

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EXTENT OF CHILDREN CONTENT IN KENYAN  
MEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE NATION AND THE STANDARD NEWSPAPERS**

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**REG NO: K50/68735/2011**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN  
COMMUNICATION, SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION  
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**NOVEMBER 2013**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other university or college for academic credit.

Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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This project has been submitted for examination with the approval of the university supervisor

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to acknowledge God who is the most high, for keeping my family and me healthy throughout the study period. Second, I would like to give special thanks to my supervisor Dr. Hezron Mogambi who spared a lot of time to guide and share with me throughout my research period. Equally, I would like to acknowledge Dr Mwende for the support that she gave me. I would also like to thank the respondents of the two media houses for the assistance they gave me.

A big thank you to the two Librarians of the two media houses: Nation Media Group and the Standard Group.

## **DEDICATION**

To the four special people in my life- Kiage- for your encouragement, patience and love, Oirere, Orotomu- my dads thank you so much for your support and your constant reminder that I can make it. You made me believe in myself and to my son Oenga Gael- thanks for your patience while I was always away. I love you all.

## **ABSTRACT**

News coverage can have a strong influence on how the public and policy makers interpret and respond to social issues. Child related issues require adequate publicity to influence decision makers to address them. This study intended to examine the coverage of children issues in leading newspapers in Kenya. The aims were to identify the extent, type and level of prominence of issues related to children in both *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. A content analysis was conducted on children issues in 240 newspapers editions of *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. *The Standard* newspaper had more coverage of children issues compared to *The Daily Nation*. In both newspapers, children issues were located in the middle pages as opposed on front pages or back pages. Children issues were found to have low prominence with most articles appearing as news briefs in both newspapers. There is need to increase coverage of children issues by the leading newspapers to help raise the profile of children in the society. The media should take more responsibility by giving children issues adequate coverage and appropriate prominence so that relevant government and public attention could be directed to address children issues in the society.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter gives the background of the study on coverage of children issues in the newspapers.

The problem statement relating to the study is presented in this chapter. This chapter also presents the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, and the significance of the study findings. Also provided in this chapter is the scope of the study and definition of key terms.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989 has spelt out the important role of media in disseminating information that promotes the child's well-being. The CRC article specifies that member states should recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources. These include those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

Article 29 in the convention indicate that all member states shall:

(a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child;

(b) Encourage international cooperation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources

(c) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;

(d) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18. (UNICEF, 2004)

Mass media have the power to influence public opinion, set role models and affect behaviours of children and society. The issues of children in any part of the world as represented by the media are both negative and positive, ranging from education to street children, stateless children, child labour and child prostitution, among others (UNICEF, 2009). The globalization of the media industry has resulted into unprecedented growth in both print and electronic media which has led to a wider range of programming targeting children in different parts of the world. Many youths and children in the world have access to a greater number of multi-media choices than ever before— conventional, satellite and cable TV channels; radio stations; newspapers and magazines; the Internet and computer and video games. In addition, many are exposed to the same programs, the same characters and the same marketed spin-off products. Today there is

greater availability of foreign programming and media, and less official censorship and control in many parts of the world (UNICEF, 2004; Shrestha, 2002).

The general public relies on the mass media such as newspapers as an important resource for information. The news media are a powerful mechanism through which images of problems are conveyed (Smith & Wakefield, 2006). Newspapers as a form of mass media is a useful source of information, especially on child related issues. However, children do not receive adequate coverage as required with many times child related issues being relegated to the periphery of the newspaper coverage. The need to improve the coverage of child related issues made UNICEF to develop a call to action to the media to ensure that the overwhelming power of the media for good in the lives of children is identified, encouraged and supported, while the potential harmful effects are recognized and reduced (UNICEF, 2004).

The action identified several areas that challenged the media to get involved by: Being educated on the rights of children and how they can be protected and promoted by good professional practices or harmed through inappropriate policies or actions. It also challenged the media to work ethically and professionally according to sound media practices and to develop and promote media codes of ethics in order to avoid sensationalism, stereotyping (including by gender) or undervaluing of children and their rights. The media is also required to resist commercial pressures that lead to children's issues and the rights of children to freedom of

expression, fair coverage and protection from exploitation, including as consumers, being given low priority and that the media is required to work to enhance the relationship between children and the media so that both grow and improve in understanding of the positive and negative power and potential of the relationship (UNICEF, 2004, Oyero, 2010).

This challenge required that the media fraternity especially the newspapers participate by making sure that child related issues are highlighted so that the public are informed on these issues. It is against this background that this study is conducted to determine the amount of children content in Kenyan media with specific focus on *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

News coverage can have a strong influence on how the public and policy makers interpret and respond to social issues. Child related issues require adequate publicity to influence decision makers to address them. These include education, health, sexual abuse and child labour. The Convention on Child Rights has argued that news coverage of children issues is important so that it can get the attention of the policy makers. In developing countries news coverage of children in newspaper is still low. A report by UNICEF (2004) indicates that in developing countries issues related to child development have not been given the attention it deserves especially in the newspapers. This report indicates that newspapers have responsibility to ensure that the rights of

children are protected and promoted. Newspapers in Kenya have a wider public readership and appeal as such using newspapers to highlight issues affecting children would help catch the attention of public, political leaders and policy makers. It is against this background that this study examined how two Kenyan newspapers have covered children issues as to bring such issues to the fore.

### **1.3 Research objectives**

The general objective of the study is to examine media coverage of children issues by *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. Specifically, the study aims:

1. To determine the extent of coverage of children issues by *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*.
2. To identify the type of children issues covered by *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*.
3. To examine the level of prominence is given to children issues reported in *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What is the amount of coverage of children issues in newspapers *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*.
2. What is the nature of children programs covered by in newspapers *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*.
3. What level of prominence is given to children issues reported in *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*.

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

There is consensus that quality media for children should be credible, comprehensible and uplifting, and empowering youth to think (UNICEF, 2004). The need to identify if such criteria are being met in local media houses is important since there is need to promote adequate coverage of children program in the country. This study forms an integral part in understanding the role of media in shaping future generations of citizens through their programs. The findings would inform the need for the responsible media houses to restructure their coverage and production of materials with greater emphasis on interests of children. It highlights discrepancies in children programs and recommends possible ways through which the content can be enriched. This study might also contribute to the body of knowledge on coverage of children in media

programs hence it will act as a good source of literature for individuals interested in conducting further research in this area.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitations**

This research analyzed newspaper coverage of children as produced by Nation Media and the Standard Group. Two local newspapers *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* were chosen for analysis. The research focused only on news pieces in which children are depicted as the subject matter.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

**Child** means any person less than 18 years of age as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

**Content relating to children** refers to any reporting or recounting of facts concerning a person less than 18 years of age through the media.

