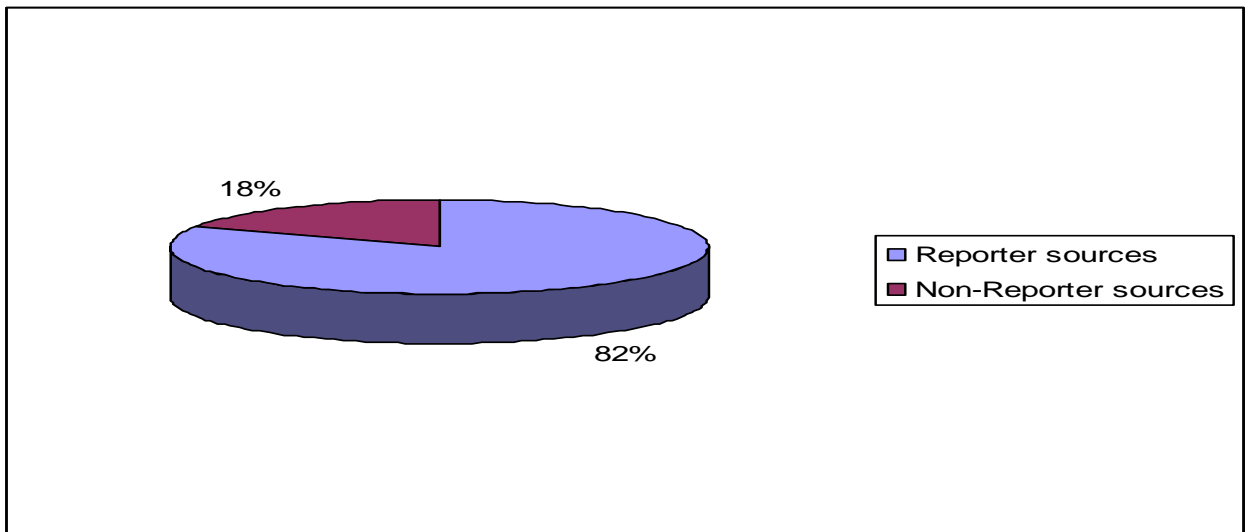
**Table 4.4 Source of sexual violence related stories generated in *The Nairobi***

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reporter sources	41	82%
Non-Reporter sources	9	18%
Total	50	100%

**Figure 4.4 Histogram showing source of stories**



**Figure: 4.4.1 Pie chart showing source of stories**



#### 4.7 Gender covered and Dominant themes

The study found that sexual violence committed by the men against women was the most dominant theme in all the 50 sexual violence related stories reviewed in *The Nairobiian*.

The researcher found out that of the 50 sexual violence related stories analysed, 90% (N=45) reported female victims while a paltry 10% (N=5) reported male victims. This showed clearly that women are prone to sexual violence compared to men. It is also highly likely that most sexual violence cases against men go unreported. It is right to say that tabloids, in this case *The Nairobiian*, tends to stand with the women who are mostly the victims.

Also prominent in the theme are sexual violence against children. In the 50 stories covered, child sexual violence took 30% (N=15). A good example being a bizarre story by *The Nairobiian* Correspondent titled “Preacher jailed for 10 years for showing minor porn movie and defiling her” (*The Nairobiian* September 29-October 5, 2017, pp. 8). The preacher is said to have always offered the minor five shillings whenever he defiled her. The story was a court story. It is worth noting that the headlines are indeed sensationalised, thus robbing the story of some element of seriousness. This seems to be a major issue in tabloids, in this case *The Nairobiian*. One can easily say that the focus of tabloids is to sell the story, not necessarily to fight certain vice. Tabloids appear to be glorifying sexual violence – in its attempt to sensationalise news.

Another major theme is sexual violence in marriages. It is evident from the research and analysis of the 50 stories in *The Nairobiian* that sexual violence does exist in marriages. Sexual violence in marriages accounted for 6% (N=3). A good example

being a bizarre story by *The Nairobiian* Reporter: “Minister denied me sex, was cruel - wife” (*The Nairobiian* February 10-16, 2017, pp. 5). The story pitting a powerful Kenyan Cabinet Secretary was sourced from the courts. The correspondent, whose identity is hidden got court papers from court staff. In the story, the estranged wife of the minister is seeking a divorce citing sexual violence and cruelty.

