

**PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS IN KENYA'S PRINT MEDIA**

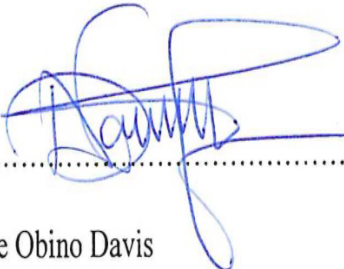
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K50/11405/2018**

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DECLARATION

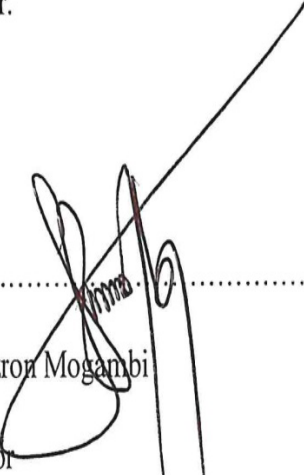
I declare that this research project is my original work and has not been presented for any other degree in any other university.

Signed.......... Date.....28/11/2023.....

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university supervisor.

Signed.......... Date.....28.11.2023.....

Prof. Hezron Mogambi

Supervisor

DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my mother, Petronila Bongwe and my late father Jared Chweya, both of whom contributed heavily on my academic journey. My partner Sylviah Wanyonyi for supporting me and creating an enabling environment for completing my studies. I thank you.

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I am grateful to God Almighty for the good health, wisdom, and provision throughout the period of my study.

Significantly, I acknowledge the excellent professional and intellectual support and encouragement of my supervisor Prof. Hezron Mogambi who guided me in writing this research project.

ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the portrayal of Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) in Kenya's print media. To achieve this objective, news stories from two Kenya's leading newspapers, The Daily Nation and The Standard were used as the main sources. Through an inductive content analysis study design, where desk research was adopted for data collection, relevant articles between January 2021 and December 2022 were sought in the Daily Nation and The Standard to help respond to the research questions. Ultimately, the present study findings revealed that the predominant images of representations of WHDRs included their efforts in championing for reproductive rights, participation in political processes, support for marginalised groups, legal reforms and litigation, and resilience in the face of threats. These patterns were identified in the present research findings, as contributing to the visibility of human rights issues by WHRDs in the news. Also, positive portrayals, human interest stories, gender stereotyping, criticism and opposition and coverage of activism represent the main themes of WHRDs' portrayal and representation in media according to the present study findings from the Daily Nation and The Standard newspapers. Moreover, the main images and narratives used in the packaging of news about issues raised by WHRDs took the form of heroic narratives, gender stereotypes, empowerment and agency, recognition and awards, breaking barriers and amplifying voices, as well as inspiration and role modelling. Ultimately, it is recommended that the Kenyan print media diversify their portrayal of WHRDs by highlighting their multifaceted roles and contributions. Additionally, the media should be mindful of the potential implications of their agenda setting and its impact on public perceptions and actively work towards fostering a more accurate and balanced portrayal of WHRDs.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AST	Agenda Setting Theory
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CJGEA	Centre for Justice, Governance, and Environmental Action
CREAW	Centre for Rights Education and Awareness
FIDA	Federation of Women Lawyers
GALCK	Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya
GNC	Gender Non Conforming
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICJ	International Commission of Jurists
KHRC	Kenya Human Rights Commission
LBQ	Lesbians, Bisexuals and Queer
NGEC	National Genders and Equality Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHRDs	Women Human Rights Defenders
WLEA	Women and Law in East Africa

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

Perceptions, attitudes, and opinions about people are influenced by each other's situations, social positioning, and relationships. Therefore, the standpoints and worldviews of individuals, groups, or communities result from such influences. The media – whose essential role is to inform, entertain, represent culture, and educate the masses - has an enormous role in constructing perceptions, attitudes, and opinions about women (Kadeswaran, *et al.* 2020). Keenly woven into our daily lives, the media plays its role by transmitting messages into our consciousness about the genders, many of which are stereotypical and foster limiting perceptions about women's roles and status.

Over the years, there has been a significant number of inquiries into the effects of media representation of women, with findings indicating that women are underrepresented in the media, falsely implying that women are invisible while men are the culturally acceptable standard (Bartlett, 2018). Secondly, men and women are portrayed stereotypically to sustain culturally and socially accepted views of gender. Third, the coverage emphasizes traditional gender roles perpetuating discrimination, inequality, and violence against women.

Even in the post-modern era, the role of women continues to be benchmarked against stereotypical traditional gender roles, even within newsrooms. Further research by O'Brien, (2019) shows imbalances in media institutions and unequal portrayal of women and men. In a separate survey to investigate gender manifestation and profiling within the East African region, The East African Journalists Association (EAJA) revealed that gender representation in the media is highly imbalanced (Masinde *et al.* 2022). It is skewed in favor of the men, with women being represented

as victims even when the topic of discussion is significant to women or concerns them.

Nonetheless, women's rights activists have participated in actions such as forming social movements for social change over the years. They have taken part in political protests and revolutions. However, due to gender relations and roles, the role of women's rights defenders continues to be documented and told from the traditional stereotypical angles, which has perpetuated gender-role imbalances (Fafowora, 2020). Through content analysis, this concept seeks to study Kenya's leading print media local dailies: The Standard, and Daily Nation Newspapers in Kenya, to bring to the fore women's rights defenders' images of portrayal that the media creates for its audiences.

1.1 Background of the Study

This section reviews the status of women in Kenya, the challenges they face, and the media landscape in Kenya.

1.1.1 The situation of Women in Kenya

Kenya has been largely patriarchal, as with many African countries, where men rule over women (Akinola, 2018). The term "patriarchy" succinctly captures the extensive network of oppressive norms and way of life forces that have persisted throughout history, transcending national and cultural boundaries and affecting various aspects of life. This implies that for ages, Kenya's social construct was founded on the ability of men to dominate women through the prevailing patriarchal paradigm fostering the victimization of women throughout various social, political, and economic domains.

In Kenya, the government, regional and international stakeholders have publicly acknowledged that women are disadvantaged and have made a formal

commitment to alleviate their situation through ratification of various international treaties and protocols, such as the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), Beijing Declaration and Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa, ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Banda 2019).

Locally, the 2010 Constitution of Kenya recognizes Kenyan women as human beings. It envisages a situation where men and women participate equally in the country's development by prescribing the structure of government, its organs, and national values (Kimani, 2020). To protect the sovereignty of the people, to ensure that all state organs observe democratic values and principles, and to promote constitutionalism, the constitution prescribes the establishment of independent constitutional offices. One of the recommended commissions is the National Genders and Equality Commission (NGEC), whose aim is to promote human dignity, equity, inclusiveness, equality, non-discrimination, and protection of the marginalized (Laibuta 2018). In 2017, NGEC published a report highlighting inequality indexes in Kenya, which found that over 62 percent of women were excluded from various economic activities, partly due to gender differences.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 further presents all citizens of Kenya, including women, with an opportunity to attain the highest possibilities of life that anyone can attain concerning self-actualization (Kimani, 2020). Through the constitution, various provisions champion the realization of women's rights to unshackle them from age-old systemic control and subjugation. The constitution accords every citizen, including women, protection of the right to life, and personal liberties. Further the Kenyan constitution protect its citizens from slavery, forced

labor, inhuman treatment, deprivation of property, and discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, color, ethnic, and gender (Kimani, 2020).

According to Castillejo, (2022) there is an effort to ensure that no more than two-thirds of those holding elective or appointive positions in the CoK 2010 are of the same gender through the inclusion of affirmative action provisions such as Article 26 (6), Article 27 (8), and Article 81 (b). Recognizing that certain groups in society, notably women, have been neglected by the political system, the not more than two-thirds gender principle calls on the state to implement steps to safeguard the right to equality and non-discrimination for these groups. This right to equality and non-discrimination requires the state to deliberately work towards eliminating historically rooted cultures of prejudice and disadvantage that contribute to the subordination and exclusion of women.

According to Nzomo (2014), women's political leadership and governance participation can be traced to the precolonial and colonial periods. Even after independence in 1963, women have continued to seek participation in public life processes such as decision-making, politics, and governance alongside men. It was until 1969 that a woman, Grace Onyango, was elected to parliament despite women being the majority of the voters at the time (The Standard, 2015). Women have made significant efforts to participate in the democratic political process over the years, and most significantly within the past two decades, where they overcame patriarchy and hostility to become elected leaders despite supportive legal frameworks. However, their full participation continues to be hampered by structural obstacles, including harmful cultural practices, perceptions, unsupportive institutional and policy frameworks, and low levels of civic and genders awareness.

Despite the population of women in Kenya being more than fifty-one percent of Kenya's total population (KNBS, 2019), it has been noted that women struggle to benefit equally with gender men regarding economic development. Longstanding patriarchal structures, harmful norms, ideologies, and diverse cultural contexts of people's lives that disproportionately emancipate or subordinate women directly influence how women and men experience development and self-actualization Konte (2020). According to Schäfer, (2021) women in Kenya, as in many African countries, are victims of a system of inequality and power that deliberately gives social, civil, economic, and political opportunity and access in favor of the male gender and at the detriment of women and other marginalized groups by systematically applying behavioural counteracts that influence how women experience their civil, political and socio-economic rights and the society's perceptions of women.

1.1.2 Media and Women Human Rights Defenders Landscape

Beijing Declaration defines Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) as persons of both sexes who advocate for gender equality and women's right; women and girls working on human rights concerns (Sanders, 2018). In addition to self-identified human rights defenders, the Declaration also includes in this group all civil society actors concerned with achieving gender equality, including private actors, journalists, environmental activists, health workers, peacebuilders, development and humanitarian actors. Further, the United Nations recognizes WHRDs as individuals whose role is to protect and uphold democracy, maintaining its inclusivity, diversity, active citizen participation, and adherence to the principles of the rule of law and effective government (Piccone, 2018).

Since the 1970s, there has been significant attention from both political and academic areas to bring to the fore the representation of women in the media (Ross *et*

al., 2016). To illustrate this concern, the 'Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action' from 1995 recognizes the media's crucial role in promoting gender equality (DECLARATION, 2020). Article 33 of the Declaration emphasizes that the media holds great potential to advance women's rights and gender equality by portraying men and women in diverse, non-stereotypical, and balanced ways. The role of media in achieving gender equality is further underscored in Article 44 of the Declaration, urging governments to take strategic actions to address concerns such as the categorizing of women and the disparities in women's access to and participation in the media (DECLARATION, 2020). Consequently, the Declaration reassures the formulation and execution of regulations about gender parity in media representation.