**The media** refers to newspapers

**Nation Media Group:** A leading local print and electronic media house in Kenya.

**Newspaper coverage** includes editorials, news stories, one-on-one interviews, newspicture and pictures in the newspaper.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher sought to place the study within the context of existing published literatures with a specific guide to the research questions. This started with a critical review of the theory used, then existing gap(s) of the theory. The researcher then moved systematically to literatures touching on the research objectives. From these, the researcher was able to identify gaps and/ or inconsistencies in the available literatures. Lastly, the researcher was able to come up with final gaps that this study sought to address.

### **2.1 Newspapers and coverage of children**

Newspapers have always played a fundamental role in disseminating news, information and in creating a public awareness. They serve several purposes including amongst others entertainment, educative and as communicating tool. Newspaper has continued to play a significant role in children related issues. These issues according to Shrestha (2002) include child rights issues like, child rights to participation and decision-making, children as citizen of civic society, child rights to expression, child rights to recreation, Global movement for children, CRC, peace for children and gender equality.



Several limitations among newspapers in covering children issues have been noted in different countries in the world. For example, Taiphapoon and Muthitacharoen(2009) indicates from a study conducted in Thailand that coverage of children in the newspapers was more passive than pro-active, as news stories and news pictures are by their very nature a straight forward presentation of situations as they occurred. Special reports and one-on one interviews, on the other hand, have an agenda-setting purpose and involve a proactive effort on the part of the media to raise certain issues for public debate or mobilize the public to act in a certain way, regardless of whether the situations in question exist at the moment of reporting or not. They realized that in Thailand latter type of coverage is still rare and is inconsistently used in newspapers.

Based on these findings Shrestha (2002) argues that media houses are driven by different agenda when covering children issues and most of the time information is obtained from organizations that work with/for children. He attributed this to lack of investigative journalism in newspaper's articles. While there is evidence that newspapers cover children issues UNICEF(2004) argues that the one of the largest problems regarding media rights for youth is simply lack of coverage of children and young people in the news. They report that the available little coverage that there often portrays youth in the context of sensationalist issues, e.g., child abuse, exploitation and violence, with little respect for the dignity and privacy of the children and scant opportunity for

young people to speak for themselves. They argue that this makes children around the world to feel excluded from or disserved by the media when they are portrayed simplistically as superficial, apathetic, poverty stricken or delinquent. Oyaro (2007) adds that children issues are rarely given prominence; instead, children are shunned or scantily reported. And in most cases their stories end up as “briefs” or “fillers” in the newspapers or news broad cast.

However Saunders and Goddard (2002) argue on the contrary the newspaper coverage of children as stricken with violence and child abuse might be important since such media attention to child abuse has, at times, positively influenced public, professional and political responses to the circumstances in which children and young people find themselves. Understanding media influences, and how to use the media constructively, may thus be an essential tool for those who advocate for children, young people, and their families. Others argue, however, that mass media campaigns and media coverage of the abuse and neglect of children perform an important and significant role in placing issues such as child abuse on the public and political agenda. Lindsey (1994) maintains that: “Media has a central role in mediating information and forming public opinion. The media casts an eye on events that few of us directly experience and renders remote happenings observable and meaningful.” The strength of mass media like newspaper to positively advocate for children issues is confounded by its limitation to convey complex

information, in teaching skills, in shifting attitudes and beliefs, and in changing behaviour in the absence of other enabling factors (Saunders and Goddard, 2002).

## **2.2 Education Issues**

Schools are a great resource for journalists and newspapers – they often hold events involving the arts or prize-giving and local dignitaries or celebrities, provide great photo opportunities and provide a reason for the featured children’s parents to buy a copy. Whereas these events provide positive stories involving young children most newspapers do not cover these events but only focus on a few negative schools stories – about underachievement or bad behaviour. Shrestha (2002) in his analysis of media and children in Thailand indicates that most news articles in newspapers focused on hectic schedule of the schools, infrastructure problem of the schools in the rural areas and its adverse effect on schools functioning, various problems facing by the government and private schools.

Newspapers coverage of education issues among children can have a strong influence on how the public and policy makers interpret and respond to education needs of children. To advocate effectively for high quality, adequately supported child care and early childhood education, advocates must be able to articulate a clear message that resonates with specific audiences. They have to make their case well, and make it publicly. This means they must understand the current

public conversation regarding child education policy issues and how the issue is being framed in the news. Similarly, if journalists are going to tell the story of child education as it is debated by different stakeholders, they should know what parts of that discussion are being emphasized and which, if any, are being neglected. However this does not happen as most of the time much of the newspapers do not cover education issues of children. (UNICEF, 2004)

Newspapers have a role to play in improving education of our children in the society. However, this has not been the case as Aday (1997) realized that many parents have apparently noticed that newspapers ignore children's programming and education issues. In his analysis majority of parents interviewed (53.4%) said their local newspaper was either "not very helpful" or "not helpful at all" in helping them to make decisions about what shows their children should watch. In fact, parents were far more likely to say that newspapers were "not helpful at all" (28.7%) than to say that they were "very helpful" (9.6%). Only 31.8 percent said they were "somewhat helpful." Lacking confidence in their local newspaper, parents were far more likely to seek out other modes of information to help them decide what shows were good or bad. While this happens to be case he recommends that newspapers could do more without radically altering their work routines or mission as objective sources of information.

Children get an opportunity to speak in the *Young Nation*, a children's magazine published by Nation media group every Sunday. The flip side to this is that usually it is children from rich

families who get to be featured and the magazines does not provide sufficient forum for in-depth analysis of issues affecting children ( Habwe and Okwemba, 2002).

### **2.3 Health issues of Children**

Children health remains an issue of public health concern in many countries. It has been established that media should play a critical role in highlighting the health needs of children (UNICEF, 2009). The need to accurately report on health issues of children would help strengthen the kind of services being offered to children. It also exposes detrimental health practices in the community such as child sexual abuse, child labor and children stricken with hunger as well as child neglect in the society (Chesser et al., 2009; Saunders and Goddard, 2002).

In analyzing health needs of children Chesser et al (2009) argues that with health hazards such as drowning which is the second leading cause of injury-related death among children ages one to 14 in the United States, the media, such as newspapers, and health professionals often have the opportunity to disseminate drowning prevention tips, such as those presented in the Safe Kids campaigns so as to help raise awareness among children on such health. They recommend that newspapers should increase the level of prevention messages as such newspapers should be

encouraged to include prevention strategies to each story they cover on drowning or near-drowning accidents.

While many developing countries have adopted Millennium Development goals for eliminating child mortality, Kayode and Adeniran (2012) reports that it is shocking that Goal 4 on *child mortality* and Goal 5 on *maternal health* are among the least reported MDG issues, despite the fact that this region has alarming mortality rates. Therefore they recommend that there is an urgent need for an increased media focus on maternal and child health.