Another dominant theme is sexual violence pitting relatives, fathers and their daughters. Of the stories sampled, 14% (N=7) was sexual violence related stories touching on defilement or rape orchestrated by close family members. A good example being a bizarre story by *The Nairobiian* Correspondent: “Limuru man in court for defiling daughter” (*The Nairobiian* August 12-18, 2016, pp. 10). The story once again is sourced from court. The suspect is said to have defiled his four-year-old daughter in Kiambu.

The above findings indicate that *The Nairobiian* depict sexual violence victims from the same patriarchal perspective. *The Nairobiian* seems to construct the view that women suffer from sexual violence than men. These findings do not deny that women are victims of sexual violence more than men, but the findings emphasize the patriarchal mind of the journalists who assume that sexual violence affect women more than men.

It is evident that the inclination to report women are victims to some extent, create a more heightened visual, sexual or sympathetic appeal. In this case, sexual violence with female victims were viewed as more newsworthy. However, more research is needed to find out the gender difference of sexual violence victims in the real world. Further, there was no articles relating to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and abortion in the 50 stories analysed in *The Nairobiian* between January 2016 and December 2017. This is a clear indication that *The Nairobiian* newspaper does not set the agenda when it comes to

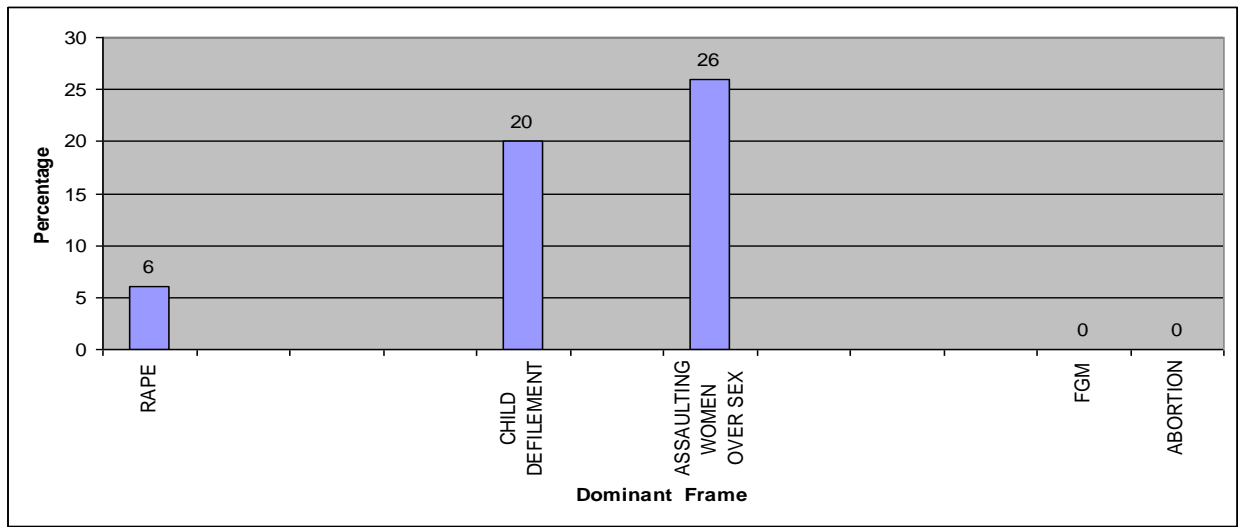
issues on FGM and abortion. Frequency and dominant themes, frames in the *The Nairobi* are illustrated in Table 4.5 and Figure 4.5 respectively.