According to Wood (1994), the media influences our understanding of life. The media shapes our perceptions about men and women, including WHRDs. Wood (1994) illustrated how the media covered and portrayed stories of traditionally feminine women who were not too able, powerful, or confident. In Wood's studies, women were portrayed by the media as people who are expected to behave in a more positive, less powerful, and expressive way. The predominant lens for portraying women in print media in the past has been based on traditional patriarchal roles of poverty, inability to make decisions, childbearing, rearing, and household management. Further, women are often portrayed as girlfriends or wives by the print media, and that women have less value in contributing to national issues and, if covered, their role must be limited to traditional roles (Das, & Sharma, 2021).

Eagly *et al.* (2020) posit that gender stereotypes persist despite a significant decline from the past. However, the report notes that while the decline is evident, the stereotypical portrayal has evolved. At the same time, other images of sexism and violence against women and men are glamorized, and WHRDs are glamorized and

monetized. A new form of aggression against women and girls is being revived or remains unchanged. Ross *et al.* (2020) argue that women and the media were symbolically annihilated. Beyond the exclusions and trivializations, they further argue that WHRD issues were portrayed negatively by the media.

The images portrayed by the media focused more on the personal rather than the issue and the style than substance. Ross *et al.* (2020) further found out that women, more so those in politics and governance positions, are depicted by the media as women who have stepped out of the gender norms- norms of privacy, intimacy, care, reproduction, and death. In the process of the construed portrayal, the media creates two images of women; the sexualized, idolized, deferential, pretty, caring, angels, subordinate, helpers, and whose attention is on managing their homes - referred to as good. The second image that the media constructs is that of an ambitious woman who is independent but very lonely and angry.

According to Mbaru *et al.* (2018) in Africa, WHRDs issues encountered difficulties in gaining media traction. When they did manage to get media coverage, their issues and accomplishments were often attributed to their association with a male family member who served as their "benefactor." For instance, Osei-Appiah, (2019) observed that when women speak out on human rights issues, the media would frequently refer to them as the daughter or wife of a prominent man, implying that they were either being influenced or exploiting their personal connections. Also, Osei-Appiah, (2019) suggests that journalists play a role in perpetuating a patriarchal understanding of the political process, contributing to the lack of representation and visibility of women in news discourse. This underrepresentation reflects the public's perception of women's incompetence in topical national matters.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As per UNESCO's report in 2022, Kenya's media landscape actively recognizes its role in advancing gender equality through equitable news coverage and empowering representation of minority groups. Currently, this role manifests itself in two interconnected aspects: Firstly, the media actively shapes and sustains preconceived notions and biases related to gender and gender roles through content programming, design, and production. Secondly the existing structural organization of mass media and communications further reinforces these stereotypes (Asare & Agomor, 2023). This underscores the pivotal role of the media in shaping the narrative surrounding women. For women's empowerment within the media, it is essential to commence by providing them a platform to express themselves and safeguarding them from unwarranted attacks and harsh scrutiny, factors that often discourage their participation in the media landscape (Asare & Agomor, 2023).

The current constitution of Kenya, Chapter 4, and the subsequent progressive policy and legal frameworks compounded by an increasingly innovative and vibrant civil society have secured a conducive environment for women to protect and promote rights and freedoms in Kenya (United *et al.* , 2020). Kenya's population is increasingly becoming more aware of their rights and freedoms - commonly referred to as Haki Yangu - and increasingly demands the enjoyment of these rights through various channels. This consequently attracts media coverage, where WHRDs become sources of news. The increase in the number of individuals who are actively involved in the work of promoting and protecting human rights and the increased media attention is important.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The primary goal of this study is to examine the images and popular narratives of women human rights defenders presented in Kenya's print media.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study aims:

- i) To describe the images used by print media in presenting human rights issues by WHRDs.
- ii) To examine the main themes in the portrayal of WHRDs by Kenya's print media.
- iii) To analyse the narratives and images used in news by WHRDs in Kenya's print media.

1.4 Research questions

The study seeks to address the following questions:

The following research questions guided the study:

- i) What images do human rights issues by WHRDs take to make it to the news?
- ii) How are WHRDs portrayed and represented in Kenya's print media?
- iii) What are the main images and narratives used in the packaging of news about issues raised by WHRDs in Kenya's print media?

1.5 Significance of the study

The study's findings could have a positive implication for various sectors and individuals in the country by improving their understanding of women's human rights defenders. Through investigations of institutions, problems, people, and processes, the media teaches the public how those in power use it. The media continually writes, speaks, or broadcasts about government and agency operations, determining which

areas governments should focus on, providing explanations, and motivating governments to take corrective measures. In this case, the media tremendously impacts what emerges on the national agenda (Asare & Agomor, 2023). Therefore, this study presents an opportunity to contribute to the existing knowledge of how the media covers and portrays WHRDs.

Adopting the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders by the United Nations General Assembly in 1998 and passing of the Constitution of Kenya in 2010 have further created a democratic environment that enables women to participate in political, social, economic, and cultural development spheres. As the number of women in these domains continues to rise, it is important to portray their roles boldly and move beyond patriarchal and stereotypical representations. This study sought to provide new perspectives in this regard. Moreover, upcoming communication students investigating gender and media representation can find significant value in this study. Its outcomes will substantially contribute to the current pool of knowledge, advancing the examination of how women are portrayed in the media.

1.6 Scope and limitation of the study

This research focuses on analysing images of portrayal by the print media to cover stories of women human rights defenders in Kenya. The main print media newspapers that were analysed The Daily Nation, and The Standard newspapers, owned by, Nation Media Group, and Standard Media Group, respectively. These newspapers are published and distributed countrywide daily. Access to the targeted newspapers is relatively easy as publications can be found in government libraries and in digital format on respective repositories by the media houses.

The study acknowledges that it may not be exhaustive on the issues of the portrayal of women human rights defenders by print media in Kenya based on the

coverage of the two newspapers as there existed other print media outlets, including Kenya Times, Nairobiian, and The People Daily, among others. The period for analysis was January 2021 to December 2022, during the post-pandemic period when the ripple effects of the Covid-19 pandemic were being felt all-over the world. This meant that those most vulnerable and marginalised citizens were likely to experience exacerbated effects of the pandemic; thus, WHRDs would step in to protect and promote their rights to guarantee them justice. The period selected for the study is based on a deliberate increase of debates on gender mainstreaming efforts by the county and national governments, civil society groups, and the media on the role that women and women human rights defenders played in the protection of human rights.

The images of WHRDs presented in the newspapers were subjected to a qualitative content analysis, and through the lens of the framing and agenda setting theories to demonstrate the images and narratives created. This is the textual analysis which does not have predetermined categories. The categories were derived inductively from the data analyzed. Qualitative content analysis has been defined as latent level analysis because it is an interpretive analysis that seeks to understand the deeper meaning in the data. An emphasis was on analyzing the media presentation of nine different women human rights defenders covered during the period but acknowledges that there existed and continues to exist more women human rights defenders involved in the protection and promotion of human rights during the period and might have been covered elsewhere on other print media outlets.

1.7 Study Rationale and Justification

This study is crucial because it investigates how the media portrays women human rights defenders in Kenya, contributing to the existing literature around gender studies. The media's portrayal of women can either challenge or perpetuate

stereotypes. Gaining insights into how women human rights defenders are portrayed in the media is essential for promoting gender equality and recognizing these individuals' contributions. As evidenced by its constitution and international obligations, Kenya has made significant progress in promoting women's rights and gender equality. Nevertheless, media portrayal remains a powerful influence on societal attitudes. This study seeks to shed light on whether women human rights defenders are portrayed as empowered advocates or as individuals constrained by traditional gender norms by analyzing media narratives and images. The findings of this study will ultimately not only contribute to academic research, but they will also provide policymakers, media professionals, and civil society actors in Kenya with valuable insights. Ultimately, it aims to promote a more inclusive and accurate depiction of women human rights defenders, highlighting their important work and challenging detrimental gender stereotypes.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This section reviews the relevant literature for the suggested subject in detail. This study reviews the existing literature on media portrayals of women, concentrating on two levels of analysis. The first part of the study reviews the literature on gender portrayal in the media concerns. This review includes studies on a local, national, and international level. The theoretical underpinnings of the proposed arguments are covered in the second part.

2.1 Existing studies on the representation of women in media at the international level

Since the 1970s, the question of women's media coverage has been a focal point in academia and politics (Haraldsson & Wängnerud, 2019). The 1995 'Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action' (UN Women, 1995) is an illustrative example of this trend, where it is considered that media has a significant influence in advancing gender parity. While a quantitative approach to studies on gender and the media is valuable, it is equally important to consider the depiction of women. Research conducted by Verge & Pastor (2018) revealed that in the media, women are typically depicted in traditional roles like wives and mothers, and seldom in more progressive ones like professionals and legislators. The Global Media Monitoring Project highlighted that women are mentioned five times more frequently than men in news stories due to their family status (WACC, 2015). Additionally, a study by Oláh, *et al.* (2018) revealed that the new roles of men and women and implications for families and societies. Springer International Publishing. Revealed that relationships between women and their families are three times more common than among men. As stated

by Oláh, *et al.* (2018) women are pointedly more frequently depicted in a family setting than men, further consolidating traditional and stereotypical roles of women in society.

Kassova, (2020) mentions violence, politics, and sports as three news themes that have been studied extensively in academic literature for their depictions of women in the media. When investigating violence, the researchers discovered that women featured in news stories about violence are often portrayed as victims. Disturbingly, they receive less compassionate treatment as victims and are more harshly depicted as perpetrators than men. The study also found that news representations of women and violence in the United States uncovered distortions and biases in how women were portrayed as perpetrators and victims. The study suggests that news media plays a role in legitimizing subjective biases, such as the belief that rape and violence against women are less significant compared to other forms of violence, especially when the victim is acquainted with the attacker.

Vavrus (2002) conducted a study analyzing news reports in the United States during the 1990s and early 2000s to investigate how they influenced public perceptions of women in politics. This research examined the media portrayal of Anita Hill during the year 1991, the national elections of 1992 and 1996, and Hillary Clinton's participation in the 2000 senate race. According to Vavrus, news representations of women and events, although appearing to promote the presence and authority of women in the public sphere, really served to perpetuate conventional gender stereotypes. She describes this pattern as a manifestation of post-feminism in news coverage of women in political life. One specific example she highlights is the concept of "soccer moms," which refers to married, white, middle-class women whose lives revolve around their children. Despite being recognized as a significant

voting demographic, these women were seldom linked to policies, platforms, or politicians. Instead, they were depicted primarily as a target group for advertisers. Vavrus suggests that this portrayal stems from middle-class aspirations and consumer lifestyles rather than fostering a desire for public engagement or political activism among women.