In analyzing the role of black newspapers as a tool for cancer education in African American communities Caburnay et al (2008) reports that black newspapers publish proportionately more stories about cancer than general audience newspapers, and this coverage contains more desirable attributes for public health advocates, such as being locally relevant and containing mobilization information, referrals to resources, and prevention information. This they argue given that certain diseases are more likely to affect younger children the black newspapers are the most a trusted source of cancer information, trusted more than general audience newspapers or other newspapers.

Good nutrition plays an important in promoting child health, increased cases of poor child health due to malnutrition can be highlighted by newspapers as problems facing the society and on the

other hand newspapers can be used as agents of change in conveying public health messages to the community especially parents on the importance of nutrition in promoting child growth and development (Wallack et al.1993). However the media especially newspapers are not committed on performing this public health advocacy role as expected.

According to Woodruff et al(2001) in their analysis of newspaper coverage of child nutrition issues in California realized that despite the importance of nutrition for children's health and well being, in major California newspapers that are read by statewide policy makers and opinion leaders, substantive articles on childhood nutrition policy are rare. They realized that fewer than five percent of news and opinion pieces that included nutrition policy discussions devoted more than one-third of the piece to the topic. Two-thirds of the samples (66 percent) were news or feature stories. Columns and other opinion pieces made up 13 percent of the sample. Editorials and letters to the editor each comprised about 10 percent of the sample. On the other hand they realized that when substantive nutrition policy news does appear, it was well-placed. Nearly one third of the pieces appeared on the front page indicating the strong newsworthiness of food and nutrition issues. In this regard they argue that public health advocates are likely to have greater success getting journalists interested in doing stories on childhood nutrition policy issues if they localize national stories and have ready spokespeople. Their analysis suggests that public health advocates must be better prepared to pitch stories about policies that could improve health, and

be prepared to describe solutions beyond. They believe that newspapers can be used to provide public health education on child health issues by getting reporters to convey the public health approach to nutrition, which will galvanize public, will to promote such changes.

Childhood disability is a both a social and health problem facing many societies and newspapers have a great influence on how the society views the disability and persons with disabilities. Byrd and Elliot (1988) believe that if we are ever to change people's perceptions of disability, we must identify the media's abounding messages about the subject. However, Mu and Válková (2007) argue that the media have often provided only poor coverage on disabilities and the people with disabilities especially children since they realized that during four years from 2003 to 2006, the eight selected Chinese children's newspapers published 152 articles on disabilities and persons with disabilities in total. Therefore among the total of 2496 published issues of all eight newspapers, there were only 139 issues containing articles about disability articles. They argue that improved coverage of child disability issues in the newspapers would help children, since it provides them with a good opportunity to let them know more about disability and to form and change their attitude toward disability and people with disabilities.



## 2.4 Child Labor Issues

The media in all over the world has provided news coverage on child labour only when issues have arisen. Whenever a child labour issue arises, the news media provide coverage. In Malawi for example the case seems to be different since according to Mang'anda (2012) of the country's main daily newspapers, the *Nation* has over the past decade given sustained coverage of child labor. He reports that it boasts of a library with a section detailing all child labour stories that the paper has covered over the period with a number of news stories, especially about activities of Non Governmental Organizations, government officials and others who deal with child labor issues being documented.

On the other hand Shretsha (2002) realized that in Nepal issues of child labor was found in 10 newspaper articles most of which covered situations of children who are involved in different occupations like domestic work, vendor, and newspaper selling and stone quarries. Equally the newspaper articles covered the living conditions of children surviving through different occupation and reason for child involvement in such occupation like, poverty, large number of family, lack of earning member in the family. The same review identified that newspapers covered or identified various risk factors affecting both the physical and psychological development of children who are engaged in dangerous works in the global context as well as in

context of Nepal along with relevant figures. On the occasion of International Child Labor Day, it also covered the issues showing how many organizations working in the field of children are spending huge amount of money for the elimination of child labor but the situation remains still the same in the country. The newspaper also covered the activities of child clubs that are against child labor.

The burden of child labor is well highlighted in Vietnam by the leading newspaper since Nguyen(2009) reports that the Labor newspaper reported that 30 percent of Vietnamese children between the age of six to seventeen join the labor force, with most children stay close to home to help their family business. The newspapers also argue that the actual number could be much larger as children employed as domestic servants, restaurant assistants or children working on the streets as beggars, shoes shiners or newspaper and lottery sellers were not covered in the report. The report also revealed that up to 62 out of 173 manufacturing factories in Ho Chi Minh City employed child laborers, 50 percent of whom are below 15 years old.

## **2.5 Child Abuse**

Child abuse is a problem facing children in many communities, it deprives children of their right to live a decent life as such the media such as newspapers need to highlight the plight of children facing abuse in the community. This is important as Wurtele and Miller-Perrin (1993) have observed that media coverage of child sexual assault helps to demystify and reduce the secrecy

that has surrounded its occurrence. Similarly, a review of the literature on mass media campaigns reveals many examples of campaigns impacting on public knowledge about issues such as work safety, drug and alcohol use, drink-driving, speeding, cigarette smoking, obesity, AIDS, and domestic violence. Coverage of such incidents in the media may lead to behavioral change may also occur during campaigns, although this result may be short-lived, lapsing when campaigns end (Freimuth, Cole and Kirby 2001). In a study conducted in Thailand by Shrestha (2002) realized that only 6 news/articles on the physical and sexual abuse of children were reported and this included issues such as child rape cases, runaway cases of the culprit, child physical abuse by biological parents as well as adopted parents.

The media have been essential to the growth of society's awareness of child abuse and neglect, not so much from specific community education campaigns as through ongoing news and features reporting on specific cases, research and intervention initiatives (Gough 1996). The failures of child protection services in particular have preoccupied the media in Australia for decades As Saunders and Goddard (2002) have noted, such media coverage has a major impact. Every such death provides opportunities to re-visit previous tragedies for example when a UK tabloid *The Mirror* devoted its entire front page and three other pages to "The lost ones" (7 May 2001). Inside, the paper carried more than 20 stories, accompanied by photographs of children who died as a result of abuse, neglect or murder which helped raise the profile of child abuse in

the UK and eventually made other media to take reporting of child issues with the seriousness it deserves. Similar trend also occurred in Australia, in which on one day (6 June), *The Advertiser* in Adelaide devoted its entire front page to the story of a former magistrate found guilty of sexually abusing young boys; *The Courier Mail* in Queensland carried a major story entitled "Drinking dad drops his baby, court told", while *The Age* in Melbourne reported on its front page that "child-porn swoop leads police to state bureaucrat" (Saunders and Goddard, 2002).

