

**KENYA'S PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE
MANDERA AND GARISSA TERRORIST ATTACKS**

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DECLARATION

This research project is my own original work. It has not been previously presented for the award of any degree in any other university.

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.

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ABSTRACT

In the recent years, Kenyans have been scarred repeatedly by a series of attacks by the Al Shabaab terrorist group based in neighbouring Somalia. The devastating attacks have been characterised by profiling and targeting of non-Muslims, a tactic that has polarised Kenyans along religious lines and increased likelihood of conflict. This study sought to find out how the print media covered religious communities, specifically Christians and Muslims, in the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera (November/December 2014) and Garissa University College (April 2015) in the context of the Code of Conduct for the Practice of journalism by the Media Council of Kenya (2013) and the backdrop of interreligious polarisation occasioned by previous attacks. Both attacks under study were characterised by separation of Muslims and Christians before the latter were killed. The study analysed contents of 133 news articles that made direct references to the two religious communities within four weeks of the attacks. For the Mandera attack, articles were selected between November 23rd to December 23rd 2014 while for the Garissa attack; they were selected between April 2nd to May 2nd 2015. The study also interviewed six journalists and two editors regarding the print media coverage of those attacks to gain deeper insights into the matter. The study established that the coverage of religious communities in the two publications was largely done professionally in line with the Code of Conduct for the practice of journalism in Kenya with the exceptions of a few shortcomings. In addition, the coverage was largely done in a manner that is not polarising. Instead, the majority of articles published emphasised national unity among Kenyans of all religious communities to combat Al Shabaab. The study recommends that the media should exercise extra caution in reporting terrorist attacks to ensure that they do so professionally and accurately without fanning interreligious polarisation and conflicts in the country.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In the recent years, Kenyans have been facing increasing attacks from the Al Shabaab militant group based in Somalia. The mounting and indiscriminate attacks have not only caused the loss of hundreds of lives in Kenya but have also left many people with life-long debilitating injuries. In addition, as Schroeder, Pennington-Gray, & Bricker (2014) indicate, key pillars of the economy, particularly tourism, have been adversely affected, as potential visitors give Kenya a wide berth. Kinyanjui (2014) also indicates that investor confidence has plummeted as a result of the heightened climate of fear and insecurity.

The attacks by Al Shabaab which have been characterised primarily by the profiling and targeting of people who are perceived not to be Muslims, have heightened interreligious tensions and divisions and increased likelihood of conflict between Kenyans professing different religions specifically Christianity and Islam as Otiso (2009) asserts.

Kenya is made up of a diverse mix of religious affiliations. The International Religious Freedom report by United States of America's State Department (2013) asserts that 80 per cent of the population in Kenya are Christians, while Muslims make up at least 10 per cent. It indicated that while Kenyans of different religious faiths have co-existed peacefully for many years, the emergence of terrorism is straining relations and increasing likelihood of interreligious polarisation and conflict.

The attacks by Al Shabaab have attracted significant coverage from the mass media in Kenya and around the world. This study analysed how the print media, specifically the two largest daily newspapers in Kenya (*The Daily Nation* and *the Standard*), covered religious

communities such as Muslims and Christians in the recent devastating Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera (November/December 2014) and Garissa University College (April 2015).

1.2 The Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University College

The Al Shabaab group has attacked Kenyans many times in the recent years, but among the worst attacks were the ones in Mandera in November/December 2014 and Garissa University College in April 2015 in which more than 200 people lost their lives while hundreds of others were injured.

On 23rd of November, Al Shabaab gunmen hijacked a bus in Mandera before killing 28 people inside whom they had identified as non-Muslims after separating them from those who identified themselves as Muslims. In the dawn attack, unarmed civilians were shot dead on point blank range by Al Shabaab, sparking national outrage at the brutality and the profiling of people on religious lines. A week later, Al Shabaab attackers struck again, this time at a quarry just outside Mandera killing 36 workers whom they identified as non-Muslims. This was reported by Jubat, A. (2014).

Again, on the dawn of April 2, 2015, Al Shabaab gunmen stormed the Garissa University College and killed about 150 people, mostly unarmed students and injuring at least 80 more in what they said was retaliation for the presence of Kenyan soldiers in Somalia since October 2011. The attackers were eventually killed by Kenya's security forces, but the attack left the country in shock and pain at the massive loss of lives. This was reported by Mutambo, A. (2015). In both attacks, Al Shabaab separated Muslims from Christians before executing the latter sparking outrage.

1.3. Problem Statement

Some previous studies on media coverage of terrorism in Kenya have concluded that they have largely not adhered to the Media Council of Kenya Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism (2013) and risked polarising Kenyans along religious and ethnic lines.