**Table 4.5. Frequency of Dominant Themes and Frames in *The Nairobi***

<b>Dominant frame</b>	<b>Sub frames</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Rape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√ rape in marriage</li> <li>√ rape by employer</li> <li>√ rape by relatives</li> <li>√ rape by strangers</li> </ul>	6	11.5%
<b>Child defilement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√ defilement of boys</li> <li>√ defilement of girls</li> </ul>	20	38.5%
<b>Assaulting women over sex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√ killing of women over sex</li> <li>√ destroying property over sex</li> <li>√ domestic sex slavery</li> <li>√ forced prostitution</li> </ul>	26	50%
<b>FGM</b>		0	0
<b>Abortion</b>		0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Researcher 2016**

**Figure 4.5 Frequency of Dominant Frames in *The Nairobiian***



#### **4.8 Tone analysis**

Tone analysis is a major part of framing stories in tabloids. This refers to the mood, style and manner of presentation. It is the philosophical outlook of a communication that says whether the tone is shrill, liberal, moderate or abrasive. Tone can make stories have a positive or a negative connotation as it underpins the way sources decide to say what they intend to say and how they say it (Koneru, 2008). Tone analysis in this regard looks at how reporting of sexual violence matters are presented in *The Nairobiian*. This looks at whether such stories are positive, negative or neutral. Indeed, a positive tone focuses on pleasing aspects of sexual violence related issues and pleasant words are used to portray hope and optimism. A negative tone involves use of mocking, harsh words, besides focusing on the unpleasant aspects of sexual violence related stories. A neutral tone is neither positive nor negative. Among the positive stories included a court story, *South Sudanese sentenced to life for defiling minor* (*The Nairobiian*, May 6-12, 2016, p8). This story brings hope to victims, this is because the people responsible for the sexual violence crimes are brought to book and punished. This



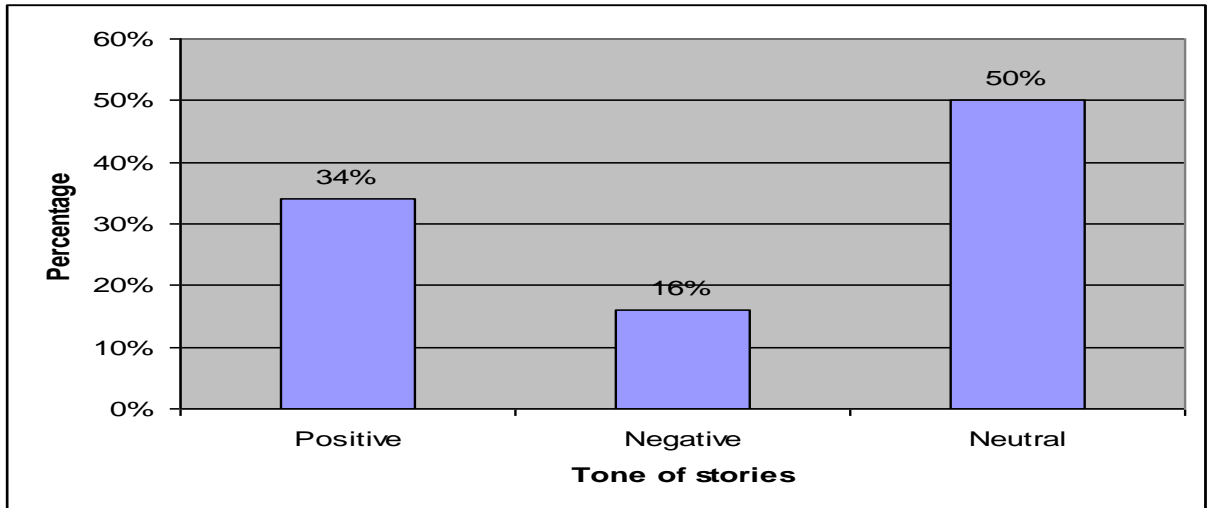
ruling brings hope to the common people most of whom have continued to suffer in the hands of sexual predators. Another positive story, one which brings hope and optimism is Boaz Kipngeno’s story, ODM official facing defilement charge, (*The Nairobiian*, May 27-June 2, 2016, pp8). This is a story of hope since even politician suspected of committing sexual violence act was arrested. Another positive story is, Pastor sentenced to life for impregnating daughter, (*The Nairobiian*, May 13-19, 2017, pp8)