Studies conducted in Kenya on print media coverage of child sexually abuse by Muita and Khamasi(2007) realized that the most newspapers in Kenya adopt a sensationalization approach in reporting in which in there is no evident sympathy for these young girls from either police or newspaper reporters. They argue that the leading newspapers in the country especially *Standard* is apparently bent on making stories out of anything with most newspaper articles report as though commercial sex work is a female gender trade only.

They conclude from the analysis that newspaper coverage of sexuality and sexuality education, HIV and AIDS, reproductive health and rights, sexual orientation and identity, sexual violence and child marriages on the whole, by the media is relatively general and often lacks details. They argue that newspapers seem to assume the basic role of information transmission and not so much of educating or raising the readership's consciousness to issues such as reproductive rights

of women, the adolescents sexual health, sexual violence, HIV and AIDS, and sexual orientation and identity. Muita and Khamasi(2007) recommends that the media can shape public perception about the problem, familiarize the public with available resources, educate policy makers about the problem and the need for effective services and policy, and encourage victims to come forward for help. It can also serve as a deterrent by warning perpetrators and potential abusers of the consequences of their actions.

In this regard newspapers have an important role to play in protecting children from being victims of child abuse. Newspapers have a role to educate the community on effects of child abuse as journalists can help clarify child care issues for the public by identifying the stakeholders, investigating the issue, and reporting stories that help the public and policy makers see the relevance of today's policies for tomorrow's society. They can also help fill the gaps in reporting on child care by probing deeper and asking questions that help illuminate child care issues discussed less frequently (Dorfman, and Woodruff, 1999).

While the newspapers have roles to play in highlighting the plight of abused children, critics have argued that mass-media is to be blamed for the increased cases of child abuse in the world. However McDevit (1996) argues that the media should not be blamed for the increased cases of child abuses since all the media-especially newspapers are doing is to highlighting deep rooted

societal problems that lead to child abuse. As such she argues that media serve to sensitize, arouse public opinions on issues, influence policy makers and call responsible government agencies to take action to protect children from abuse. Child abuse and maltreatment in the world have continued to be a problem which McDevitt(1996) believes the media especially newspapers can have an influence not only in the changing public opinions but getting policy makers into action to address problems of child abuse in the community.

One important study that has shown how important newspapers can be when it comes to effecting policy change is a study conducted in China by Zhao et al (2012) which lead to development of policy guidelines on addressing the problem of runaway children in the Chinese Society. This study realized that mass-media especially newspapers can be used as tools with powerful influence to many juveniles who are fascinated by the adventurous life of runaway portrayed in various as such they recommend that newspapers can also play a role in helping politicians, government representatives and policymakers understand the various types of abuse or neglect, the complexity of some of the issues, and consequently the need for different kinds of resources to address the diverse situations.

In study on role of media in preventing child abuse Kerlinger (2004) concluded that the media can play an important role in exposing the issues and perceptions of child abuse in the world either by confronting the entire issue or evading it altogether. On the other hand Treadwall

(2006) indicates that media most of the time informs the public when a child has been molested and the perpetrator sentenced to jail. As such he attest that the media especially newspapers can serve as the conduit through which the public can gain understanding of what child abuse means and develop mechanism to recognize that it is their responsibility to address the problem in the community.

In the review of literature covered in this study it is evident that coverage given to children's issues by newspapers is generally low and as Oyero (2010) suggests there is need for improvement on the part of newspaper reporters and editors to step up the attention given to children. He believes that media have great roles to play in the realization of children's right, there is need for newspaper organizations to expand the coverage given to children's issues. He suggest that one way of doing this is to devote specific pages to children matters where issues affecting their rights could be featured this is important since the awareness by the public that children issues are treated on specific pages can influence their looking out for such pages when information on children is needed. On the same note children as well, can look forward to such pages to know about themselves. He concludes by suggesting that it will be needful for the government to formulate a policy guideline to compel newspapers to devote a certain percentage of their news coverage to issues that will serve the purpose of protection and promotion of the rights of the child.

## **2.6 Theoretical framework**

Agenda setting theory has been adopted as the theoretical framework of this paper. Agenda setting refers to the operation of the media which results in prioritization of the issues that arise and engage the attention of the society (Oyero, 2010). In this regard McQuil (2005) indicates that that the issues focused upon by the media become the issues that the public accepts as important for attention and discussion. On the other hand it is the process whereby the news media lead the public in assigning relative importance to various public issues.

The media agenda influences public agenda not by saying ‘this issue is important’ in an overt way but by giving more space and time to that issue and by giving it more prominent space and time Oyero (2010). Further more Severin and Tankard (1997) define agenda setting process as the media’s capability, through repeated news coverage, of raising the importance of an issue in the public’s mind. It is a causal hypothesis suggesting that media content has an influence on the public perception of the importance of issues.

They argue that the media can be used to influence policies and the way people think. Moreover, since the treatment of the children’s rights by individuals hinges heavily on their attitudes and behaviour, the media, through the agenda setting process, can immensely change them into positive attributes. In outlining the process of agenda setting Folarin (2005), describe the



elements involved in agenda setting to include: The quantity or frequency of reporting by the media; prominence given to the reporting; the degree of the conflict generated in the reports and cumulative media-specific effects over time. Another explanation on how agenda setting should be conducted is as explained by Lang and Lang (1983) who have expanded further on agenda setting by breaking it into six key steps which are:

1. The press highlights some events or activities and makes them stand out.
2. Different kinds of issues require different kinds and amounts of news coverage to gain attention.
3. The events and activities in the focus of attention must be ‘framed’, or given a field of meanings within which they can be understood.
4. The language used by the media can affect perception of the importance of an issue.
5. The media link the activities or events that have become the focus of attention to secondary symbols whose location on the political landscape is easily recognized and finally
6. Agenda building is accelerated when well-known and credible individuals begin to speak out on an issue.

A critical issue in process of agenda setting is that the journalist or media person setting the agenda must be conversant with topic on which the agenda is being set. Additionally the

journalist should be prepared to implement the issue in stages as the concept of agenda building seems to suggest. In this regard Oyero (2010) states that when the media frame an issue and the code word they use to describe it should have an impact; and that the role of well-known individuals commenting on the issue should be considered as an important one. This is important since agenda setting concept thus raises important questions of responsibility for the journalists. The labels that journalists apply to events can have an important influence on whether the public pays attention to the issues connected with the event.

This study utilizes the agenda setting theory which provides the basis for examining how the press especially newspapers in Kenya has been able to set agenda on coverage of children issues. This theory is helpful in determining how newspapers have been for example assigning relative importance to child related issues through frequency of reporting, the prominence given to such reports and the conflict generated in them as well as the effect their coverage has had in promoting children rights and wellbeing in the society.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methodology used for the study of the selection of news sources in the *Standard* and *Daily Nation* newspaper. The highlights of the chapter are as follows: study design; population of study; sample selection, methods of data collection; data collection procedure; data processing and analysis, limitations of the study and ethical consideration

### **3.1 Research Design**

This was a content analysis of the *Standard and Daily Nation* newspapers published between January 2013 to June 2013 was done for coverage and collection of the news, news features/analysis, news/articles and the sole opinion of the writers on children's issues. The first step was to take a sample the content source, which in this case involve *Standard and Daily Nation* newspapers. The two were chosen because they are among the leading Kenyan newspapers with nationwide circulation and readership respectively. These newspapers also fit study objectives because of their wider content on topic issues as well as for their wide coverage of news in the Eastern Africa region.