For instance, a study by the Media Council of Kenya (2014) analysed a selection of newspaper articles and TV clips in the Kenyan media and found that they largely did not adhere to the Code of Conduct and the coverage could polarise Kenyans along religious lines through sensationalist and alarmist reporting of terrorism, use of bloody pictures and abhorrent scenes, and inability to separate fact from commentary among other anomalies.

Another study by Kisang (2014) reviewed a selection of television news documentaries on terrorism in Kenya and concluded that the coverage, especially those dubbed as investigative stories, were not done professionally and were likely to enhance interreligious polarisations in the country through glorifying terrorism.

The code asserts, in part, that news, views or comments on ethnic, religious or sectarian issues should be presented with due caution and restraint and not in a manner likely to inflame the passions, aggravate the tension or accentuate the strained relations between the communities concerned.

From the foregoing, this study seeks to establish how the print media covered religious communities in the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University to see if they had improved their practice in reporting terrorism and had learnt the lessons of the previous studies cited. The previous studies cited did not include the Mandera and Garissa attacks by Al Shabaab which occurred after the studies had long been published.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 Main research objectives

Find out how *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* newspapers in Kenya covered religious communities in the Mandera and Garissa University College attacks by Al Shabaab in the context of the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya (2013).

Establish how the media coverage of the attacks tackled the question of interreligious polarisation among Kenyans caused by terrorist attacks.

1.4.2 Specific research objectives

Find out the main themes in the coverage of Al Shabaab attacks of Mandera and Garissa University College by the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard*.

Establish the tonality of articles in the coverage of the attacks.

Find out the language used in the articles.

Establish the nature of photos used.

Find out the nature of headlines used in the articles.

Establish the presence of stereotypes in the articles.

Find out the placement of the articles in the two newspapers in terms of page and size.

Establish the frequency of the articles touching on religious communities in the two publications.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How did the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* cover religious communities in the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University College in the context of the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya (2013).
2. How did the media coverage of the attacks tackle the question of interreligious polarisation among Kenyans due to terrorist attacks?

1.6 Justification of the Study

Firstly, religious communities in Kenya such as Christians and Muslims are central in the media coverage of terrorism, since the perpetrators of the attacks, claim to be doing so in the name of religion while victimising others on the basis of their religion.

At a time of increasing interreligious tensions and potential of conflict in Kenya due to Al Shabaab attacks that target Kenyans along religious lines, inaccurate and unprofessional coverage of religious communities in the media are likely to worsen the situation and put the stability of the country at stake.

So this study seeks to find out how the print media covered religious communities in the Mandera and Garissa attacks by Al Shabaab in the context of the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya and how they tackled the question of interreligious tensions and divisions. The recent Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University offer a valuable opportunity to evaluate the print media coverage of the attacks in the backdrop of previous research studies that found media coverage of terrorism in Kenya as potentially likely to aggravate inter-religious tensions and divisions.

Secondly, it would be critical to find out how best the media can report on terrorist attacks professionally without aggravating tensions, divisions and conflict along religious lines in Kenya as required by the Code of Conduct.

Thirdly, media coverage of terrorism in the country is a timely and relevant subject as Kenyans continue to grapple with the recent threat of terrorism that has visited the country's shores.

Fourthly, the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* were selected for the study because they are the largest newspapers Kenya in terms of circulation and readership. In addition, they often set the agenda on the national issues of the day, including terrorism. They not only influence the public directly by shaping their opinions but also have considerable impact on policy makers who consume their content. Moreover, the publications influence how other media houses in the country, including electronic ones, report about vital issues of national interest including terrorism. This is in line with the assertion that "elite newspapers has been found influence other "lower cadre" news organizations as well as the policy makers in each country" by inspiring copycat coverage (Dimitrova and Stromback, 2008).

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study focused on the print media coverage of religious communities in the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera (November/December 2014) and Garissa University College (April 2015). The study focused on the coverage in the *Daily Nation* and *the Standard* newspapers from November 23rd 2014 to 23rd December 2014 for the Mandera attack and April 2nd 2015 to May 2nd 2015 for the Garissa University College.

1.8 Purpose of the study

The study sought to add to the volume of knowledge and insights which can facilitate media houses, individual journalists and editors to report on terrorist attacks and terrorism generally more professionally without fuelling interreligious divisions and conflict among Kenyans.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Since this study focussed on two newspapers only, its findings may be limited since all the other media outlets, including electronic and print were not considered because of limitations of resources. The Kenyan media is vibrant in terms of the numbers of print and electronic outlets which may have covered the Mandera and Garissa attacks in distinctly different ways from the two publications under study. The findings of this study, therefore, may not necessarily, apply to the other media houses in Kenya.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores previous studies of how the media has covered terrorist attacks in Kenya and across the world with emphasis on religious communities to give a context to this study. It also gives a snapshot of religious communities in Kenya. In addition, this section outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study and the gap in knowledge to be filled by this research.