Praptiningsih (2017), while investigating how the print media portrayed women in Indonesia, found out that 67% of media coverage in a leading newspaper portrayed women in stereotypical homemaker roles, thus taking away their very role as critical contributors in the political and economic spheres of nation building. Further, his analysis found out that while the images used by the media portrayed women as individuals with the right to engage in public and private spheres simultaneously and have access to a good career, education, economic, and social environments, the media portrayed them as individuals who should not forget about family life.

Sakallı & Kuzlak (2018), while studying how media presents women in Turkey, researchers found that sexist rhetoric that puts women at a disadvantage predominated. When women did receive coverage, it was typically in the context of being mothers, wives, or objects used in the public sphere. What society considers to be the problems associated with being a woman were superficially covered. While studying the influence of the media on views of gender in the United States, Wood (1994) demonstrated that women are often represented as caregivers. Despite having careers outside their homes, such as engineering or nursing, the media pays little attention to their career lives. Predominant roles portrayed include homemakers, mothers, and wives. Make sure most of your sources are 2018 and later

The Women and Caribbean Media research from was one of the earliest attempts to analyze the media landscape in the Caribbean. Graham & Clarke (2021) state that Caribbean women's representation in the media has been debated in regional and national conferences. Nonetheless, despite several assurances and suggestions, there has been little follow-through or implementation. On a global scale, the trivialization and perpetuation of gender stereotypes in media content have become a major concern in the political arena. This problem, coupled with the lack of women in positions of power and authority in the media, was highlighted as a central issue at the First United Nations Decade for Women Conference in Mexico in 1975 (Shinbrot *et al.* , 2019).

An examination of Israeli media's portrayal of women reveals entrenched patriarchal myths, with women relegated to the home and their roles confined to that of sexuality and reproduction (Shomron & Schejter, 2022). The media also portrays women as emotional beings, lacking rational thought and uncultivated behavior, reinforcing the perception that women are marginalized. Media portrayals of women tend to center on them performing more stereotypically female caring tasks like teaching, nursing, and social work. Furthermore, women are represented as having personality attributes that are fundamentally different from men's, with a greater focus on romanticism, sensitivity, dependency, and fragility and less on rational reasoning, ambition, activity, independence, heroism, and dominance. (Hanasono *et al.* , 2019).

Moreover, Nadin *et al.* (2020) examine if the current status of female entrepreneurship, which is characterized by a lack of representation and uneven possibilities, is in any way impacted by the media's sexist depictions of business owners. The scholars further claim that the proportion of women owned enterprises in the United Kingdom stands at a mere 17%. These firms tend to be predominantly

found among the congested and low value services sectors, often operating on a part-time basis and being based inside the home environment. The phenomenon of female entrepreneurship is closely interconnected with the portrayal of women entrepreneurs in the media. Media depictions of women business owners significantly impact how people see their typical roles and experiences (Kamberidou, 2020). This influence may be observed through two key mechanisms. First and foremost, these factors have an impact on women's perception of entrepreneurship as both desired and achievable, as well as the specific form of entrepreneurship they choose to pursue.

Therefore, the UK government has identified the strategic use of female role models, such as Martha Lane Fox, as an important policy instrument in its attempts to promote female company ownership (Nadin *et al.* , 2020). Furthermore, the manner in which women entrepreneurs are seen plays a crucial role in shaping the interactions between these entrepreneurs and other stakeholders that have the potential to impact their performance, such as funders, clients, suppliers, and business partners (Alsos & Ljunggren, 2017). The portrayal of female entrepreneurs in the media not only reflects the current gender disparities in entrepreneurial endeavours, but also plays a significant role in perpetuating these gender disparities by shaping how they are seen and interpreted.

Power *et al.* (2019) assert that it is crucial to make a connection between media depictions of women entrepreneurs and the actual realities encountered by female entrepreneurs in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the issue and effectively address the particular obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs. An increasing number of scholarly investigations have been conducted to examine the significance of media portrayals of women entrepreneurs and their influence on societal attitudes of female entrepreneurship. Power *et al.* (2019) and Cardella *et al.*

(2020) studies indicate that female entrepreneurship is depicted in business media, newspapers, and research journals as being less focused, professional, and successful compared to male entrepreneurship.

2.2 Existing Studies on the Portrayal of Women in Media at the Regional Level

Mpofu, (2017) acknowledges that the news media in Africa is still in the process of transformation thanks to numerous legal and political reforms across the continent. Despite efforts made by various local, regional, and international policy frameworks that encourage and facilitate women's active involvement in politics, the transformation remains insufficient as it does not meet the established standards. In his study to investigate the media landscape in Zimbabwe with a particular focus on the portrayal and participation of women in the media and politics, Mpofu (2017) found out that the Zimbabwean media has occasionally overemphasized female sources' age, marital status, appearance, and domestic and familial conditions when doing so was unnecessary. Specifically, this was mirrored in the media's portrayal of female politicians and political spouses carrying out official obligations. Female patriarchal media discourses emphasized housework and conventional gender roles. Among these was the promotion of masculine competence at the expense of female sensitivity and nurture. Some female political personalities were often referred to as "mother" in the media.

In Kenya, Siringi and Nduva (2018) conducted a study to learn how women in positions of power in Kenya are portrayed in the media by reading their own words and the words of female politicians. They went even farther, examining how media portrayals of women in leadership roles affect public opinion. This research was biased in favor of covering secondary details rather than primary ones. The findings pointed to the media's discriminative attitude towards women in leadership,

especially the failure to recognize women leaders' hard work or development agenda that the media continues to focus on peripheral issues that perpetuate disempowering narratives around women as opposed to core issues such as their contribution to nation building.

Pair *et al.* (2021) examine the ways in which the Daily Nation, the Standard, and the Kenya Times represent women in Kenya. The results revealed that newspaper stories on women tended to represent them positively, as capable of tasks that fall within accepted gender standards. The study found that the print media primarily portrayed women in "soft women friendly topics such as reproductive, workplace, and home roles and assumed personality traits, which supports the argument that the media promotes insubordination of women through the narratives it uses when reporting on women's issues. While the media has successfully set the agenda in Kenya, women and women's problems have received comparatively less attention than other topics.

According to the Gatekeeping Theory, the print media's portrayal of women (and the agendas they establish) are heavily influenced by the personal biases and agendas of the media's gatekeepers (editors and reporters) (Aruguete *et al.* , 2021). According to Asare Agomor (2023), women's political underrepresentation is exacerbated by misogynistic media portrayal. While women's positions have generally increased, improvement in political representation in the media has been slower, according to a global survey. It concluded that the more sexist the media is, the fewer female prospective politicians there are. The media greatly influences voters, and gender disparities in media coverage will likely have severe electoral consequences (Trabelsi, 2023). It discourages legislators and political parties from endorsing women and discourages women from engaging in politics.

According to Åkestam *et al.* (2021), advertising contributes to women's negative self-perceptions and a focus on physical appearance at the expense of other media strengths. According to the results, women were portrayed only in negative ways (as sex objects, victims of abuse, and housewives). Women in Kenya tend to be shown as either subjects of art or as victims of war, starvation, rape, or as primary carers in their families (Sinclair *et al.* , 2013). However, Opoku *et al.* (2018) claim that there has been little work done to ensure that Kenyan domestic law safeguards the human rights of women in line with international standards. They claim that society as a whole is becoming more sexist as a result of this inequality.

Barrientos *et al.* (2019) research provides support for this position by arguing that males have obvious justification for women's subjection and suffering because of the way women are portrayed as inferior, naive, petty, wicked, and lacking in moral ability and responsibility. Coleman (2021) argues that males fight because they believe women are to blame for all the world's problems. After all, Biblical Eve ate the apple from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, it is only right that women be held accountable for their actions and regulated to prevent additional damage. Researchers, however, have neither critically examined the specific regions nor the style of unfavorable representation in the print media in Kenya, nor have they clearly shown the magnitude of the negative contribution made by the print media.

A study by WLEA (Women and Law in East Africa), the ICJ (International Commission of Jurists), and the FIDA (Federation of Women Lawyers), funded by the government of Kenya and the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), discovered that gender bias in Kenya's social, economic, and political systems causes more than half the population (women) to be effectively excluded from decision-making and policy creation (Pair *et al.*, 2021). Research suggests that the failure to

acknowledge, respect, and compensate women for their substantial contribution to national progress is linked to the unraveling of the social fabric (Ilesanmi, 2018). Despite the popular phrases of gender equality and affirmative action, Cornwall & Rivas (2015) found that media outlets there continue to publish images suggesting that women are not given the same opportunities as males, and they only appear on the front pages of newspapers when they are being portrayed harshly or discussed in terms of attractiveness.

According to Cohen *et al.* (2019), media messages and images significantly impact how women are viewed and treated in society. Mathenge (2021) backs up these claims, detailing that the media in Kenya, as in other developing nations, has a purpose beyond reporting the news and providing entertainment; it also has a responsibility to enlighten the public about important issues including health, democracy, sustainable development, and human rights. The paper claims that the Kenyan press has neglected and portrayed women negatively, essentially falling into the trap of perpetuating some of society's ill practices, attitudes, and beliefs. According to Slakoff & Brennan (2019), who appear to share similar beliefs, women are not a reliable source of information for the front page of newspapers.

These opinions are supported by Mannila (2017), who discovered that there are more possibilities of women's movements being acknowledged and absorbed into the mainstream news frameworks if their interests and ideals correspond with those of the elite in politics and the media. The media, intentionally or unintentionally, plays a role in idealizing and legitimizing specific organizations and individuals to fulfill their organizational objectives while simultaneously marginalizing other social groupings and their perspectives. This ultimately reinforces the prevailing consensus within society (Mannila, 2017). These studies follow the Agenda-Setting Theory, which

posits that the media has a significant role in determining the topics and issues prioritized for their respective audiences (Langer & Gruber, 2021). This subsequently aided the present study in examining the extent to which the media in Kenya has fulfilled its function of shaping the public discourse on women's marginalization, hence facilitating discussions and policy implementation by the government and other relevant actors to address this discrepancy.

2.3 Theoretical framework

Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda Setting Theory (AST) of the media, also known as Agenda Setting Function, is a theory that solidifies narratives that the media sets the public agenda (McCombs *et al.*, 2018). The media wields significant influence over the public by determining which stories are newsworthy and how much attention they are given. As a result, the media can shape public opinion, not necessarily by dictating what people should think but by controlling what topics and issues they think about. Essentially, the theory posits that the media shapes the public's perception of reality by setting the agenda for what people should focus on and in what order of importance.