### **3.2 Population of study**

This study took interest in *Daily Nation* and the Standard, which are published in Kenya by Nation Media and Standard Group respectively.

### **3.3 Sample selection**

Daily editions of *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* were sampled for review in this study. The content analysis examined copies of the newspaper produced from January 2013 to June 2013. There were no specific consideration for the choice of the particular dates of this study; rather they were chosen for their convenience in terms of availability of the newspapers.

### **3.4 Methods of data collection**

This study used content analysis to collect information. This method was used in an effort to generate data that could answer the questions on newspaper coverage of children issues.

#### **3.4.1 Content Analysis**

Data was collected using content analysis technique. The process involved counting of the frequency of occurrences of the characteristics of news coverage of children issues found in the two newspapers. Hansen et al (1998) indicates that “content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication”

The units of analysis from the two sampled newspapers included all straight news, news analysis,

features, opinions and editorials published. The variables covered included: Education, health, child labor and child abuse.

### **3.5 Data processing and analysis**

Data collected from content analysis was analyzed by examining the percentage of children stories compared to the total number of stories published in each of the newspapers. Findings have been presented as frequencies and percentages

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

This refers to giving attention to ethical issues associated with carrying out research. The Permission to conduct this study was obtained from University of Nairobi. Permission of the Nation Media Group and Standard Group was also sought prior to data collection. Data collected will be kept confidential and the findings will only be used for research purposes.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This section discusses the findings of the study. A total of 240 Newspapers of The Daily Nation (n=120) and The Standard (n=120) were reviewed for the period between January 2013 and June 2013. Sample articles were selected from the newspapers through a broad search by use of keywords such as “child health”, “Child education”, “Child abuse” and Child Labour”. Following the initial selection the articles were selected in terms of merit of their content relating to their relevance to the topic of study.

The criterion for selection was that all articles had to be specifically on children alone. Once the articles were determined to have met the selection criteria they were sorted out by date and data extracted then entered into an Ms Excel Spreadsheet using a range of criteria as outlined in appendix(1).

#### 4.1 Coverage of Children's issues by the selected newspapers

**Figure 1: Distribution of Articles in Daily Nation and The Standard**

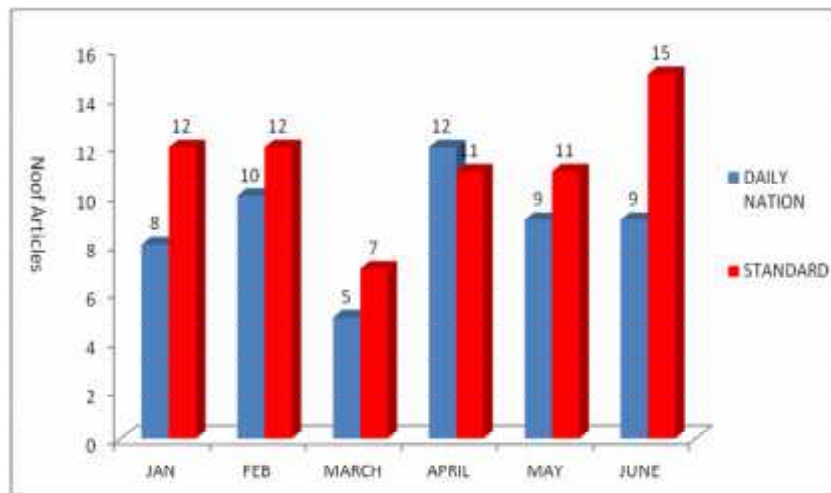


Figure 1 above shows the distribution of children articles during the children under review. The highest number of articles was in June 2013 and the lowest in March 2013.

**Figure 2: Coverage of Children Issues in the Newspapers**

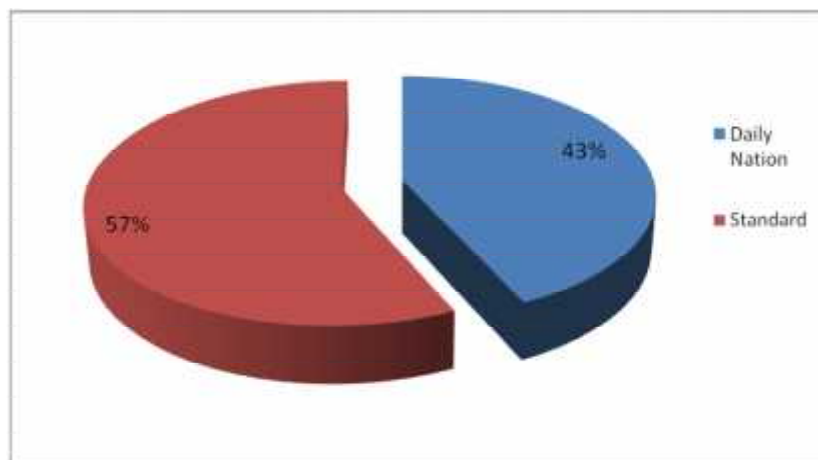


Figure 2 above shows the coverage given to children issues by the two newspapers. A total of 121 stories were covered over the six-month period of study. *The Daily Nation* had 43% of the

children issues while *The Standard* had 57%. *The Standard* reported children issue more than the *Daily Nation*. The newspapers were reviewed for the type of article published either it was a news article, opinion or an advert. News article referred to article that described and explain current news events. Opinion referred to articles written to express an opinion of a contributor other than the Editor. An advert referred to an article published to advertise an event, product or service. Table 1 below gives a summary of the findings.

**Table 1: Type of Article**

Type of Article	Daily Nation	The Standard
News	49	69
Opinion	1	0
Adverts	2	0
Letters to the Editor	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>69</b>

Table 1 above shows that The Daily Nation had 49 news articles on children issues while The Standard had 69 news articles. The Daily Nation had 1 opinion article and 2 adverts respectively while The Standard had no opinion or adverts. The newspapers were also reviewed in terms of where they place children issues in the pages of the newspapers. This was done in to identify whether children article were placed in front page, page 2, page 3, middle pages represented by page 4 in this study and back pages.