2.2 Religious communities in Kenya

The population of Kenya is diverse in terms of religious and ethnic affiliation. According to the International Religious Freedom report by US State Department (2013), Christianity and Islam have the highest number of followers in Kenya. Approximately 80 per cent of the population in Kenya is Christian and 15 per cent is Muslim with rest being taken by Hindus, Sikhs, Baha'is and traditional religious beliefs. The report also indicated that among Christian followers in Kenya, approximately 57 per cent are Protestant, 29 per cent Roman Catholic, and 14 per cent other Christian denominations. About 30 per cent of Kenya's Muslims are ethnic Somalis, while a substantial number also live in the Coastal parts of the country. The rest live in other parts of Kenya as minorities in Christian-dominated regions. These religious communities have lived in harmony for many years, a situation disrupted only recently by the Al Shabaab attacks in Kenya in the name of religion.

2.3 Media and terrorism

An agreed definition of terrorism remains problematic but the one provided by Shmidt (1983) is comprehensive, with a focus on the communication intent of terrorism.

"Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby — in contrast to assassinations — the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative of symbolic targets) from a target population and serve as message generators. Threat- and- violence - based communication processes between terrorist (organizations), imperilled victims and the main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience[s]) turning it into a target of terror , a target of demands, or a target of attention depending on whether intimidation, coercion or propaganda is primarily sought." (p. 70).

The relation between media and terrorism is complex with previous research exploring various aspects of this relationship. For instance, (Bowen, 2005) argues that terrorist groups always actively seek to exploit the media to draw attention to themselves and their causes such that "there is no such thing as bad publicity" for such groups. The author highlights the central dilemma of media between legitimising the terrorists by reporting about them versus informing and warning their audiences of the terrorist events.

Similarly (Nagar, 2007) asserts that terrorists exploit the media for both tactical and strategic purposes to mobilise support and gain public recognition". The terrorists understand that their acts provide countless news stories for the media who cannot afford to ignore reporting them.

Tuman (2010) indicates that mass media is invariably drawn into reporting terrorist incidences owing to the dramatic way in which the attacks are carried out with terrorists aiming to attract and exploit as much media attention as possible to reach the larger audience with their messages. Similarly, Nacos (2007) asserts extensive media coverage of terrorist attacks unwittingly fits into the terrorists' main objective of spreading a climate of fear and despondency among the target population.

Nacos (2006) asserts that by framing terrorist events with sensationalism and prominent coverage, media houses may be unwittingly helping architects of terrorism to take advantage of the media for propaganda schemes. He suggests that reporting of terrorism should be consciously done without sensationalism and dramatization in order to deny terrorists their attention and propaganda opportunity.

Chesbro & Bertelsen (1996) assert that mass audiences may be have limited capacity in terms of critiquing framing of news events including terrorism partly because of increasing information overload that they are subjected to from the mass media. This means that the influence of the mass media on opinions of the population is even greater since the audiences have little opportunity to critically interrogate the messages they are bombarded to by the mass media at a very high rate.

Berrebi and Klor (2008) indicate that prominent and sensational coverage of terrorism incidences by the mass media dramatically increases fear and anxiety in the population making some members of the public prefer counterterrorism policies that rely on force, even though other policies may be more effective. This means that the media framing of terrorism can significantly influence how the public perceives the severity of the threat as well as what they deem should be the appropriate response.

Maslog (1971) asserts that the mass media has the capacity to create powerful stereotypes and associations about groups, religions and people through repeated and consistent presentation of news and information in certain patterns. Therefore media coverage of terrorism can lead to demonization of certain groups within a population and incite backlash against them as a result of the enhanced discord and hardening of opinions in that society.

Omanga (2012) explored frames constructed by editorial cartoons in Kenya's main newspapers regarding terrorism and specifically the September 11th 2001 attack in the United States. Critically analysing the cartoons, the author brings out various frames including universalizing the event and uniting the world against terrorism. But on the other hand, some of the cartoons were found to be playing into the terrorist propaganda by depicting the phenomenon as too overwhelming for the world to cope.

2.4 Media Coverage of Terrorism and Religious Communities Globally

A number of research studies have established that global or western media tends to stigmatise religious communities, especially Muslims in their coverage of terrorism. They do by repeatedly associating them with terrorism. Powell (2011) indicates that news coverage of terrorist events in the United States since the September 11 2001 attack revealed thematic patterns in which the fear of international terrorism is dominant with Muslims and Arabs being cast as a "threat" against "Christian America". On the other hand, domestic terrorism from local Americans who are not Muslim themselves is framed as a minor threat to national security. This characterisation has left Americans with a view that Muslims are a threat to the security of the country, making them more vulnerable to hostility, suspicions and physical attacks against them.