The findings also brought out negative stories. A good example is a correspondent’s story: Prisoner of passion: Judge frees man accused of having sex with minor – (*The Nairobiian*, May 6-12, 2016, pp8.) In the story, a judge interestingly releases a suspect on grounds that the victim, a girl aged 13, enjoyed the sex. The suspect had received a 20-year jail term after the lower court found him guilty. He, however, appealed and won. The judgement received widespread condemnation. It was voted the worst judgment in 2016. This is a negative story, one that does not bring hope to victims. From the findings, *The Nairobiian* newspaper maintained a level of neutrality when reporting stories on sexual violence and avoided a negative tone, which could come across as mocking victims or blaming them for the violence. Tone of reporting sexual violence in *The Nairobiian* was illustrated in Table 4.6 and Figure 4.6

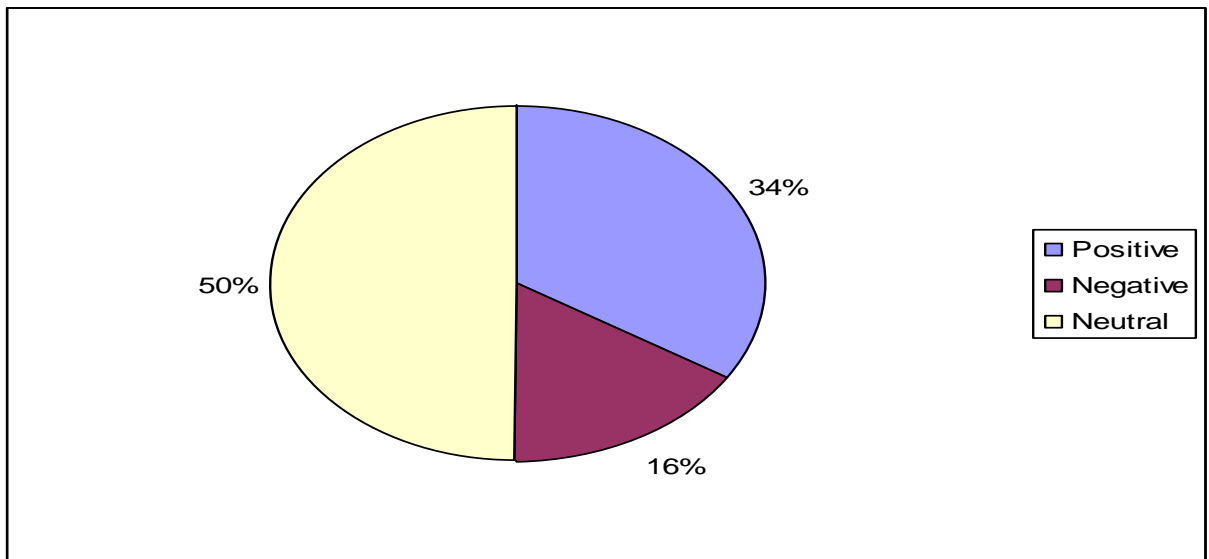
**Table 4.6 Tone of reporting sexual violence issues in *The Nairobiian***

<b>Tone of stories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Positive	17	34%
Negative	8	16%
Neutral	25	50%
TOTAL	50	100%

**Figure 4.6: Tone of reporting sexual violence issues in The Nairobiian**



**Figure 4.6.1: Tone of reporting sexual violence issues**



#### **4.9 Journalistic ethics *The Nairobiian* employs in communicating sexual violence**

##### **issues**

This second part of the research question came out during the research. As pointed earlier, a team of editors and writers spoke expansively on the approach the production team takes and how it navigates ethical issues when reporting sexual violence

issues. From the interviews conducted, editors and reporters at *The Nairobiian* upheld to the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism as required by the Media Council of Kenya and Media Law and Ethics as they are enshrined in the Constitution. Further, the Children's Act which seeks to protect minors affected by sexual violence guided the reporters when covering such sensitive issues. Also, they were guided by The Standard Group Editorial Policy, which states children should not be identified in cases to do with sexual violence, whether as victims, defendants or defendants.