<b>Table 2: Placement of Children issues in the Newspaper</b>		
Placement	Daily Nation	The Standard
Front Page	5	1
Page 2	12	9
Page 3	15	18
Middle pages	22	41
Back Pages	0	0
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>52</b>	<b>69</b>

Table 2 above shows that The Daily Nation had 5 children issues in the front page as compared to The Standard which had only 1 children issue in the front page. In page two of the newspaper, Daily Nation had 12 articles published and the Standard had 9 articles. In page 3 of the newspapers Daily Nation had 15 articles on children issues while The Standard had 18 articles.

In placement of children in the middle pages The Daily Nation had 22 articles and The Standard had 41 articles. None of the newspapers had children issues appearing in the back pages.

The level of prominence, in terms of page placement, given to a report has implication on the extent to which the newspapers have set agenda for the issue. The newspapers were reviewed on the extent to which they accorded prominence to children issues as shown in table 4 below.

**Table 3: Prominence of Children issues in the Newspaper**

Prominence	Daily Nation	The Standard
News Splash	7	6
Second Lead Story	8	10
Special Commentaries	10	9
News Briefs	27	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>69</b>

Table 3 shows that the Daily Nation had children issues appearing 7 times as News splash in the pages of the newspapers while children issues appears 6 times as News Splash in the Standard.

Children issues appeared 8 times as second lead story in the pages of Daily Nation while in The Standard it appeared 10 times. Special commentaries appeared 10 times in the Daily Nation and 9 times in the Standard for the period under review. Most of the children issues appeared as news briefs on the sides of newspaper pages 27 times in Daily Nation and 44 times in The Standard.

#### **4.2 Type and Prominence of Children issues**

Coverage of children topics in thematic areas of health, education, child abuse and child labour were reviewed in both the Daily Nation and The Standard.

**Table 4: Coverage of Children Topics**

Theme	The Daily Nation		The Standard	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Health	12	23%	10	14.5%
Education	28	54%	14	20.3%
Child Abuse	8	15%	20	28.9%
Child Labour	4	8%	25	36.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 shows that the Daily Nation had 54% coverage of Education issues in Children while the Standard has coverage of 20.3% on the education. In terms of Health issues the Daily Nation had coverage of 23% while the Standard had coverage of 14.5%. On issues of child abuse the Daily Nation had coverage of 15% and The Standard had coverage of 28.9%.

On issues of Child Labour the Daily Nation had a coverage of 8% while the Standard had coverage of 36.3%. This shows that the Daily Nation had higher coverage of health and education issues in children as compared to The Standard. On the other hand The Standard had higher coverage of issues on Child Abuse and Child Labour as compared to the Daily Nation.

The newspapers were analyzed for prominence given to the children issues by determining if the issue appeared as News Splash, Second Lead Story, Special Commentaries or as News Brief (Table 5) it shows that children health issues appeared in both newspapers as news briefs.

**Table 5: Prominence of Children Health issues in Newspaper**

Theme	Prominence	Daily Nation	The Standard
Health	News Splash	3	2
	Second Lead Story	2	2
	Special Commentaries	2	
	News Brief	5	6

**Figure 3: Prominence of Education issues in the Newspapers**

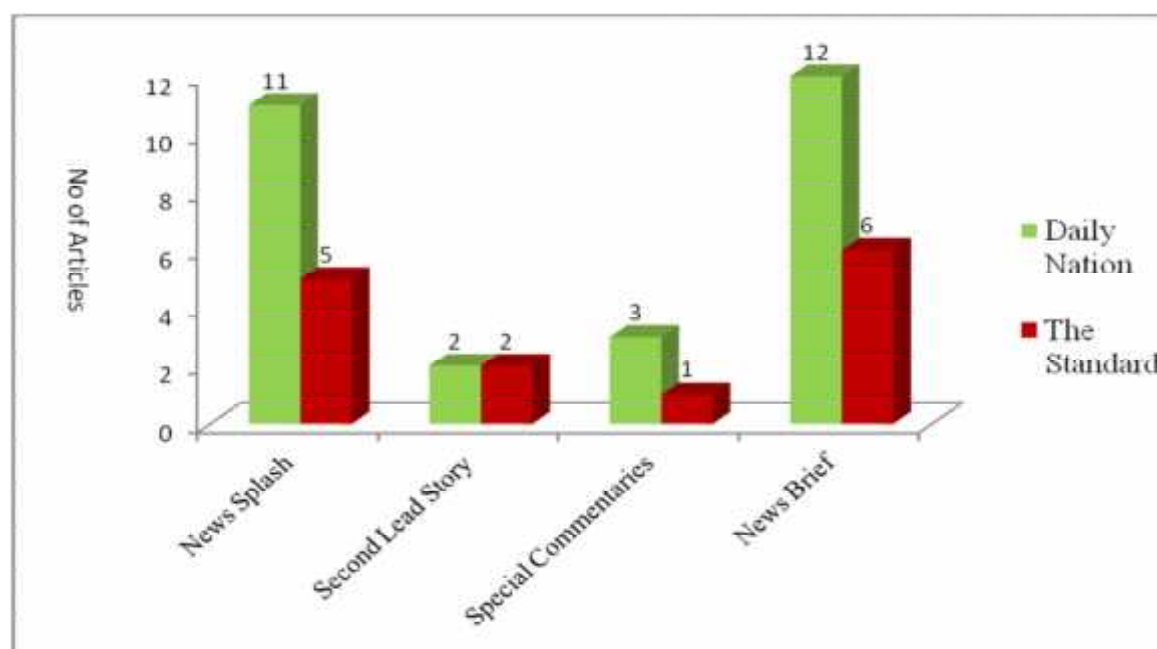


Figure 3 show that in both newspapers education issues appeared as news briefs 12 times in Daily Nation and 6 times in the Standard. Education issues appear as news splash 11 times in Daily Nation and 5 times in the Standard. Both newspapers had 2 articles appearing as second lead story. In terms of special commentaries the Daily Nation had 3 articles and the Standard one Article.

**Table 6: Prominence of Child Abuse issues in the Newspapers**

Theme	Prominence	Daily Nation	The Standard
Health	News Splash	1	1
	Second Lead Story	0	1
	Special Commentaries	1	3
	News Brief	6	15
Total		8	20

Table 6 above shows that in the Standard newspaper had 15 articles on child abuse appearing as news brief while the Daily Nation had 6 articles on child abuse appearing as news brief. The Standard had 3 special commentaries on child abuse and the Daily Nation had a single special commentaries.