(Ruigrok & van Atteveldt, 2007) conducted a content analysis in a section of media after the Sept 11 attacks in the US and concluded the media frames created a strong framework of Muslims as terrorists in all investigated media. The authors assert that the negative media frames are likely to have contributed to the hostility against Muslims in that country.

Reese & Lewis (2009) suggests that the US media uncritically adopted the government's "War on Terror" frame for many years after the tragic September 11 attack on US soil with many journalists using that frame to structure and present their articles while "treating it as an uncontested 'thing' – and naturalized it, suggesting they accepted its use as a way of describing a prevailing condition of modern life.". In other words, the media was uncritically transmitting to audiences how the US leadership was framing the response to the attacks in their country.

Smith (2013) argues that the US media coverage of Muslim Americans in the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001 attacks brought down anti-Muslim sentiment as they focused heavily on critiquing stereotypes and documenting violations of Muslims' civil liberties. He asserted that since the mass media were acutely aware that fear can lead to prejudice, the shapers of American public opinion self-consciously and successfully sought to counteract that tendency. This shows that media can play a critical role in preserving social harmony after terrorist attacks. However, the researcher asserts that several months later after the attacks, after the mass media relaxed its focus on fighting prejudice and anger against Muslims, the sentiments against Muslims recorded a slight increase.

Capella & Jamieson (1997) assert that the mass media is a powerful agent that influences how the people and the policy makers in government perceive, interpret and respond to issues, including terrorism. This means that if the media portrayals of religious communities

in the coverage of terrorism are likely to influence perception and response of considerable number of people in the country including decision-makers in the top echelons of government.

2.5 Media Coverage of Terrorism and Religious Communities in Kenya

A recent study by Kisang (2014) found that television media coverage in Kenya, especially those dubbed as investigative stories enhanced interreligious polarisations and divisions in the country. The study established that the media houses gave much space for Al Shabaab and its affiliates to communicate their harsh and extremist rhetoric to Kenyans thus enhancing divisions along religious lines. The same researcher also stresses in his study that the TV reports were not meeting their fundamental role of promoting understanding between different individuals and groups by presenting content in such a way that it was likely to strain the available relationship between various groups in the country especially Christians and Muslims.

On their part, Owala, Mohochi, & Indede (2013) studied the effect of terrorism news on readers of *Taifa Leo* newspaper in Kenya and concluded that its “biased” coverage against religious communities, specifically Muslims created suspicion, enmity and generally polarised interreligious relations in the country by creating in-group and out-group relationships. The researchers concluded that the language used in the newspaper articles, employed by the news reporters or the people they quoted enhanced prejudice and stigmatisation against people from Muslim, Somali or Arab backgrounds and enhanced interreligious divisions.

Similarly, a recent study by the Media Council of Kenya (2014) suggested that sensational reporting of terrorism by local media was fanning religious intolerance and divisions among

Kenyans of different faiths. The study, which reviewed the content of some selected newspaper articles and TV reports on terrorism, concluded that that lack of adherence to the professional conduct in the practice of journalism had caused skewed coverage of terrorism and polarised Kenyans along religious lines. Some of the violations of the code of conduct that the media was found to have committed included propagation of stereotypes against religious communities, use of polarising language and sensational headlines leading to enhanced divisions and tensions among Kenyans along religious and ethnic lines. Notably, all the above studies in Kenya were conducted before the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University College in November/December 2014 and April 2015 respectively.

The Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism developed by the Media Council of Kenya (2013) asserts that news, views or comments on ethnic, religious or sectarian dispute should not inflame passions, aggravate tensions and accentuate strained relations between the communities concerned. In addition, it cautions against stereotyping communities but instead reporting should be fair, accurate and unbiased.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The study relied on the Agenda Setting, Theory and Theory of Media Framing, since they were found to be the most useful and applicable to this study:

2.6.1 Agenda Setting Theory

This theory was first crafted by Dr. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw while studying the 1968 presidential elections pitting Democratic Party candidate Lyndon B. Johnson and his Republican Party rival Richard Nixon. The researchers surveyed 100 residents of Chapel Hill town in North Carolina State regarding what they thought were the most important issues regarding the election. This information was juxtaposed with the coverage of the local and

national media in the US. It emerged that what the voters thought were the most important issues in the elections is what the media was treating as the most important, meaning the voters were strongly influenced by the media. (McCombs & Shaw, 1972)

According to Hester & Gibson (2003), agenda setting is the phenomenon in which the mass media selects and highlights issues prominently and frequently, leading the consumers of the media to perceive the highlighted issues as more important than others. By this process of putting emphasis on certain issues, the mass media ends up determining what the consumers of the media think and discuss about.