One of the editors said one of the journalistic practices they constantly adhere to is use of fair comment and use of expert opinion driven by well-researched data. "We protect the identity of minors and victims. Our stories are rendered in simple prose, devoid of jargon, often employing the language used by the person on the street," he said.

Another editor – also at *The Nairobiian* production desk - agrees, and points out the important fact that despite the fact that they are a tabloid, they often strive to draw a line between telling the story and glorifying the act. According to him, *The Nairobiian* packages sexual violence related cases with utmost sensitivity befitting humanity and objectivity of good journalism. A reporter at the desk sums it up thus; emphasis is placed on seeking out the facts of the story, and proper representation of the parties involved. The stories told are objective and the portrayals are decent.

Where anonymity can be maintained, the paper protects the privacy of the victims, and that of sources. As much as possible, whenever possible, the story is done in a way that minimizes the hurt on the victims or avoids it entirely. Further, one of the editors observed that in cases of minors, their photos were blurred and their names were not revealed.

Another editor observed that great care was given when it comes to use of language when reporting on sexual violence stories. They avoided vulgar, insulting language that could offend the readers and the public in general. The choice of language was objective to avoid appearing biased, mocking the victim or passing judgement to the victim.

From the interviews, the respondents were guided by the Editorial Policy of Standard Media Group, which ensured they avoided personal opinions and being biased when reporting sexual violence. The Policy dictates terms and words used to describe sexual violence and hence, protect the dignity of the victims. The Policy also dictates that graphic details of the act cannot be published and the victims cannot be portrayed in an unfavourable manner.

It is evident that honesty, credibility, accuracy, objectivity and a regard for privacy are the key practices employed in reporting sexual violence stories in *The Nairobi* newspaper.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented both findings and discussion of this study. This chapter has reached three vital conclusions that respond to the research questions and the objectives of the study. The dominant themes were identified, the sources and their frequency have been established and the tone of reporting sexual violence in tabloid press presented as well. Also captured in this chapter is the second part of the research question, which seeks to find out the journalistic practices *The Nairobi* employs in telling the stories. The next chapter will discuss these findings and draw conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Overview

This chapter provides summary, conclusions and recommendations for this study. All these are based on the objectives of this study. This study sought to examine how tabloid newspapers, in this case *The Nairobiian*, covers sexual violence related stories.

This was done by looking at the frequency with which *The Nairobiian* covers sexual violence stories in terms of prominence, sources of such stories, dominant frames, tone adopted and size of the articles in the newspaper. This study was anchored by agenda setting and cultivation theories. Indeed, according to McCombs & Shaw (1972; Cohen 1963), media prominence of an issue determines the salience of an issue to society as media coverage puts an issue in the public's roster of salience. The treatment of sexual violence by the media makes it accessible to society, influencing the importance that issue is given (cf. Price and Tewksbury 1997; Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007).

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

Based on the data and analysis conducted, the following were identified.

##### 5.1.1 Type of stories that covered sexual violence in *The Nairobiian* newspaper

This study showed that the type of stories published by *The Nairobiian* that covered sexual violence were mostly court news, news stories, features and opinions. Court stories were the highest covered. However, there were no sexual violence articles in the newspaper editorial and feedback from readers in the two-year study period. This shows that the newspaper did not take time to voice its own opinion on the issue of

sexual violence. This is quite telling given the editorial section often is weighty and is allocated matters considered serious; it's the voice/stand of the newspaper on certain cardinal issues.

## **5.2 Placement of sexual violence stories in The Nairobi pages**

*The Nairobi* has sexual violence stories distributed throughout the pages of the newspapers. However, a substantial number of sexual violence stories were placed inside the newspaper – pages 6-30. In the two-year period, analysis of *The Nairobi* shows that of the 50 stories analysed, five (5) of the items were lead stories, one (1) was placed on pages 46 and 47 while a majority of 44 stories were put inside the pages (6-30). This means that majority of sexual violence related stories covered in *The Nairobi* were mostly carried inside the newspaper (page 6-30) followed by lead stories with only one story appearing on the back, largely because it was a sports story. Not many sexual violence related stories were carried in the lead pages (Pages 1-5).