According to the Agenda-Setting Theory, news organizations have a powerful impact on public opinion without explicitly telling viewers what they should think (Vu *et al.*, 2019). The influence that WHRDs have on society's knowledge of human rights, gender equality, and activism may be amplified if the media regularly covers their successes, problems, and opinions. By doing so, we may see if the media accurately portrays the crucial responsibilities that WHRDs play in fighting for human rights and social justice. The idea also implies that the media's ability to establish the agenda extends beyond overtly presented stories to include the subtler act of implicitly framing topics for audiences (Vu *et al.* , 2019). Understanding how

the media influences public opinion requires an examination of the media's use of language, imagery, and narrative framing when reporting on WHRDs.

Agenda-setting occurs when the media raises public attention and interest in a topic. Most studies on agenda-setting start with two presumptions: (1) the press and media do not represent reality; rather, they filter and mold it; (2) the media's narrow focus on a small number of topics or themes causes the public to prioritize such issues above others (Ogunyombo *et al.* n.d). The time frame of the phenomenon being covered is at the core of this theory. Further, the theory posits that if the frequency of the coverage of a story by the media is high, then the story will seem more important to the public. In addition, the more important an issue is to the audience, the more coverage it will receive. This theoretical framework was critically used to analyze the portrayal of Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) by the print media in Kenya. It will explain how WHRDs are portrayed in the print media and whether the images used are the true images of the WHRD.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This section outlines the systematic technique utilized by the researcher to obtain relevant data in order to address the research questions. The section provides a complete overview of the research strategy utilized, the carefully chosen research techniques, the complexities of the sampling procedure, the systematic approach to data gathering, and a critical discussion on the ethical issues that were essential to the study's implementation.

3.1 Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative research approach, a method of investigation that immerses the researcher in a particular context to comprehend the complexities of the world through a wide variety of material and interpretive techniques. Frost (2021) asserts that incorporating a wide range of sensory and interpretive activities, qualitative research is a dynamic undertaking that helps researchers grasp the heart of reality. Through this immersive process, the researcher is able to convert the intricate fabric of the world into meaningful representations, which may include interviews, field notes, audio recordings, photographs, and reflective memoranda. These representations serve as the palette through which the researcher endeavors to reveal the complex layers of meaning that individuals attribute to their experiences and environments.

In addition, the qualitative approach, which is profoundly rooted in its naturalistic orientation, emphasizes the investigation of phenomena in their natural habitats (Mohajan, 2018). This method entails a sincere effort to comprehend the phenomenon in its purest context, making it a powerful instrument for probing the depths of human experiences. By eschewing artificial settings and adopting the

authenticity of real-life situations, the researcher can shed light on subtleties and complexities that could easily evade traditional quantitative methods. The essence of this method is its capacity to interpret and fathom phenomena through the varied perspectives of those who actively participate in and contribute to its existence.

Saldaña (2021) claims that the interpretative approaches that back up qualitative research help experts make sense of and portray the social world's spontaneous unfolding of events. This methodological approach acknowledges the complex interaction between the researcher and the investigated, in which the researcher's perceptions and biases invariably influence the data collection and interpretation processes. As a result, qualitative research flourishes on the complex interaction between the researcher and the subjects, and it revels in the subjectivity that underlies human experiences and meanings.

Due to the complexity of the subject at hand, the qualitative methodology is a natural fit. The multifaceted nature of this research necessitates an in-depth examination of the images and, narratives of the WHRDs prevalent in Kenyan Print Media. According to Sovacool *et al.* (2018), quantitative methods, while valuable in and of themselves, may lack the profundity necessary to uncover the underlying motivations, beliefs, and contextual complexities that shape the perspectives and actions of individuals. Through qualitative investigation, this study seeks to enter the subjective domain of the authors in popular Kenyan Print Media, utilizing their individual narratives and reflections to develop a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the research topic.

3.2 Research Design

The current study utilized a qualitative research design which uses content analysis as a tool to conduct detailed analysis of how WHRDs are depicted in the print media of

Kenya. Content analysis is a research approach that entails the collection and analysis of data in a manner that avoids the use of predetermined categories or ideas. Content analysis serves as a research instrument used to identify and determine the presence of specific abstractions or in written material or collections of texts. Subsequently, the quantification and scrutiny of how these abstractions and words are used to draw meaning about the messages conveyed in the texts, the authors, the target audience, and even the societal and temporal context to which they belong. The term "texts" encompasses a wide range of written or spoken communication, including but not limited to books, book chapters, essays, newspaper headlines and articles, speeches, dialogues, advertisements, informal conversations, theatrical performances, or any instance of linguistic interaction.

The researcher's analysis was guided by the flexibility of the data, enabling the identification of emergent images, themes, and concepts. The process of inductive research commences by examining specific observations and subsequently progresses towards more comprehensive generalizations. This method is particularly well-suited for investigating intricate and subtle topics such as media representation. The objective of this study was to explore the various complex issues that are commonly portrayed in the depiction of WHRDs. In order to accomplish this goal, the researcher undertook a thorough analysis of narratives that highlight WHRDs in two prominent and widely circulated Kenyan newspapers, namely The Daily Nation and The Standard.

The selection of these publications was deliberate, taking into account their substantial audience and broad geographical coverage. The reason for their importance can be traced not only to their extended history in the manufacturing and distribution of newspapers, but also to their well-established network of news

reporters strategically located in different regions of the country (MCK, 2020). The utilization of the inductive approach facilitated a thorough and meticulous investigation, commencing with particular occurrences and progressively constructing a more extensive comprehension of the depiction of WHRDs in the media within the context of Kenya. The chosen approach proved to be highly effective in elucidating the intricacies of the topic, so facilitating a deeper understanding of its subtleties and underlying patterns.

3.3 Research population

The research conducted a thorough analysis of the representation of WHRDs by examining news narratives and visual depictions associated with nine prominent persons. The WHRDs occupied notable roles within prominent human rights organizations in Kenya, such as the esteemed Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), the influential National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders - Kenya (Defenders Coalition), the transformative Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW - Kenya), the globally recognized Amnesty International, and the pioneering Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK). These organizations are well recognized for their substantial contributions in promoting various human rights concerns, such as civil liberties, the effectiveness of governance, environmental justice, ethical business conduct, and the safeguarding of human rights.

Furthermore, they assume crucial functions in advocating for the rights of women and girls, placing significant emphasis on issues pertaining to gender equality. The objective of the study was to involve Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) who are actively involved in these prominent groups and also have a significant ability to garner media coverage, as emphasized by Munene and Thakhathi (2017).

The study population consisted of WHRDs who varied in age, ranging from 18 to 55 years. This age range was selected to ensure the inclusion of individuals from different generations, thereby providing a comprehensive representation of the population. The deliberate dedication to diversity guaranteed that the observations obtained from their portrayal in the media comprised a diverse array of experiences and perspectives. Through a comprehensive analysis of news articles featuring these nine WHRDs, this study shed light on the complex dynamics between media representation, organizational associations, and variations in age. The primary objective of this extensive inquiry was to offer profound insights into the portrayal of WHRDs within the print media landscape of Kenya.

3.4 Sampling

This study utilized purposive sampling in a rigorous manner to specifically identify appropriate WHRDs as portrayed in the print media of Kenya. The main aim of this study is to do a thorough and extensive examination of the portrayal of WHRDs in the print media of Kenya. The utilization of purposive sampling was motivated by the objective of capturing the most prevalent and enlightening viewpoints, by guaranteeing that the chosen participants have garnered considerable media coverage for their human rights defence actions (Polonsky & Waller, 2010; Campbell *et al.* , 2020).

To achieve the objective, the research centered its attention on nine WHRDs who occupy influential roles among the foremost human rights organizations in Kenya. The WHRDs should have received significant media coverage due to their associations with reputable institutions. The strategic selection approach employed in this study diverges from random sampling procedures in order to ensure that the viewpoints and experiences collected are truly aligned with the essential objectives of

the research. By deliberately selecting WHRDs who are featured in print media, the research ensured that the perspectives and encounters shared genuinely captured the intricate dynamics of media portrayal within the specific Kenyan media landscape. Thus, the study sample included Racheal Mwikali, Wanjeri Nderu, Martha Karua, Daisy Amdany, Naisula Lesuuda, Ms Florence Achuya, Wanjiru Gikonyo, Phylis Omido, and Marylize Biubwa.

Moreover, purposive sampling technique is particularly well-suited for qualitative research as it facilitates a thorough examination of the complex dynamics of media portrayal of the real-life encounters of the chosen WHRDs. According to Thomas (2022), purposive sampling is crucial in accessing the experiences of individuals pertaining to a specific subject matter. Purposive sampling in this study serves to emphasize the dedication to identifying significant patterns, images, and narratives pertaining to WHRDs with unique viewpoints. This strategy enhances the study's ability to develop a comprehensive and genuine narrative concerning the portrayal of WHRDs in the Kenyan print media landscape.

3.5 Data Collection

This study's chosen data collection method revolves around desk research, a comprehensive approach that involves sourcing and analyzing existing materials to extract valuable insights (Guerin *et al.* , 2018). In this context, the focus is on comprehending how WHRDs are portrayed within the Kenyan print media landscape, specifically through news stories published in the Daily Nation and The Standard newspapers between January 2021 and December 2022. Desk research embodies a systematic and thorough examination of written sources, including newspapers, articles, reports, and various textual resources. This method was particularly advantageous due to its capacity to tap into a substantial pool of pre-existing data,

offering a holistic perspective on media coverage of WHRDs. Through this approach, the researcher meticulously reviewed news articles, capturing critical information such as publication dates, article titles, authors, content summaries, and sources. A carefully crafted data extraction form was utilized to facilitate consistent data collection (see Appendix).

While desk research does not involve direct interaction with individuals, it presented an avenue to unearth profound insights from the available information. This method's suitability stemmed from its ability to provide an in-depth exploration of media narratives and language surrounding WHRDs. By scrutinizing a wide array of news stories, desk research contributed to uncovering implicit biases, framing strategies, and the overall stance the media took in presenting these pivotal figures. It enabled the researcher to examine the extent to which WHRDs' contributions and challenges are acknowledged and represented in Kenyan Print Media.

The desk research method in this study was a robust tool to examine the portrayal of WHRDs in Kenyan print media. This approach enabled the researcher to unravel the multifaceted layers of media representation by leveraging testing data, shedding light on how WHRDs are depicted, valued, and framed within the broader socio-political discourse. The researcher designed a data extraction form before beginning data collection to specify the details that had to be collected from each newspaper story, such as the date of publication, the title, the content, the source, and other pertinent information (Guerin *et al.* , 2018). Precise criteria and classifications was defined to maintain consistency throughout data extraction. The researcher then extracted pertinent information from each newspaper story and enter it into the data extraction form. This method entailed carefully reading the papers and collecting data

relevant to the research objectives. When the data extraction was completed, the data was analyzed.