Littlejohn (2002) indicates that Agenda Setting theory has one level which enacts the common subjects that are most important while the second level is about which parts of the subject are important. On their part, Rogers & Dearing (1988) identify three types of agenda setting namely: public, media and policy agenda setting. In public agenda setting, it is the audience's agenda that is the focus, while media agenda setting focuses on the media influences on its audiences. On its part, policy agenda setting is about how media and public agendas might influence the decisions of elite policy makers.

McCombs, Maxwell & Donald (1979) assert that the media tells its consumers (1) what to think about (Agenda Setting) and (2) how to think about it (framing). But Walgrave & Van Aelst (2006) assert that the media does not have all the cards in this issues since its coverage of events and issues also interacts with the audience's' preconceived beliefs which might impact on how the issues are perceived. The media is not seen as all-powerful in influencing its audiences.

This theory is useful since it reveals how the media can determine what people think about and what they consider important through its selection and emphasis of the issues to publicise. It also influences what part of the news we focus on.

2.6.2 Theory of Media Framing

Goffman (1974) suggests mass media audiences make sense of news or information through patterns of organisation and presentation done by the media. Those patterns constitute the "frames" through which mass media audience can perceive the event or persons being reported. Papacharissi and Oliveira (2008) write that framing theory emphasizes the ability of media, individuals, or organizations to define reality, highlighting one interpretation while de-emphasizing a less favoured one. He describes a frame as the central idea around which attributes of events are organized within individual schemata. He argues that by selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, one promotes a particular definition and interpretation.

Shook (2000) asserts that every news event is filtered or interpreted through a certain lens or "angle" by the communicator to create one "version" of reality which is not necessarily the objective or dispassionate or the dispassionate one which is then communicated to the audience. On their part, Jamieson and Waldman (2003) say that, "journalists deliver the world to citizens in a comprehensible form." namely, through frames that make meaning out of the events. As a result, terrorist events are conceptualised and understood by the public through "frames" used by journalists or communicators that simplify, prioritise and structure the narrative. Through giving priority to certain facts and images over others, the journalist consciously or unconsciously promotes a certain way of interpretation of the events over others.

Reese (2001) indicates that frames are “organizing principles that are socially-shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (p.9). Similarly, Entman (1993) considers frames to “highlight some bits of information and making them more salient” in the communication text. Campbell (1995) says that even though the elements of information presented by a journalist in a news story may be true, how he chooses to emphasise, include or arrange parts of the information over others will invariably influence the way the audience perceives the event, issue or person being presented.

Pan and Kosicki (1993) outlined a number of dimensions of how frames are created in news reporting. These include syntactic structures or word choice; script structures or an evaluation of the news worthiness of an event; thematic structures, including causal themes for news events; and rhetorical structures, which include “stylistic’ choices made by journalists. Scheufele (1999) asserts that how information is framed is dependent on a factors such as ideology, social norms and values which determine which elements of information are to be given salience over others as well their presentation to audiences. This suggests that journalists or media houses from varying ideologies may present the same events in different ways.

Entman (2003) indicates that media do not simply report terrorist events as they are but selectively frame them to build tacit definitions, interpretations, and moral evaluations of problems and maybe suggest solutions Frames construct reality by creating certain meaning on actions, events, and issues and organize them within familiar categories and narratives. Media select and emphasize certain facts in the events and downplay others; their presentation of issues therefore shapes public perceptions and views of appropriate responses

Capella and Jamieson (1997) highlight the criteria for identifying and classifying frames, stating that:(a) they should have “identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics,”(b) they should be “commonly observed in journalistic practice, “and (c) they should be “reliably distinguishable from other frames”.

Entman (1993), asserts that framing involves selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. According to Gorp (2007), frames in media text often manifest itself through devices such word choice, metaphors, exemplars, descriptions, arguments visual imagery, visual metaphors, stereotypes, catch phrases, dramatic characters, graphics, lexical choices etc.

2.7 Research Gap

There have been a number of research studies in Kenya on the media coverage of terrorism as cited in the review of literature. The studies reviewed concluded that the media coverage of terrorist attacks and terrorism did not adhere to the Code of Conduct for the practice of journalism in Kenya. As a result, the coverage was found to have increased the risks of polarising the country along religious and ethnic lines. But those studies cited were published before the recent Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera (November/December 2014) and Garissa University College (April 2015). This study therefore sought to find out if the media in Kenya has improved or not in their coverage of terrorist attacks in line with the code of conduct with a specific focus on the question of polarisation of religious communities.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology of this study as well as the research design, study population, sampling procedure and sampling size. Also presented is the research instrument as well as procedures of data collection and analysis.

3.2 Research Design

Burns and Grove (1997) assert that the design of a research study is the end result of a number of decisions made by a researcher with regard to how the study will be conducted. It offers a blueprint to enhance control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the research findings.