**Fig 4: Prominence of Child Labour issues in the Newspapers**

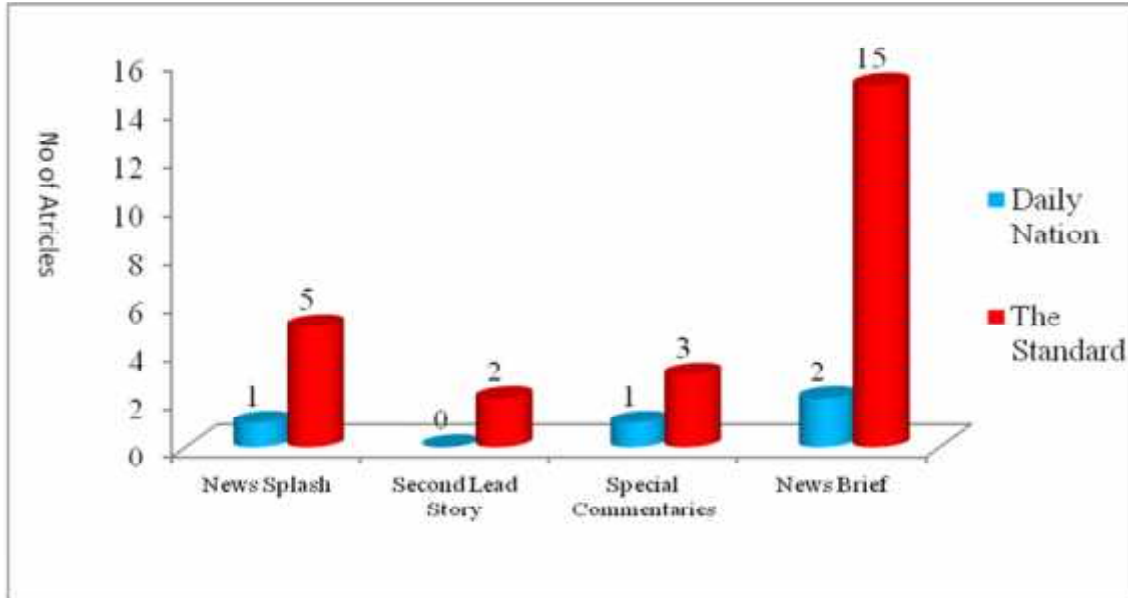


Figure 4 shows the prominence given to child labour issues in the two newspapers. The Standard had a higher coverage of child labour issues in which 15 articles appeared as news briefs; 3 articles appeared as special commentaries; 2 articles appeared as the second lead story and 5 appears as news splash. In the Daily Nation, 2 articles appeared as news briefs, 1 as special commentaries, none as second lead story and 1 as news splash.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This section discusses the findings in summary as well comparing and contrasting findings realized to those of similar studies. Finally conclusion and recommendations emanating from this study are presented.

### **5.1 Summary of the Findings**

This study was conducted with aim of determining the extent of coverage of children issues at *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. Significant findings realized shows that *The Standard* reported children issues more than the *Daily Nation*. Most of the children issues appeared as news article with the *Daily Nation* having 49 news articles and *The Standard* 69 news articles.

In terms of placement in the newspapers both newspapers placed children issues in the middle pages than in the front pages or the back pages. The *Standard* had 41 articles placed in the middle pages and the *Daily Nation* had 22 articles. In terms of front pages the *Daily Nation* had 5 articles in front page and *the Standard* had only one article while none of the newspapers had children issues appearing in the back pages.

Most children issues appeared as news briefs both newspapers 27 times in the Daily Nation and 44 times in *The Standard*. On the other hand children issues were given low prominence only appearing 7 times as News Splash in *Daily Nation* and 6 times as News Splash in the *Standard*. In terms of prominence as the lead story children issues appeared more in the Standard as compared to the Daily Nation. The Daily Nation had more coverage of children issues appearing as special commentaries as compared to the Standard.

Selected themes of health, education, child abuse and child labour appeared in varying frequencies in the two newspapers. The *Daily Nation* had higher coverage of health and education issues in children while *The Standard* had higher coverage of issues on Child Abuse and Child Labour. In both the newspapers the themes appeared more times as news briefs. The Standard newspaper had a high coverage of these themes as news briefs while the Daily Nation had a higher coverage of the themes as news splash especially in health and education issues.

## **5.2 Discussion of the Findings**

Evidence gathered from this study shows there is low coverage of children issues in two leading newspapers in Kenya. For a period of six months the two newspapers with wide national coverage and public readership had published only 121 articles to cover issues on children. It is evident that children are invisible in the newspapers content. Majority of these articles appeared



in *the Standard* newspaper as compared to the *Daily Nation*. In the same period the month March 2013 recorded the lowest number of articles covering children issues probably because this was the general election period. This shows that political news is highlighted more compared to children issues.

The low coverage of children's issues in this study is similar to others carried out on children issues. Taiphapoon and Muthitacharoen (2009) indicates from a study conducted in Thailand that coverage of children in the newspapers was more passive than pro-active, as news stories and news pictures are by their very nature a brief and straight forward presentation of situations as they occurred. The UNICEF (2004) argues that there is simply lack of coverage of children and young people in the news. They report that the available little coverage that there is often portrays children in the context of sensationalist issues, e.g., child abuse, exploitation and violence, with little respect for the dignity and privacy of the children and scant opportunity for young people to speak for themselves. Oyero (2010) in content analysis of *Daily Times* and *The Guardian* in Nigeria realized that there is low coverage of children issues. She argues that children issues are rarely given prominence; instead, children are shunned or scantily reported with most of their cases end up as "briefs" or "fillers" in the newspapers or news broad cast.

Placement of children issues in the middle pages than in the front pages or in the back pages makes them hidden from the public as such they may not draw the attention that it requires. This study shows that children issues may not be considered as news worth by the newspapers hence their placement in middle pages. Children issues are important in any society as such they need to be accorded equal or near equal profile by the newspapers in this country. Consistent with this finding Oyero (2010) argues that when someone reads a newspaper, the first point they look at is the front page and then the back page before checking the stories inside the newspapers. She recommends that putting children's stories on the front page will thus increase their newsworthiness. This she believed can be achieved even though, there are many stories competing for the front page and one way of doing this is to set some children's news headlines in the front page, while the stories continue in the inside pages. This she believes will raise the profile of children issues in the print media.

The prominence accorded to children issues in thematic areas of health, education, child labour and abuse shows that they appeared mostly as news briefs. Health problems in children are so common as such I expected to find higher coverage in the newspapers. Many children die of malnutrition, infectious diseases like Malaria and HIV/AIDS as such if the newspapers would have given high coverage on topical issues of disease preventions the public would be more informed on how to prevent some of these diseases. As Kayode and Adeniran (2012) reports

despite many countries including Kenya adopting the Millennium Development Goals it is shocking that Goal 4 on *child mortality* and Goal 5 on *maternal health* are among the least reported MDG issues. Therefore they recommend that there is an urgent need for an increased media focus on maternal and child health by increasing coverage in the newspapers to help raise the profile of achieving the goals. Wallack et al(1993) also concurs that the media especially newspapers are not committed on performing public health advocacy role as expected as such they need to scale up coverage of children issues.