3.6 Data Analysis

The present study's data analysis process was guided by Agenda Setting Theoretical framework. The Agenda Setting Theory posits that media entities wield substantial influence on public opinion through their discretion in determining the prominence and extent of coverage given to certain news stories. In the present study, the utilization of Agenda Setting Theory facilitated the analysis process by assisting in the identification of WHRDs who garnered significant media attention. This spurred a more in-depth examination of the media's capacity to set the agenda and its influence on public consciousness on the roles of WHRDs in promoting human rights, gender equality, and activism. The theory also prompted an evaluation of the extent to which the media's ongoing coverage of Women Human Rights Defenders' achievements, obstacles, and perspectives corresponded with its assertion that media attention can enhance the influence of individuals or matters. This theory played a pivotal part in assessing the manner in which the media constructed narratives pertaining to WHRDs. The analysis facilitated the identification of narratives utilized in media portrayals, specifically in terms of how WHRDs were presented as either influential catalysts for change, marginalized persons, or contentious personalities.

The process began with a thorough first analysis of the gathered textual data, during which the use of the Agenda Setting Theory aided in identifying notable depictions of WHRDs and their engagements within the media. Concurrently, the utilization of the Agenda Setting Theory facilitated comprehension of the manner in which these narratives were conveyed, so establishing the groundwork for subsequent investigation. During the course of the analysis, careful examination was conducted

on every line of the data, and significant parts were allocated descriptive codes. The attention of Agenda Setting Theory was directed towards WHRDs who received significant media coverage, which is consistent with the theory's notion of agenda-setting. The Agenda Setting Theory facilitated the discernment of narratives employed in media depictions, enabling an examination of whether WHRDs were portrayed as agents of transformation or as marginalized individuals.

The field of Agenda Setting Theory has played a significant role in the analysis and identification of various themes pertaining to the media's function in emphasizing individual WHRDs and their valuable contributions to society. The application of Agenda Setting Theory facilitated the organization of themes according to the manner in which the media packaged the narratives of WHRDs, thereby providing insight into the many viewpoints that were portrayed. Further, data processing was conducted, encompassing methodologies such as merging and splitting to guarantee a thorough representation of data inside the thematic categories. The importance of frequently discussed subjects and personalities was highlighted by Agenda Setting Theory as well as enabled the evaluation of the interconnectedness of various narratives within the dataset.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the entirety of this study endeavor, despite its exclusive emphasis on the collecting of secondary data. The study's inception involved the development of its design, with a primary objective of serving the public interest. This commitment to the public good persisted throughout the research process, extending to the dissemination of findings, which prioritized transparency, accessibility, and the potential for replication. Tripathy (2013) argues that the utilization of secondary data is considered to be an ethically sound practice

due to several reasons. Firstly, it allows for the optimization of the value derived from any public investment made in data collection efforts. Secondly, it alleviates the burden placed on respondents, thereby respecting their time and effort. Thirdly, it guarantees the ability to replicate study findings, leading to enhanced transparency in research procedures and upholding the integrity of the research conducted. Hence, the utilization of secondary data in this study was deemed advantageous as the benefits it offered surpassed the associated dangers.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter the results of the desk research are present along with the thematic analysis outcomes. In this section the data extraction form is presented fully-filled with the necessary data the researcher sought to capture during the research. Meanwhile, three major themes were identified along with their supporting sub-themes as discovered from relevant articles selected to provide appropriate data to respond to the research objectives.

4.1 Data Extraction Form

The data extraction form present below provides a snapshot of the main newspaper articles from the Daily Nation and The Standard identified as relevant to the present study on portrayal of WHRDs in Kenya's print media.

Table 1: Date Extraction

Article Title	Author name	Date of publication	Content Summary	Source
Rights defenders reject draft reproductive health policy.	Mercy Chelengat	March 23, 2022.	Right defenders say the health policy excludes provision for safe abortions and women were not consulted. They stated that the draft policy uses stigmatisation language against the adolescents, Survivors of sexual violence and people outside the traditional family unit. Racheal Mwikali from the coalition of grassroots stated that the development process was not public and the policy was not readily accessible online. So how could the policy speak to the needs of all Kenyans when the marginalised and vulnerable have not been given a chance to participate.	Daily Nation(March 23, 2022)

Article Title	Author name	Date of publication	Content Summary	Source
I wish i'd started earlier	Jaqueline Mahugu	August 22,2021	Wanjeri Nderu, a human right defender has been arrested about thirteen times. She has left the country three times for a safety. She has been doing this for ten years and she wishes that she had started on her early twenties. She proposes that feminism to her is equality of the sexes and equity. Her grandfather was a Mau Mau and she has learned a lot from him and has memories of their family. She propels that more people need to come out and speak out for their voices to be heard.	The Standard newspaper (Aug 22,2021)
Martha Karua: Iron lady spirited rights defender. Deputy President?	Justus Ochieng	May 16,2022	The Narc Kenya party leader Martha Karua has been named as first Kenyan woman deputy president running mate by azimio la umoja presidential candidate. A lawyer by profession, at the risk of being blacklisted by the KANU regime she is a defendant in several human rights activists. She served as an MP for Gichugu constituency in 1992 and as a minister for water resources and management between 2003 and 2008. She is known to fight for democracy and second liberation and constitution changes. She has practiced justice, equality and non-discrimination as a believer in equality before the law and equality in opportunities.	The Daily Nation(May 16,2022)
Why women's leadership matters	Moraa Obiria	Sep 19,2022	Daisy Amdany says when women think of themselves they think of their children family, parents and extended unit. She says that women bring to the table reforms that would have missed out if women were left out. she proposes that women have right to equal opportunities.	The Daily Nation(Sep 19,2022)

Article Title	Author name	Date of publication	Content Summary	Source
Naisula Lesuuda: The First Elected Women Mp In Samburu	Duncan Khaemba	December 27,2022	Naisula Lesuuda made history as the first woman to serve as an MP in Samburu.she was nominated to the senate following the 2013 act. she made her name while working at Kbc. she has faced criticism and rough politics from her competitors. she has fought endlessly against the bandits attacks.	The Daily nation(Dec 27,2022)
Vihiga woman relishes rights advocacy despite hurdles	Derrick Liuvega	June 15,2022	Ms Florence Achuya is a trained human right defender. She does not feel sustained if she fails to protect the vulnerable in her community. She states that she is a defender by nature and advocates for equal rights to women and children. She faces financial constraints but she keeps moving on with the services she offers.	The daily nation(June 15,2022)
Magic wand? No, BBi is but a poisoned chalice	Wanjiru Gikonyo	April28, 2021,	The author criticizes Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), arguing that the report relies on anecdotal and emotional partial narratives to make its arguments and is, in reality, a political statement of the world as seen by political leaders. She also asserts that it is populist, based on partial narratives and insufficient diagnoses, and is primarily a political settlement intended to exonerate those who have thus far obstructed Kenya's democratization process for their own egotistical gain. She concludes that it is a poisoned chalice filled with sweet wine to entice war-weary citizens into a hasty resolution at the expense of economic liberation.	The standard(28 april,2021)

Article Title	Author name	Date of publication	Content Summary	Source
Lead poisoning:Phyllis Omido's unending battle in Owino Uhuru	Winnie Atieno	January 28, 2022.	With numerous awards under her belt, Phyllis Omido says her work is not done until justice is served. She was recognized for her campaign against lead poisoning in the Owino Uhuru slums in Jomvu Mombasa county. She won Goldman environmental prize including five million and a trophy in 2015. In 2020 she won Ethecon blue planet award on her heroic efforts on environmental conservation. Owino Uhuru slums which has more than 3000 residents, was contaminated by activities of a smelting company and the residents affected were not compensated. Ms. Omido states that the residents continue to suffer from the effects of lead poisoning. She raised an alarm saying that it was exposing residents to lead poisoning. She has organized a protest and requested the residents to join her. She says she will not stop fighting environmental injustice.	Daily Nation(January 28,2022)
Queer people seek inclusion in electoral process	Wangu Kanuri	August 08, 2022	The group feels that their members did not participate fully in the previous elections, fearing being rejected, violated physically, verbally and digitally. Marylyze Biubwa a queer feminist says that questioning their gender does not promote inclusion. To document what happens to the LBQ and GNC people QBESR deployed 46 observers across six counties. QBESR observers were to provide real time analysis with a focus on the participation of LBQ and GNC persons.	Daily Nation(August 08, 2022)

4.2 Major Themes

Table 2. Main Themes and Subthemes Summary

Major Themes	Patterns that human rights issues by WHRDs take to make it to the news in Kenya	Portrayal and representation of WHRDs in Kenya's print media in the case of Daily Nation and The Standard newspaper	Main images and narratives used in the packaging of news about issues raised by WHRDs in Kenya's print media
Sub-Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Championing for reproductive rights, • Participation in political processes, • Support for marginalised groups, • Legal reforms and court cases, • Resilience in the face of threats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Portrayals • Human interest stories, • Criticism and opposition • Coverage of activism • Gender Stereotyping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heroic narratives, • Empowerment and Agency, • Recognition and Awards, • Breaking Barriers and Amplifying Voices, • Inspiration and role modelling. • Gender stereotypes

4.2.1 Theme 1: The images that human rights issues by WHRDs take to make it to the news in Kenya.

Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) in Kenya often make it to the news due to their efforts in addressing various human rights issues that disproportionately affect women and marginalized groups. While the specific reasons can vary, there are several images identified in the present research findings that were deemed to commonly contribute to their visibility in the news articles such as their efforts in championing for reproductive rights, participation in political processes, support for marginalised groups, legal reforms and court cases, and resilience in the face of threats.

Specifically, championing reproductive rights in Kenya is crucial, and women human rights defenders play a vital role in advocating for these rights. Their efforts help raise awareness, influence policy changes, and empower individuals to make informed choices about their reproductive health. It's important to support and amplify their voices to create a more inclusive and equitable society. For instance, according to Mercy Chelengat's article on Daily Nation, Ms Mwikali, a WHRD, in Kenya says, "The development process was not public and the policy was not readily accessible online. How can the policy speak to the needs of all Kenyans when the most vulnerable and marginalised have not been given a chance to participate?" She further states that the Ministry of Health's failure to include safe abortions even though unsafe abortion is the main cause of maternal mortality in Kenya was dangerous and unconstitutional. Also she argued that the constitution notes that the pregnant women can seek safe abortions if, in the opinion of a trained health professional there's a need for emergency treatment or the life or health of the mother is in danger. Meanwhile, Mercy Chelengat reports Rachel Mwikali's sentiment that, "without guidance from the ministry women who use public health facilities are unable to seek safe abortion due to lack of information and services."