This study used the retrospective study design since it is looking back at events that have already taken place for study and analysis. This study relies on both secondary and primary data. The former was retrieved from the past editions of *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* that were published between November 23rd and December 23rd (for the Mandera attack) and April 2nd to May 2nd (for the attack on Garissa University College).

Secondly, primary data was obtained from key informant interviews which included six journalists and two editors from the two newspapers to share their insights on the research questions at hand. This study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to realise the study objectives, answer research questions and data analysis and presentation.

3.3 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame was 313 articles, which are the total number of articles that were published about the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa in the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* between 23rd November 2014 and 23rd December 2014 and 2nd April and 2nd May 2015. This was meant to track the coverage of the attacks in the two newspapers within that time period for analysis.

3.4 Target Population

According to Wimmer, R.D and Dominick, J.R. (2011), a population is a group or class of subjects, variables, concepts or phenomena while a sample is a subset of the population that can be taken to be representative of the entire population.

This study's focus is on the articles published in the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* newspapers between November 23, 2014 and December 23, 2014 as well as April 2, 2015 and May 2, 2015. The dates are the two blocs of one month period each within which the Mandera and Garissa University College attacks by Al Shabaab occurred. This study's focus was specifically on news articles that were published during this period. A total of 313 articles were published about the attacks in the period.

Another target population were the journalists and editors of *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* who were to be selected as the key informants in the study. This was to gather their insights in order to better answer the research questions at hand. A total of six journalists and two editors were selected.

3.5 Sampling Method and Sample size

This study used purposive sampling to select articles that the research found relevant and useful for the study. The researcher specifically looked for news articles regarding the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University College that made direct references to religious communities (Christians and Muslims). The study excluded opinion articles, editorials and letters to the editor. Following that sampling method, a total of 133 articles were selected for analysis out of the total 313 that had been published during the period under study.

In addition, a total of 8 key informant interviewees, including six journalists and two editors were selected for the study using purposive sampling. It was not possible to establish the total number of journalists and editors in the two media houses since the data was not readily available. The number of journalists selected were those whose articles were part of those analysed in this study and whose numbers were considered adequate and manageable in line with the objectives of this study. Initially, the journalists whose articles appeared during the period of study were traced and requested to participate in the key informant interviews. Subsequently, the journalists were requested to recommend the editors who would provide the most insights into the subject matter at hand, after which they were traced and requested to participate in the interviews.

3.6. Data Collection Method

According to Burns and Grove (1999), data collection is the accurate and systematic gathering of information that are relevant to the objectives and questions of a study.

In this study, the procedure for collecting data was through the document review method, in which the researcher looked for the newspapers that fell within the period of study and

reviewed all the articles that had been published. After that, the researcher embarked on close reading of the articles to select those that had direct references to religious communities since they were the ones which were relevant to the study.

The data extraction instrument was established only after first identifying the exact information that was needed from the articles to meet the research objectives and answer the research questions. This means that the data collection instrument was limited to just the information that was relevant to the study.

On the other hand, the data from the key informants was collected through face-to-face interviews. The data collection instrument developed was first clarified to ensure that the questions asked to the interviewees aligned specifically to the study objectives and research questions. This was done in order to give focus to the interviews to extract the most relevant information. The data collected from the newspapers and key informants were then coded into a coding sheet in readiness for analysis.

3.7. Data Analysis and Presentation

The data that was collected from the articles in the *Daily Nation* and *the Standard* was sorted, cleaned, coded and analysed using content analysis.

This type of analysis is an empirical research method that can be employed to make “inferences from texts to the contexts of their use” according to (Krippendorff, 2004). The author indicates that content analysis helps the researcher to systematically establish useful trends and patterns by classifying large quantities of texts into categories based on defined coding rules. Doing so enables the researcher to analyse large amounts of texts into meaningful themes.

The study then established common themes that emerged from the articles for discussion and analysis. The articles were also analysed on the basis of size, prominence, framing, headlines, tone, word selection, accompanying photographs to bring out the general picture of the coverage of the two religious communities. In addition, the notes taken during the key informant interviews were transcribed after which the common themes that emerged categorised accordingly.

The data from the content analysis of the newspaper articles as well as the key informant interviews was presented through a combination of pie charts, tables and narrative form.

3.8 Ethical Considerations of the Study

This study applied the fundamental ethical principles relating to social research, primarily informed consent as well as confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents.

3.8.1. Informed Consent

According to Piper & Simons (2005), informed consent means that the interviewee in a research study should first give an express permission of participating in the study after being informed of the purpose of the research and the consequences of him or her participating in it. In the footstep of these principles, all the key informant interviews were properly briefed on all aspects of the study before their permission was sought to participate in the study.

3.8.2. Confidentiality and Anonymity

The key informant interviews were conducted after assuring the respondents of their privacy and anonymity. Their names or descriptions have not been cited anywhere in this research study to protect their privacy. The interview notes were taken without identifying the interviewees in any manner, giving them anonymity.