In this review children health issues had only 22 articles out of the 121 published which shows that children health issues had low coverage of less than 10%. This is low similar to those realized by Woodruff et al (2001) in their analysis of newspaper coverage of child nutrition issues in California who realized that despite the importance children's health and well being fewer than five percent of news and opinion pieces appeared in the newspapers. In this regard Byrd and Elliot (1988) believe that if we are ever to change people's perceptions of children health including disability, we must identify the media's abounding messages about the subject by profiling them more in newspapers.

Education of children is an integral component of national development of which the media have a role to play by highlighting the profile of education in children. They need to highlight the

success realized; challenges children are facing and also provide solutions to the problems. Unfortunately this study shows that children education issues appear more frequently as news briefs than as news splash or as the leading story. To raise the profile child education newspapers need to do more reporting since UNICEF(2004) suggest that newspapers coverage of education issues among children can have a strong influence on how the public and policy makers interpret and respond to education needs of children. While Aday (1997) argues that newspapers have a role to play in improving education of our children in the society however, this has not been the case as such they need to increase on objective reporting of children issues they are important sources of information in the society.

Child abuse affects in varying proportions. In the recent past cases of children being molested, sexually abused or even being abandoned has continued to increase in the country. Consistent with this increase this study showed that the both newspapers reported more cases of child abuse although most of time child abuse cases appeared as news briefs. This shows that child abuse is on upward trend in the society. It also shows that the media is highlighting more cases of child abuse in the society. This is important as it will draw the attention of policy makers, children advocates and the government to take action. Wurtele and Miller-Perrin (1993) observed that media coverage of child sexual assault helps to demystify and reduce the secrecy that has

surrounded its occurrence; while Freimuth, Cole and Kirby (2001) believes that coverage of such incidents in the media may lead to behavioral change.

The prominence given to child abuse issues was found to be low in this study. Child abuse cases appeared only once as news splash in both newspapers with most of the time being reported as news briefs. This is quite a low profile compared to that realized by Saunders and Goddard (2002) in which the UK tabloid *The Mirror* devoted its entire front page and three other pages to "The lost ones" (7 May 2001). Inside, the paper carried more than 20 stories, accompanied by photographs of children who died as a result of abuse, neglect or murder which helped raise the profile of child abuse in the UK and eventually made other media to take reporting of child issues with the seriousness it deserves.

The newspapers reviewed in this study reported more cases of child abuse as compared to the other three themes. This might make the public to criticize the newspapers as being responsible for the increased cases of child abuses yet in actual sense the newspapers are highlighting the plight of abused children. McDevitt (1996) argues that the media should not be blamed for the increased cases of child abuses since all the media-especially newspapers are doing is to highlighting deep rooted societal problems that lead to child abuse. As such she argues that

media serve to sensitize, arouse public opinions on issues, influence policy makers and call responsible government agencies to take action to protect children from abuse.

Child labour has occurred in our society in alarming magnitudes, yet only a few cases of child abuses seem to be highlighted in the media especially newspapers. The prominence accorded to child labour is quite low as realized in this study. The Standard newspaper had high coverage of issues on child labour although only as news briefs. This low profile accorded to the problem of child labour by newspapers is worrying given the detrimental effect of child labour on education, health and wellbeing of children in this country. In contrast Nguyen (2009) reported that the burden of child labor is well highlighted in Vietnam by the leading newspaper He reports that the Labor newspaper reported had coverage of 30 percent on child labour issues. Oyero (2010) argues that the newspapers do not have to shout that child labour is an important agenda but all they have to do is to accord it more prominent space and time.

In relation to the theoretical underpinnings it seems that children issues are given a low profile in the agenda of two newspapers reviewed in this study. The agenda setting process allows the media through repeated news coverage to raising the importance of children issues in the public's mind yet this is not the case as realized in this study. Public understanding of the children's issues hinges heavily on their attitudes and behaviour, the media, through the agenda

setting process, can immensely change them into positive attributes. Folarin (2005) argues that these newspapers can raise the profile of children issues by increasing the quantity or frequency of reporting and giving more prominence leading to cumulative effects over time. In raising the profile of children issues McQuil (2005) indicates children issues should be focused upon by newspapers which will make the issues be accepted by the public as important for attention and discussion. Oyero (2010) further suggests that newspapers should frame children issue with labels that have an impact, since labels that journalists apply to events can have an important influence on whether the public pays attention to the issues connected with the event.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The study analyzed the newspaper coverage of children issues and the findings show that there is need to increase coverage of children issues by the leading newspapers. Doing so will help raise the profile of children in the society. The media, therefore, take more responsibility in setting agenda for children by giving them adequate coverage and appropriate prominence so that relevant government and public attention could be directed to address children issues in the society.

Principle reason explaining the low coverage of children issues in the newspapers is that children issues are considered not news worthy compared to politics or economic issues. Yet in actual

sense children are affected more by the political decisions and economic problems being experienced in any society.

The limitations of this study are that it was exploratory and it is limited by the amount of newspapers reviewed and people interviewed. As such the findings may not be a true representation of what is happening in the print media as far as coverage of children issues is concerned. Further studies with large number of newspapers being reviewed would be appropriate.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

There is need for improvement on the part of newspaper reporters and editors to step up the attention given to children. There is need for newspaper organizations to expand the coverage given to children's issues and one way of doing this is to devote specific pages to children matters where issues affecting their rights could be featured. This is important since the awareness by the public that children issues are treated on specific pages can influence their looking out for such pages when information on children is needed.

It will be needful for the government to formulate a policy guideline to compel newspapers to devote a certain percentage of their news coverage to issues that will serve the purpose of increasing the profile of children issues in the society.



I recommend that the media should strengthen the symbiotic relationship with the public by providing ethical and balanced coverage of children issues to the public. This will go a long way in shaping the opinion of the public and also raising the profile of children issues in the society.

Deliberate efforts should be made by the newspapers to develop a weekly children edition independent of daily publications that will focus on children issues in education, health, sports and in entertainment.

### **5.5 Suggestions for further research**

Based on the findings of this study the researcher suggests that there is need to conduct further studies to:

- i. Determine the understanding of newspapers journalists and editors on importance of children issues as news items.
- ii. Assess the public rating of newspaper coverage of children issues in the country.
- iii. Examine the perceptions of professionals involved with children such as educationists, pediatricians and child right activist view the role of newspapers in addressing the plight of children in this country.

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**APPEDIX I: CODE SHEET**

Date And Type Of Newspaper 1=DN* 2=STD*	Theme	Number of Articles On Children	Type Article 1=News 2=Opinion 3=Adverts	Placement Page 1 2 3 Other=4	Prominence 1=News Splash 2=Second Lead Story 3=Special Commentaries 4=News Brief	Main Event	Main Subject
	Health						
	Education						
	Child Abuse						
	Child Labour						
	Health						
	Education						
	Child Abuse						
	Child Labour						

\*DN=Daily Nation. STD= The Standard.