## **5.3 Prominence of space given to sexual violence stories in *The Nairobi***

The research results indicate that the space allocated to the stories on sexual violence related stories were relatively very small. In terms of space only six (6) of the articles 50 sampled stories covered three-quarters of a page, five (5) half a page and another 10 a quarter of a page, 15 covered less than a quarter of a page. This shows that most sexual violence stories were allocated less than a quarter of a page. It also shows that sexual violence was not allocated must space in the newspapers. This could show that as much as tabloids carry sexual violence stories, not much space is allocated them. The same applies to the sizes of articles which address sexual violence.

#### **5.4 Sources of sexual violence content in *The Nairobiian***

According to research, of the 50 sexual related stories analysed in *The Nairobiian* between January 2016 and December 2017, reporter generated sources comprised the majority at 41. Non-reporter sources comprised nine stories (9). This showed that most stories being reporter generated are largely factual, objective and ethical. Secondly, it shows that the newspaper has tasked reporters to report such stories.

#### **5.5 Dominant frames that emerged in reporting sexual violence**

The research showed that sexual violence that was propagated by men against women was the most dominant theme in all the 50 sexual violence related stories reviewed in *The Nairobiian*.

The research found out that of the 50 sexual violence related stories analysed, 45 reported female victims while a paltry 5 reported male victims. It is evident that women suffer more from sexual violence acts unlike the men. It is also highly likely that most sexual violence cases against men go unreported. It right to say that tabloids, in this case *The Nairobiian*, tends to stand with the women who are mostly the victims.

It is evident that the female gender is the one most covered as sexual violence victims than their male counterparts. These findings can be interpreted thus: (a) tabloid newspapers reflect Kenya as patriarchal society where women, more than men, are likely to be victims of gender violence; (b) tabloid publications are emphasising women as victims of gender violence, starting a chain of events that sets the public agenda of sexual violence discourse in Kenya. Also prominent in the theme was child sexual violence. In the 50 stories covered, five (5) were on child sexual violence. The research also showed

that sexual violence exists in marriages. Sexual violence in marriages accounted for 3 of the 50 stories analysed.

It is true that tabloids have succeeded in framing and agenda setting on sexual violence from their coverage and giving prominence to sexual violence, making the issue to remain in the public domain. An editor of *The Nairobiian* who was interviewed during the research said *The Nairobiian* brings to the fore a wide range of issues relating to sexual violence opening them to public scrutiny and where possible inviting action from policy makers and other stakeholders.

Indeed, when media agenda becomes a public agenda, an effect is felt at policy level whereby interventions are put in place by authorities to respond to issues of public concern. However, the question of how successful tabloids have been successful remains unaddressed because that is beyond the purview of this study. Perhaps, the newspaper coverage and representation is influenced by the yokes of patriarchy, embedded in the social structure, engendering the depiction of female gender as sexual violence victims. This is because there is inordinate number of stories that represented women as victims compared to men, both in tabloids and broadsheets. One editor interviewed says women are mostly portrayed as the victims, citing a case where a young woman who had suffered abuse and contracted an STI, was offered treatment and a university scholarship following our story which was widely discussed. The editor adds that most men who may have been sexually abused often chose to bury their heads in shame fearing to come out mostly due to cultural stigma associated with the matter.



## **5.6 Tone analysis of sexual violence stories in *The Nairobiian***

The tone of reporting sexual violence related stories in *The Nairobiian* is mostly neutral contrary to the negative nature of tabloids press. This reveals that tabloids can be level headed and maintain objectivity even in the face of the findings revealing that sexual violence in Kenya is generally in a sorry state; a situation a tabloid could exploit to slant issues and excite public emotions. The neutral tone of most of stories in *The Nairobiian* can also be viewed that they don't give much attention to victims or concerned about being on the forefront to fight sexual violence.