In addition, care has been taken as much as possible not to identify the authors of the articles that have been analysed, especially when the articles have been found likely to aggravate interreligious tensions and divisions in the country. This was done to protect them from any potentially adverse consequences that may result to their careers or personal safety.

Moreover, the authors of some articles that were analysed were not identified including the dates and pages of publication of their articles so as not to potentially compromise their safety.

3.8.3 Defence of Research Proposal and Research Draft

In addition, the research proposal as well as the final draft of the research paper were both presented and defended before a team of supervisors of the University of Nairobi who critiqued it and suggested improvements including strengthening of the ethical considerations to protect the participants of the interview.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the articles in the *Daily Nation* and *the Standard* that had direct references to religious communities (Muslims and Christians) are analysed and presented in the form of tables, bar graphs, pie charts, and narratives.

In addition, the findings of key informant interviews carried out with six journalists and two editors from *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* are presented in narrative form with a sprinkling of their quotes.

4.2 Response Rate

The study was able to access all the newspaper articles about the Mandera and Garissa attacks by Al Shabaab since they were readily available in the Standard Media Group library.

In addition, all the six journalists and two editors from *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* who were the key informants were available for the interviews.

Of the total number of 313 articles that were published during the period of study, a total of 133 articles were found relevant for the study since they had direct references to religious communities in Kenya (Christians and Muslims).

4.3 Findings of the Content Analysis of *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard*

A total of 133 news articles in both newspapers were selected for analysis within the one month period of the Mandera and Garissa attacks by Al Shabaab. The following parameters

were used in the analysis since they were found most suitable in yielding useful information with regard to the research objectives and questions.

1. Frequency of articles
2. Placement of articles
3. Tonality of articles
4. Key themes in articles
5. Language used in articles
6. Presence of stereotypes in articles
7. Headlines with the articles.
8. Photos used with the articles.
9. Framing of articles.

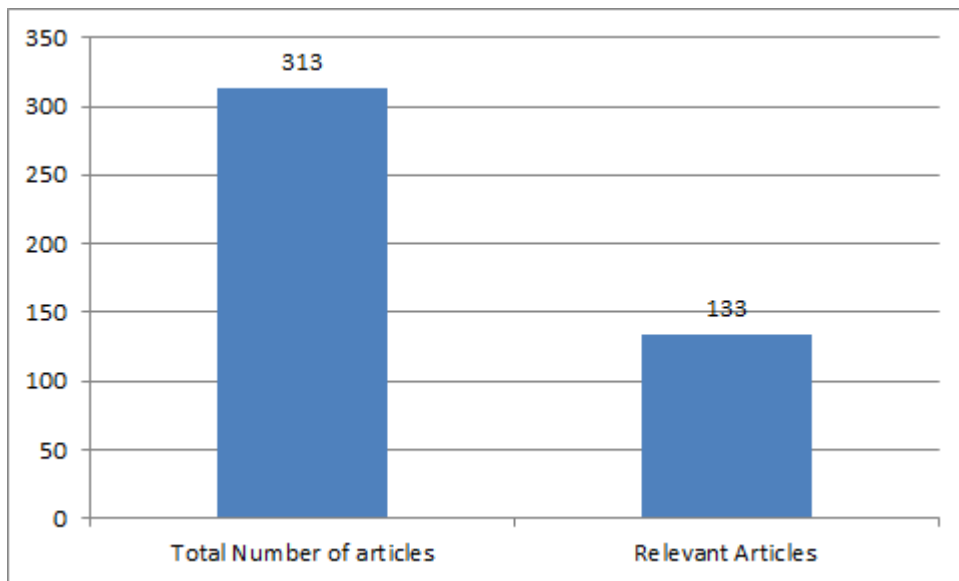
4.3.1 Frequency of Articles

By frequency, this study meant the total number of articles that were published about the two attacks that had relevance to the study as they contained direct references to religious communities (specifically, Christians and Muslims)

To gauge the importance that the two newspapers placed on religious communities in their coverage of the Mandera and Garissa attacks by Al Shabaab, this study first compared the total number of articles that were published about the two attacks with total number of those articles that had direct references to religious communities (Christians and Muslims).

It emerged that out of the total 313 news articles that were published about the attacks in the period under study, 133 articles were found to be relevant for this study. This is illustrated in figure 1.