In addition, according to the article Mwikali laments that the language in the policy stigmatises young survivors of sexual violence by blaming them for failing to resist forced sex by partners. The language stigmatises sexual reproductive rights of adolescents by emphasising abstinence and delayed sexual debut as their main Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) needs. According to Mercy Chelengat's article Mwikali said that, "it is also ironic that we signed the Geneva convention which criminalises access to safe abortion. If you get raped, you cannot access safe

abortion. Our women and girls are dying in the slums because of unsafe abortions. We want Kenya to withdraw from the convention just like the United States did.”

Despite these obstacles, Mwikali worked tirelessly to raise awareness, provide support, and influence policy changes to ensure that women can make informed decisions about their reproductive health. This depicts that the images that women take that makes to the news is that of promoters and protectors of human rights for all women. Additionally, WHRDs are portrayed in news with regards to their efforts in empowering women, reducing maternal mortality, and advancing gender equality in Kenya.

Subsequently, according to study results participation in political processes by WHRDs in Kenya represents a significant and impactful development determining their inclusion in news. For instance, Wanjiru Gikonyo’s article on her stance on the BBI is part of the news for her criticism of the political process which had no actual benefits to citizens, citing numerous holes within the bill. Also, WHRDs in Kenya have persisted in their efforts to make their voices heard and influence decision-making processes as portrayed in the media. For instance, Martha Karua is highly featured in the Kenyan newspapers, because she represents a prominent figure in Kenyan politics known for her advocacy for human rights and active participation in political processes. In Justus Ochieng’s article on daily nation written in May 16, 2022 Martha Karua is presented as an advocate for women’s rights and empowerment, using her political platform to push for gender equality and inclusivity in government and decision-making. Also, she’s portrayed in the news for been involved in championing legal reforms to address issues such as domestic violence and discrimination against women. Her involvement in various political parties and

leadership positions demonstrates her commitment to influencing policy and governance.

Meanwhile, in his article Justus Ochieng highlighted that Martha Karua had served as a Member of Parliament of Gichugu constituency in 1992 and became the Democratic party's legal affairs secretary in 1993. In addition, she served as a minister for water resources management and development in the late president Kibaki's administration between 2003 and 2008 before she was appointed minister for justice, national cohesion and constitutional affairs where she served until April 6, 2009 when she resigned from the government. Also, according to the article, Martha says, "I have been in trenches with the azimio presidential flag bearer comrade Raila Amollo Odinga. We have been in the trenches together and come a long way in the struggle and fight for the second liberation constitution and when we have had disagreements, we have laid them on the table, overcome them in the interest of people of Kenya." She was chosen as the running mate of presidential candidate Raila Amollo Odinga in the 2022 general elections. Because of Martha Karua's advocacy for women's representation in government and increasing the presence of women in political positions she rarely misses on the news as a WHRD. This can be attributed to her works to address issues such as corruption, electoral integrity, and human rights violations. From the Daily Nation she is portrayed according to her efforts in raising awareness about these issues and promoting a fair and just political environment in Kenya.

Similarly, Duncan Khaemba wrote an article on the Daily Nation on December 27, 2022, reporting on Naisula Lesuuda a WHRD, for having made history when she was elected as the first woman to serve as member of Parliament in Samburu community. In the article she is presented as a prominent figure in Kenya,

advocating for women's rights and participating in political processes. Her works to amplify the voices of women and marginalized communities, striving to address gender inequalities and promote inclusivity represents the major issues which elevated her inclusion in the news. Duncan Khaemba writes in his article Naisula, first joined politics following the 2013 general elections where she was nominated to senate.

Likewise, Daisy Amdany's political participation as a WHRD in Kenya is a significant example of inclusion in news for advocating for gender equality and democratic principles. She appears in the Daily Nation for her efforts to highlight the importance of women's voices in political processes, aiming to ensure that women's rights are protected and promoted. Through her work, Daisy Amdany strives to overcome barriers and promote inclusivity, ultimately contributing to a more diverse and representative political landscape in Kenya. She advocates for equal representation of women in president Ruto's government according to Moraa Obiria's article. In the article Daisy is quoted saying "...one of the things that make women uniquely different is that when they think of themselves, they think of their children, family, parents and extended unit. Now imagine bringing that perspective to leadership and decision making." As a WHRD, Amdany's contributions have been pivotal in raising awareness about issues like violence against women in politics, unequal representation, and the need for legal reforms, which represents the core reason for inclusion in the news.

Moreover, Florence Achuya's political participation as a WHRD in Kenya represents a major reason for her advocacy for gender equality and social justice to get in the news. An article from the Daily nation by Derrick Luvega presents her relative to activities such as advocating for women's representation in political positions, raising awareness about women's rights, and working to address gender-

based violence. Her efforts demonstrate the importance of including diverse voices in political processes to create a more inclusive and equitable society. She was picked as an election monitor and began by monitoring the registration aspirants by the independent electoral boundaries commission. Derrick Luvega's article quotes Florence who says, "I fight for women, girls and even boys. I feel that the boy child has been neglected. I am happy being a defender. I feel happy when I succeed in defending people because it leaves me with fulfilment and satisfaction that someone has received justice as a result of my effort." This depicts how women HRDs are portrayed as individuals who are concerned with issues that affect everyone in the community, including men. Further, it shows the willingness of Kenyan media to include the issues raised by WHRD in the news.

Wangu Kanuri writes about WHRDs in Kenya for playing a crucial role in advocating for the rights of marginalized groups. These defenders focus on a wide range of marginalized groups, including women, indigenous communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and more. For instance, the article includes Marylize Biubwa in the news as a prominent WHRD known for her dedicated support for marginalized groups in Kenya. She is portrayed as a vocal advocate for the rights of women, LGBTQ+ individuals, ethnic minorities, and other marginalized communities. According to Wangu Kanuri's article on the Daily Nation written on August 8, 2022, Marylize Biubwa is presented as a queer feminist arguing that questioning their gender does not promote inclusion in the electoral process. Wangu Kanuri reports that to document what happens to the LBQ and GNC people before, during and after the 2022 general elections, QBESR deployed forty-six observers in six counties. QBESR observers were to provide credible, real time analysis with a focus on participation of LBQ women and GNC persons. The author

also reports on activism by Marylize Biubwa, which plays a crucial role in promoting gender equality, social justice, and human rights in Kenya.

Additionally, WHRDs were portrayed as legal reformists and litigants. For instance, Phyllis Omido is a prominent Kenyan WHRD, portrayed in the news her activism, where she uses litigation to advance environmental human rights. Omido's advocacy got in Kenyan mainstream news for her identification of the detrimental effects of lead poisoning on the community, particularly affecting children. She also appears in the news for founding the Centre for Justice, Governance, and Environmental Action (CJGEA) to raise awareness about the issue and advocate for the rights of affected residents according to Winnie Atieno's article on the Daily Nation. Winnie Atieno continues to report on Phyllis Omido's international recognition for her efforts to address the health and environmental impacts caused by lead pollution from a lead-smelting plant in the Owino Uhuru informal settlement in Mombasa, Kenya. According to Winnie Atieno's article Phyllis took the government head on when she sued over environmental degradation and effects of lead on residents of Owino Uhuru village where over 3000 residents, lived in a contaminated area resulting from the activities of smelting company. Winnie Atieno, states that Phyllis won a court battle against the factory owned by foreign tycoons and a Mombasa politician ensuring the residents of Owino Uhuru informal settlement found justice.

WHRDs in Kenya often reach the news for their display of remarkable resilience in the face of various threats such as physical violence, harassment, intimidation, legal challenges, and social stigma. In the news, WHRDs are shown to be deeply committed to their causes, driven by a strong sense of justice and a desire to improve the lives of others. For instance, Wanjeri Nderu a WHRD is known for her

activism to fight for women rights, fair and equal opportunities to all people according to Jackline Mahugu's article on the standard newspaper. In the article Nderu is quoted saying, "I have left this country three times for my safety. One time, they had imprisoned four Kenyans illegally in South Sudan. I did a campaign for one year, eight months. I would sit down in a pub and South Sudanese men would sit down around me. They used to follow me."

Additionally, the article mentioned how she has been arrested more than thirteen times; most of the times just to harass and scare her. According to the standard newspaper, Wanjeri Nderu had passion for justice since when she was 12 years old when she told her father that she wanted to work with refugees. She learned everything from her grandfather who was a Mau Mau detained for seven years and after detention worked as a cook for a white family according to author Mahugu (2021). Ultimately, it is important to note that while these patterns can increase the likelihood of WHRDs making it to the news, media coverage can also be influenced by the agenda of news outlets, prevailing public sentiments, and the broader political and social context.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Portrayal of WHRDs in Kenya's print media in the case of Daily Nation and The Standard newspaper.

Generally, positive portrayals, human interest stories, criticism and opposition, coverage of activism and gender stereotyping represent the main ways WHRDs are commonly portrayed and represented in media according to the present study findings from the Daily Nation and the Standard newspaper. Accordingly, positive portrayals of WHRDs was found to be prevalent in the Daily Nation and The Standard Newspapers. For instance, Jacquella Mahugu an author for the Standard writes about Wanjeri Nderu's passion in her efforts to fight for justice, highlighting her ideal

upbringing which nurtured an assertive and self-expressive activist for human rights. In the article Mahungu argues that Wanjeri Nderu got her passion for justice from her grandfather who was a Mau Mau veteran. These portrayals contribute to the narrative of gender stereotyping implying that Nderu could not have taken to her role as a WHRD if it was not for her grandfather, who the author claims she learned everything from.

Majority of the articles included in this study focused on the achievements of WHRDs by celebrate their successes, recognizing their impact in various areas such as gender equality, social justice, and community development. For instance, Justus Ochieng represents Martha Karua positively in the daily nation highlighting her achievement and profile. According to Ochieng, (2022) Martha was celebrated for championing the Water Act 2002 which accelerated the pace of water reforms and related services. Moreover, she is a proven champion for equality and non-discrimination, a believer in equality before the law and equality of opportunities. In Justus Ochieng's article Martha Karua is portrayed as, "She is fairly a good mobiliser with proper oratory skills and a good grasp of issues who will be instrumental in Raila's campaigns." This portrayal emphasizes the gender stereotype of Martha Karua, a Kenyan WHRD being just a peripheral to Raila who is her male counterparts in the same political scene.

Similarly, Naisula Lesuuda is represented positively in the Daily Nation highlighting her achievement in her community. Duncan Khaemba in his article, 'Naisula Lesuuda: The First Elected Women Mp in Samburu', narrates Lesuuda's story from when she first made her name as a peace ambassador in the wild Suguta triangle and as a journalist at KBC, then making history as the first woman to serve as an MP in Samburu community. However, Khaemba (2022) also stereotypes her as he

writes of her making history for becoming the first female MP to serve in her Samburu community, which presents the gender inequalities within the community. Also, Khaembe in his article explains womenfolk in the Samburu community, present numerous gender stereotype, claiming that Lesuuda was lucky to escape the chores assigned to Samburu womenfolk like building manyattas, taking care of children and young or injured livestock.