## **5.7 Journalist ethical practises that *The Nairobiian* employed when reporting sexual violence**

Despite sensationalising news, tabloids, in this case *The Nairobiian*, employs a wide degree of journalistic ethical practices when covering sexual violence stories. One editor said that when assigning stories on sexual violence, a wide range of stakeholders have to be included including medical and mental health professionals, police, community members and also sexual violence prevention advocates. Through this, they ensure the stories are not biased and are objective.

A Nairobiian reporter interviewed revealed they are keen on protecting the privacy of the victims and that of sources especially where anonymity is sought to minimise the hurt on the victims.

Another Nairobiian editor interviewed said that fair comment and use of expert opinion and research is most cardinal. These, as well as protecting the identity of minors and generally being sensitive even though tabloids are known to sensationalize just about any news.

## 5.8 Conclusion

This study shows a fairly strong agenda setting and framing role by *The Nairobiian*. The study responded to the research questions and the objectives of the study. The dominant themes have been identified, the sources and their frequency have been established and the tone of reporting sexual violence issues in tabloid press presented as well. It is clear that *The Nairobiian* is engaging in different aspect of “agenda building”, what the authors termed the macroscopic mechanisms that deal with message construction. *The Nairobiian* has increased coverage of sexual violence stories. This is in turn ‘building’ a new media agenda about sexual violence. Relationship between agenda setting role and the placement as well as prominence of sexual violence articles implies that tabloid media played a certain role in creating awareness on sexual violence. This they did largely due to its ability to capture the public attention through sensationalised news. The danger however, is that victims may appear to be a target of ‘mockery’ due to the packaging and presentation of sexual violence news in tabloids. As such, a proper balance is needed. The study concludes that *The Nairobiian* plays an important role in highlighting and creating awareness on sexual violence largely through publication of court news stories and features. However, to stimulate discussion, *The Nairobiian* needs to occasionally run editorials on sexual violence. It is worth noting that not a single editorial in the entire period of study touched on the subject of sexual violence. Mogambi & Nyakeri (2015) state that editorials are one of the salient sections of any newspaper since they convey the importance of an issue, bringing to the attention of readers and policy makers. Further, editorials are used effectively to play the role of agenda setting and hence, *The Nairobiian*, to some extent has failed in doing so.

During the study period, it is worth to note that *The Nairobiian* did not cover any stories on Female Genital Mutilation and abortion. This is despite WHO report (2010:2008) revealing that in Kenya, about 21 per cent of girls and women aged 0-14 years have been subjected to FGM rites. This reveals that *The Nairobiian* has failed to set agenda when it comes to issues to do with FGM and by so doing, the issue was not viewed as a serious issue. There is need for the newspaper to highlight FGM so that readers, policy makers and the government can worry and intervene on the issue.

The study also revealed that *The Nairobiian* gives sexual violence acts committed by men against women more prominence than violence against men. This showed clearly that women are prone to sexual violence compared to men. It is also highly likely that most sexual violence cases against men go unreported. It right to say that tabloids, in this case *The Nairobiian*, tends to stand with the women who are mostly the victims, ignoring the male victims. This undermines its role of setting the agenda when it comes to sexual violence meted on men.

Finally, this study revealed that most of the sexual violence stories that *The Nairobiian* published were sourced from the courts, victims' account and eyewitness. These are primary sources, and hence, they give credibility and authenticity to the stories published. This reveals that the newspaper adhered to the journalist practises that a story especially one that is sensitive should be factual and backed with evidence.

## **5.9 Recommendations**

From the findings, the study recommends the following:

### **5.9.1 Promote training for editors, journalists in the newsroom**

*The Nairobiian* should organise editors, correspondents, contributors in areas touching on sexual violence reporting which will result in more prominent, informative, sensitive and articles. Editors and reporters interviewed stressed the need for training at the tertiary institutions teaching journalism where sexual violence reporting should be covered as a course unit to improve the quality of reporting. Additionally, editors and reports should be sensitised on the negative effect of use of sensational headlines and messages published deliberately that may affect victims. Such training will enable journalists to change their attitude about a patriarchal mind when reporting on sexual violence, especially since most journalist tend to view women as the victims of sexual violence, not me.