Moreover, Winnie Atieno of the Daily Nation writes positively of Phyllis Omido and celebrates her for achievements in environmental conservation. In her article, 'Lead poisoning: Phyllis Omido's unending battle in Owino Uhuru' Winnie Atieno reports on Phyllis Omido triumph in 2015, when she won Goldman Environmental prize which included sh5.7 million and a trophy. Atieno (2022) argues that Omido was recognised for her campaign against lead poisoning in the Owino Uhuru slums Jomvu, Mombasa County. Furthermore, Atieno (2022) highlights Omido's 2020 Ethecon Blue Planet award for her heroic efforts in environmental conservation. Moreover, Winnie Atieno recognized Phyllis Omido's appearance on Times magazine's annual list of 100 most influential people worldwide in 2021. These portrayals indicate positivity among Kenyan media towards WHRDs in their reporting.

In both The Standard and Daily Nation newspaper, human interest stories were found to be a basis for the portrayal of WHRDs in Kenyan print media with an aim to connect readers with their experiences, values, and the positive changes she's working to bring about. For instance, Jackline Mahugu reports on the story of Wanjeri Nderu including her upbringing, her arrests as a WHRD, her passion for justice, her style and experiences with parenting as well as her brand of feminism. This representation draws the reader to connect with Wanjeri Nderu in her bid to stand for human rights.

Duncan Khaemba piece on Naisula Lesuuda's transition from media to politics her transition of career serves as inspiration to many young people. She has influenced her community and promoted peaceful coexistence among the marginalised groups. Khaemba (2022), reports on one of Naisula quotes where she says "Every time I finish reading the news there's a report of people losing lives in my backyard." In this article, Khaemba portrays Naisula Lesuuda as a relatable figure whose journey and work resonate with people on a personal level. These stories often inspire readers by showcasing how one person's actions can create meaningful change in their community and beyond.

Similarly, Phyllis Omido's story in the Daily nation revolve around her remarkable journey as an environmental and human rights activist. Winnie Atieno presents her story citing how her efforts in defending human rights have brought her attention both in Kenya and internationally due to her dedication, challenges, and the impact she's made. Winnie Atieno's article of 2022 on Omido's fight for environmental injustices in the case of Lead poisoning in Owino Uhuru village represents a human interest story. In this story the author showcases Omido's courage, determination, and the transformative impact she's had on the community and beyond. These stories also draw attention to the larger issues of environmental pollution, corporate accountability, and the importance of citizen activism.

While WHRDs play a crucial role in advocating for equality, justice, and human rights, they often face pushback due to societal norms, power dynamics, and differing perspectives. For instance, Martha Karua has experienced criticism according quotes by critics in Justus Ochieng's article in the Daily Nation on May 16,2022, "For Martha she is likely to guarantee political instability in any formation she goes to. There's is history back to this when president Moi was addressing a

political rally she walked out and also went ahead to resign from Kibaki's administration." Also according to critics her abrasive style of politics and complicated family public relations skills are her undoing. Likewise, women human right defender Phyllis Omido experienced opposition in her fight for justice in the lead poison case according to Winnie Atieno's article on the Daily Nation on January 28,2022, where she lamented that despite following the required procedures for a peaceful protest, the police denied her group the right to do so. The companies involved in the polluting activities pushed back against her claims, arguing that their operations were within legal limits and that the environmental impact was being overstated.

According to the present study findings both the Standard and Daily Nation newspapers publish news articles that highlight the activities, achievements, and challenges faced by WHRDs in Kenya while covering activism. These articles used in this study focused on specific events, campaigns, or actions taken by activists to address various human rights issues. For instance, Phyllis Omido was covered in the Daily nation highlighting her achievements in her fight for environmental injustices in Owino Uhuru informal settlements. Both the Standard and newspapers run profiles and features on prominent women human rights defenders, providing readers with insights into their personal stories, motivations, and contributions to the cause. These stories aim to humanize the activists and connect readers to their experiences. For example, in the case of Wanjari Nderu activist who fought for the illegally imprisoned Kenyas in South Sudan according to author Jackline Mahugu on the standard Newspaper August 22, 2021. Meanwhile, the Daily Nation covers Racheal Mwikali from the coalition of grassroots in her campaign for health policy reforms to include provision for safe abortions and women involvement in the process.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Main images and narratives used in the packaging of news about issues raised by WHRDs in Kenya's print media. `

From the 9 articles reviewed in this study heroic and resilience narratives of WHRDs prevailed as the major image and narrative used in the packaging of news about issues raised by WHRDs. In the case of Racheal Mwikali, the Daily Nation depicts her as a champion in fighting to raise awareness, provide support, and influence policy changes to ensure that women can make informed decisions about their reproductive health. Also, these narratives highlight empowerment and agency through their inspiring stories of activism and the significant impact they've made on society. These narratives underscore how WHRDs empower themselves and others, demonstrating their agency to create change. They showcase how these individuals refuse to be passive victims and instead take action to challenge the status quo. For instance, Phyllis Omido is a celebrated fighter for environmental injustices. Omido's heroic narrative highlights her decision to stand up against a powerful lead-smelting company despite the personal risks and threats she faced. Her determination to challenge environmental injustice resonates with readers as an inspiring act of courage. Her narrative emphasizes her role as a defender of community health. She recognized the harmful effects of lead pollution on her own son and other children, driving her to take action to safeguard their well-being.

Similarly, Naisula Lesuuda, a Kenyan politician and women's rights advocate, has been the subject of heroic narratives in Kenya's print media due to her significant contributions to promoting gender equality, youth engagement, and community development. These narratives celebrate her achievements and emphasize her inspirational journey through empowerment and agency. Lesuuda's achievement as one of the youngest women elected to the Kenyan Parliament shows her amplifying

the voices of her community riddled in bandit attack. Her story is portrayed as breaking barriers and challenging traditional norms of political leadership according to Duncan Khaemba in his article on Daily Nation in December 27,2022. Heroic narratives portray Lesuuda as an advocate for marginalized groups, particularly those in pastoralist communities. Her work to amplify their voices and address their unique challenges is emphasized. Meanwhile, Martha Karua is celebrated in her role as human rights defender in the political space seeking for equal opportunities for women to take up positions of leadership portraying her in the image of an inspiration and role model to other WHRDs.

Subsequently, recognition and awards represents another major image and narrative of WHRDs in the Kenyan print media. From the findings of the current study, the news articles reported on the recognition and awards received by WHRDs for their exceptional efforts in advocating for gender equality, human rights, and social justice. These recognitions highlight their courage, dedication, and the impact they've made on their communities and society at large. Some women human rights defenders have received international awards for their work. For instance, Phyllis Omido, Naisula Lesuuda, Martha Karua, and Daisy Amdany, all received recognition and/or awards for their efforts in defending human rights in various communities. Therefore, WHRDs received recognition through interviews with major author in their features in both the Standard and Daily Nation newspapers. Such coverage raises awareness about their causes and amplifies their voices, where the recognitions and awards not only validate the efforts of WHRDs but also serve as a source of inspiration for others. They help shed light on the important work done to create a more just and equitable society and encourage continued commitment to the cause.

However, despite all the positive narrative and images of WHRDs in Kenyan print media, there exist numerous instances of gender stereotypes wrapped within the Heroic narratives, empowerment and agency, recognition and awards, breaking barriers and amplifying voices, and inspiration and role modelling. From the review of 9 articles from the Standard and Daily nation newspapers, Jackline Mahugu, Justus Ochieng, and Duncan Khaemba present WHRDs in stereotypical terms relating their roles in fighting for human rights and political participation as influenced by the men around them not by the sheer strength of the women.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

The present study findings highlight that WHRDs make it to the news for their core efforts, such as advocating for reproductive rights, political engagement, and support for marginalized groups. On the contrary, Mpofu (2017) and Siringi and Nduva (2018) suggest that the media often focuses on peripheral aspects of women's roles and appearance rather than their substantial contributions. Further, the emphasis on issues like safe abortions and maternal mortality also supports the argument that media portrayal tends to prioritize topics that are salient and relevant to the audience (Agenda-Setting Theory). Also, the prominence of WHRDs in the news due to their participation in democratic and political activities contradicts with existing research.

Siringi and Nduva (2018) found that narratives by the media on women leaders tends to be discriminative and focuses on presenting them on peripheral issues. This finding is inconsistent with the present research findings indicating that WHRDs engaging in political processes are portrayed for their efforts in policy changes and awareness-raising activities. However, it is paramount to note that but within these positive portrayal in the print media, discriminative and stereotypical narratives manifest. Therefore, the present study findings highlight the challenges WHRDs face in their portrayal by print media, with stereotypical narratives contributing to how they are portrayed regardless of their hard work and development agendas within the periphery of promotion and protection of political right. Additionally, the study findings reinforce the idea that print media's portrayal can have electoral consequences and influence political participation (Trabelsi, 2023;

Asare Agomor, 2023) which is consistent with the Agenda Setting Theoretical framework.

The present study established that WHRDs advocating for marginalized groups, including women, LGBTQ+ individuals, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities, are highlighted in the news. Their work addresses gender inequalities and promotes inclusivity. Marylize Biubwa stands out as a vocal advocate for minority communities, reflecting the importance of diverse voices in the news. This finding on media's portrayal of WHRDs advocating for marginalized groups. Thus, the present study findings differ with the existing literature by Mannila (2017) which suggests that women's movements are acknowledged by the media when their interests align with political and media elites. These results show a more inclusive portrayal of WHRDs working for marginalized groups. Further, this study found that WHRDs appear in the news due to their advocacy for legal reforms and involvement in court cases. Phyllis Omido's case exemplifies this, as her efforts to address environmental and health impacts caused by lead pollution led to international recognition and justice for affected residents. Therefore, the media's coverage of WHRDs involved in legal reforms and court cases corresponds with the notion that media shapes the public agenda and focuses on issues that are newsworthy (Agenda-Setting Theory). However, some literature suggests negative portrayals of women in the media (mpofu, 2009; Sinclair *et al.* , 2013), which is consistent with this study findings showcasing WHRDs' efforts to address human rights issues but skewed portrayal in various news articles.

Also the present study findings highlight that WHRDs are featured in the news for their resilience in the face of threats such as violence, harassment, and intimidation. Despite challenges, figures like Wanjari Nderu display unwavering

commitment to justice and social change, contributing to their media coverage. On the other hand, Wanjeri Nderu is portrayed as being moulded by her grandfather who was most influential in her quest to take up defending human rights. This finding aligns with Cohen *et al.*'s (2019) argument that media messages impact how women are viewed and treated in society. The current study's results demonstrate favorable depictions of WHRDs in relation to their accomplishments and societal contributions. This observation is consistent with existing scholarly literature that acknowledges the capacity of media to depict women in a good light by highlighting their achievements.