### **5.9.2 More prominence to be given to sexual violence stories**

To set the agenda *The Nairobiian*, and other tabloids, need to give more prominence to sexual violence in terms of placements and size. Further, they need to do more of in depth analysis when it comes to covering these stories. This will create awareness and lead to objective debates on this sensitive matter.

### **5.9.3 More research to be conducted on readers' perception on sexual violence reportage**

There is need for deeper research to be conducted to shed more light on influence of sexual violence news reporting on the reader's perception of the vice. Despite agenda

setting theory to predict the relationship between media coverage and readers' perception of sexual violence being employed in this study, there is need for more research to find out how readers have been socialised.

#### **5.9.4 Provide more resources apart from news when reporting sexual violence**

The Nairobiian, apart from highlighting such stories, can provide their readers with resources to get more information on sexual violence, come up with a call to action, hotlines for the victims and also support groups for the sexual violence victims.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: Sexual violence articles coding sheet

**Newspaper:** (1) Nairobi

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Day/ Date/Month/Year

<b><u>Type of article:</u></b> News report/ photo/ feature/ editorial/ cartoon/ letter/ others	Page where the article appeared	Victim Covered			Space in CM <sup>2</sup> (Length x Width )
		Male	Female	Sex not identifiable.	
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[http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/global\\_campaign/en/chap6.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/en/chap6.pdf)

**APPENDIX II: Interview Questions For Five Editors And One Columnist In The  
Nairobi Newspaper**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**TED MALANDA, ASSOCIATED EDITOR, *THE NAIROBIAN***

**PAUL OMONDI, REVISE EDITOR, *THE NAIROBIAN***

**KAMAU MUTUNGA, CONTENT EDITOR, *THE NAIROBIAN***

**EDWIN HERENGA, SUB-EDITOR, *THE NAIROBIAN***

**JOYCE MUTHEU, SUB-EDITOR, *THE NAIROBIAN***

**BRIAN GUSERWA, COLUMNIST, *THE NAIROBIAN***

**Introduction**

I am a graduate student finalizing my Master of Arts thesis at the University of Nairobi-School of Journalism. My project examines the reporting of sexual violence in tabloid press in Kenya. The study mainly focused on the *The Nairobiian* for a period of two years (January 2016- December 2017). Please assist me by answering the following unstructured questions.

## **Instructions**

The questions seek to know the sexual issues covered in *The Nairobiian*, how *The Nairobiian* sets the agenda when it comes to reporting sexual violence and the journalistic ethics employed when it comes to the coverage of sexual violence.

The interview can be completed in less than 30 minutes.

## **Confidentiality**

Your responses will be confidential and no comments will be attributed to any individual in any report that maybe produced from this study.

## **QUESTIONS**

- 1) What sexual violence related issues are covered by *The Nairobiian* newspaper?
  
- 2) How does *The Nairobiian* newspaper set the agenda when it comes to reporting sexual violence?
  
- 3) What journalistic ethics are employed in communicating sexual violence issues by *The Nairobiian*?

**Thank you very much for your time.**



**APPENDIX III: Certificate of fieldwork**



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This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners' meeting held on JULY 31, 2015 in respect of M.A./~~Ph.D~~ final Project/Thesis defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the student can be allowed to proceed for field work.

Reg. No: K50/80537/2012

Name: KARANJA GRACE WANJIRU

Title: REPORTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN KENYA PRINT MEDIA:

A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF THE NAIROBIAN AND SUNDAY STANDARD

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SUPERVISOR

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28/8/2015  
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Dr Samuel Siringi  
PROGRAMME COORDINATOR

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This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>19</sup> in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project/thesis can be allowed to proceed for binding.

Reg. No: KSO/20537/2012

Name: MARANJA GRACE WANJIAU

Title: REPORTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN TABLOID PRESS

IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF THE NAIROBIAN NEWSPAPER

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SUPERVISOR

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