Nevertheless, Ross *et al.* (2016) observed that women are frequently depicted in conventional roles such as spouses or mothers, which stands in contrast to the present study's focus on showcasing the accomplishments of WHRDs in domains such as politics and activism. The depiction of Ms. Lesuuda as being lucky to escape conventional Samburu womenfolk was consistent with existing literature. In Kassova's (2020) scholarly investigation on the portrayal of violence in media, a noteworthy finding emerges regarding the prominence of personal narratives, particularly those involving women who are frequently depicted as victims. This observation is consistent with the findings of the present study, which indicate that print media employs human interest tales, such as Wanjeri Nderu's account of her arrests, as a means to empower and include readers in the hardships and successes of WHRDs.

Furthermore, the present research findings underscore the fact that WHRDs encounter criticism and opposition, a phenomenon that aligns with the existing scholarly literature's acknowledgment of resistance towards women who challenge conventional gender norms. The findings of Kassova's (2020) study, which highlight the dual roles of women as both victims and perpetrators in violent situations, are

consistent with the observations made in this study regarding the problems and opposition faced by WHDRs such as Phyllis Omido and Martha Karua in their pursuit of justice. The current study emphasizes the media portrayal of WHDRs activity and accomplishments, aligning with existing scholarly discourse on the impact of media on public attitudes on women's involvement in politics and activism. The analysis conducted by Vavrus (2002) regarding media coverage of women in politics aligns with the emphasis placed on depicting women's actions and political engagement. The study findings unveiled that the articles published in the Standard and the Daily Nation newspapers showcased the activity and accomplishments of WHDRs such as Wanjeri Nderu, Phyllis Omido, and Naisula Lesuuda. Consequently, these pieces had a pivotal role in changing public discourse by providing empowering images noteworthy events and campaigns.

The notable aspect of this study is similar to the greater world pattern of stereotyping WHDRs to some degree. The existing body of literature highlights the widespread existence of conventional gender roles assigned to women, which is consistent with present study finding on the portrayal of Ms. Lesuuda as a lucky individual for having escaped the stereotypical gender roles assigned to other women from her community. However, the findings of this study also propose a more optimistic and inclusive portrayal of WHDRs within the media landscape of Kenya. The observed phenomenon can be ascribed to the dynamic nature of media activities or the shifting public sentiments in Kenya. The findings of the current study are in opposition to the research conducted by Praptiningsih (2017) in Indonesia, which revealed a significant occurrence of stereotyped depictions. This highlights the significance of taking into account cultural and geographical differences. Moreover, this study presents a novel perspective by examining the political engagement,

accomplishments, and societal contributions of WHRDs, so questioning conventional perceptions. The aforementioned observation is in accordance with the concerns raised by Ross and Byerly (2004) regarding the media's tendency to perpetuate conventional gender norms. While the study highlights the traditional depiction of women as caregivers and homemakers, it also emphasizes the diverse responsibilities and contributions of WHRDs within the wider societal context.

Moreover, the findings of this study indicate a notable frequency of heroic stories, which is consistent with existing research that acknowledges the media's inclination to portray women activists as heroic figures. These anecdotes highlight the bravery, perseverance, and autonomy of WHRDs as they confront prevailing social conventions and advocate for transformative shifts. To a certain degree these depictions challenged conventional victim narratives and presents WHRDs as persons who possess agency and actively work towards generating good outcomes, as emphasized by Ross *et al.* (2016) and Vavrus (2002). The findings of this study highlight the inconsistencies in the empowerment and agency of WHRDs in their capacity as catalysts for change. For instance, Wanjeri Nderi is portrayed as assuming her role as WHRD based on her grandfather's influence, which undermines her agency in deciding to live her life defending human rights. According to Ross and Byerly (2004), the media plays a significant role in altering societal conceptions of women's societal responsibilities by highlighting the unwavering commitment of WHRDs to confront injustice and instigate transformative change. However, the present study also proves that in these efforts by media contains aspects of masculinity in influencing the role of women in confronting injustices and instigating transformative change.

The focus on recognition and awards is consistent with the literature's acknowledgement of the importance of these acknowledgments in media representations. The aforementioned narratives serve to emphasize the significant contributions made by WHRDs and justify their diligent endeavors. This echoes the ongoing discourse surrounding the media's crucial role in validating and inspiring women activists, as discussed by Kassova (2020). The media plays a crucial role in amplifying the accomplishments of WHRDs, so reinforcing the significance of their endeavors and fostering a sense of inspiration among potential supporters to actively engage in similar pursuits. Moreover, the depiction of WHRDs such as Naisula Lesuuda as individuals who challenge societal constraints and elevate the voices of oppressed groups aligns with the scholarly discourse around women's participation in politics and activism.

The story of Naisula Lesuuda is in accordance with Vavrus's (2002) assertion that media portrayal frequently perpetuates conventional gender stereotypes, while also shedding attention on women's endeavors to defy these societal standards. Furthermore, the current study's results underscore the significance of WHRDs' narratives in terms of their inspirational qualities, which are in line with existing research that acknowledges the media's influence in inspiring women and fostering their participation in public affairs. Praptiningsih (2017) discusses how the media plays a role in altering society perceptions of women's capabilities and contributions by presenting the stories of WHRDs and highlighting their perseverance and effect. Furthermore, the current study's findings depict images of WHRDs being honored with international prizes and earning recognition. These findings are consistent with existing literature that explores the media's function in recognising women activists at a worldwide level. These narratives emphasize the wider significance of the work

carried out by WHRDs and establish a connection between their endeavors and broader movements aimed at achieving gender equality and social justice.

5.2 Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the portrayal of WHRDs in Kenya's print media when presenting issues through news stories. To achieve this objective, news stories from two Kenya's leading newspapers, The Daily Nation and The Standard were used as the main sources for relevant articles. Three major themes were identified supported by various sub-themes relative to the articles reviewed. The themes were adopted from the study questions to ensure the information collected aligned appropriately with the study topic.

5.2.1 What images do human rights issues by WHRDs take to make it to the news?

Several images were identified in the present research findings and were deemed to commonly contribute to the visibility of human rights issues by WHRDs in the news such as their efforts in championing for reproductive rights, participation in political processes, support for marginalised groups, legal reforms and court cases, and resilience in the face of threats. These patterns underscore their heroic narratives, participation in political processes, recognition and awards, legal advocacy, and determination to address societal challenges. WHRDs' efforts to influence policy changes, empower communities, and challenge norms contribute to their coverage in the media, shedding light on their significant contributions to fostering inclusivity, justice, and social progress in Kenyan society. Media coverage, driven by these patterns, amplifies their impact and advances the causes they champion.

5.2.1 How are WHRDs portrayed and represented in Kenya's print media?

Generally, positive portrayals, human interest stories, criticism and opposition and coverage of activism represent the main ways WHRDs are commonly portrayed and represented in media according to the present study findings from the Daily Nation and the Standard newspapers. Positive portrayals of WHRDs are prevalent, highlighting their achievements, impact, and contributions to gender equality, social justice, and community development. Human interest stories serve as a powerful tool to connect readers with the experiences, values, and efforts of WHRDs. These stories humanize the activists, showcasing their personal journeys, challenges, and the transformative changes they work to bring about. Meanwhile, the media frequently perpetuates conventional gender stereotypes, while also shedding attention on women's endeavors to defy these societal standards.

Criticism and opposition also find their place in the representation of WHRDs. Despite their crucial roles in advocating for human rights, WHRDs often face pushback due to differing perspectives, political dynamics, and societal norms. Criticisms highlight aspects of their personalities, politics, or past actions that invite scrutiny and discussion. Coverage of activism is another significant way WHRDs are portrayed in Kenyan media. Articles focus on specific events, campaigns, or actions taken by these activists to address various human rights issues. Profiles and features provide insights into their motivations and contributions, aiming to engage readers by showcasing their dedication to justice and equality. Collectively, these portrayals in the media contribute to a multi-dimensional understanding of WHRDs in Kenya, reflecting their achievements, challenges, and the wider societal discourse surrounding their work.

5.2.3 What are the main images and narratives used in the packaging of news about issues raised by WHRDs in Kenya's print media?

According to the present study findings, the main images and narratives used in the packaging of news about issues raised by WHRDs took the form of heroic narratives, empowerment and agency, recognition and awards, breaking barriers and amplifying voices, as well as inspiration and role modelling. Consequently, WHRDs are often portrayed as heroic figures, emphasizing their courage, resilience, and autonomy as they challenge societal norms and strive for transformative change. This portrayal counters traditional victim narratives, highlighting them as proactive agents of change.

Moreover, media coverage often highlights the recognition and awards WHRDs receive, validating their contributions and inspiring others. This aligns with existing research, emphasizing media's role in empowering and encouraging women activists. Additionally, the media portrays WHRDs as individuals who confront societal constraints and amplify marginalized voices, aligning with discussions about women's political participation and activism. Furthermore, news stories frequently showcase international accolades bestowed upon WHRDs, linking their efforts to broader movements for gender equality and social justice. Collectively, these narratives highlight WHRDs' agency, perseverance, and dedication to human rights advancement; however, the present study established the existence of numerous gender stereotyping against WHRDs

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the results of this research, WHRDs should proactively work with the media to increase coverage of a wide range of human rights concerns. This could be done through strategic news releases, interviews, and partnerships that emphasize a variety

of difficulties and achievements. Instead than relying primarily on traditional media coverage, WHRDs in the modern period can reach a wider audience and directly share their tales, triumphs, and problems by leveraging social media and other internet platforms. Collaboration with legal experts and organizations can assist WHRDs successfully convey the legal components of their advocacy, assuring accurate and compelling narratives given the prominence of legal changes and court cases in press coverage. Workshops designed to improve media literacy among WHRDs are encouraged so that they may better engage with the media, handle criticism, and convey their stories in a fair and accurate light.

For WHRDs to effectively share their experiences and struggles with a wider audience and improve their media portrayal, it is essential that they receive training on persuasive storytelling strategies. Meanwhile, processes for responding to criticism and resistance can help bring people together to work through problems. Therefore, WHRDs can show their dedication to open conversation by discussing their detractors on media platforms, panels, and in forums. The media's portrayal of WHRDs should strive to accurately reflect the intersectionality of their activism, illuminating the ways in which their work helps to combat different forms of oppression simultaneously. To further bridge the gap between media representation and grassroots engagement, WHRDs can use their media coverage to engage the public through community events, conversations, and workshops.

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Appendix A: Data extraction form

Article Title	Author name	Date of publication	Content Summary	Source