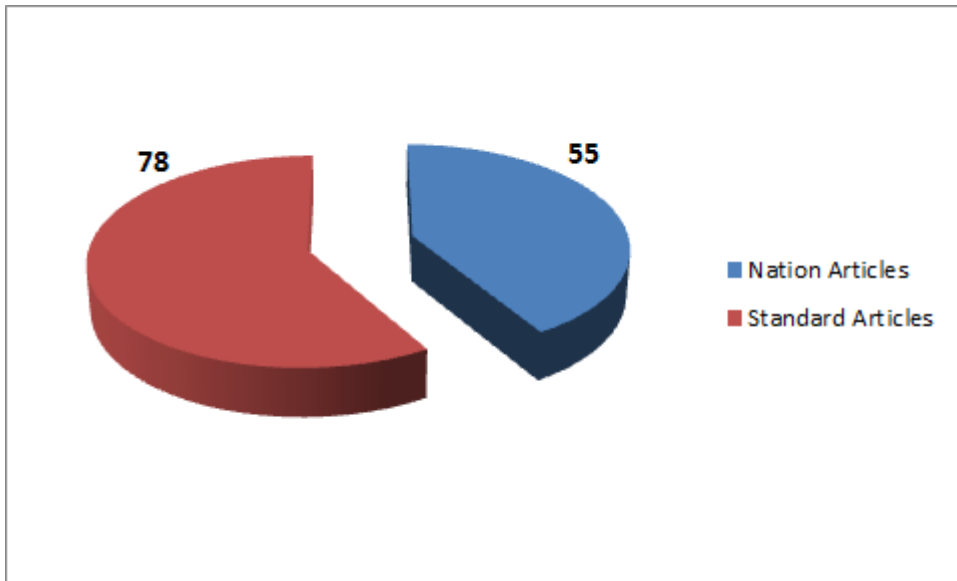
Fig 1: Comparison between the total number of articles published and the articles found to be relevant.



The relevant articles represent 42.4 per cent of the total number of articles that were published about the two attacks within the one month period of the study. This means that the two print publications attached some weight to the question of religious communities in the reporting of the attacks.

Further analysis showed that out of the 133 articles that were found relevant to this study, *the Daily Nation* had 55 articles, while *the Standard* had 78 as shown in figure 2.

Fig 2: Relevant articles selected for the study



Source: Researcher (2015)

In line with the Agenda setting theory, the considerable fraction of coverage devoted to religious communities in the two attacks by al Shabaab shows that they are central in the coverage of terrorist attacks in the both *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard*. It is obvious that the two media houses wanted to project the element of religious communities to their readers in the coverage of the attacks.

4.3.2 Placement of Articles

By placement, this study referred to the page in which the articles were placed in the newspaper as well as the size they covered. This parameter is a significant indicator of the importance that the newspapers placed on the articles.

Ordinarily, readers consume newspaper articles following the order of the pages from the beginning to the end. That is why newspapers generally place the articles they consider most interesting and most important on their earliest pages beginning from the front page. This is according to Tuchman (1978).

At the same time, articles perceived as weighty by newspaper editors are often big in size ranging from half-page to full page. Such articles are meant to have the highest visibility with the readers. On the other hand, those articles that were judged by editors as less important or less interesting by newspapers are often given less spaces usually a quarter page or are reduced into news briefs.

4.3.2.1 Placement of Articles by Page

In terms of placement by page numbers, the study established that a majority of articles that had direct references to religious communities were placed between pages 1 and 5 in both *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* as shown in table 1 below:

Table 1: Placement of Articles in both the Daily Nation and the Standard.

<i>Placement by page</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>1-5</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>53.3</i>
<i>6-10</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>36.0</i>
<i>11-15</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>6.0</i>
<i>16-20</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2.4</i>
<i>21-25</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>26-30</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2.4</i>
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>133</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: Researcher (2015)

This shows that the articles that made references to religious communities following the Mandera and Garissa attacks by Al Shabaab were considered weighty by the two newspapers. This also means that the articles must have enjoyed significant exposure to the consumers of the two newspapers.

Analysis of both *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* individually shows that the majority of articles with references to religious communities were still in the first five pages as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Placement of Articles in the Daily Nation

Placement by page	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	35	63.6
6-10	16	29
11-15	1	1.8
16-20	1	1.8
21-25	0	
26-30	2	3.8
TOTAL	55	100

Source: Researcher (2015)

Table 3: Placement of articles in the Standard

Placement by Page	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	36	46.1
6-10	32	41
11-15	7	8.9
16-20	2	2.5
21-25	0	
26-30	1	1.4
TOTAL	78	100

Source: Researcher (2015)

4.3.2.2 Placement of articles by Size

In terms of placement by size, articles that are perceived to be weighty by newspaper editors often cover more space compared to those that are judged to be less important or less interesting. For instance, articles that cover full-page or half page of the newspaper would be considered weighty and prominent while those that cover a quarter page and less would be seen as less prominent.

In terms of size, the majority of articles that mentioned religious communities directly in the coverage of the Mandera and Garissa attacks by Al Shabaab covered a quarter page and half-page in that order as shown in table 4:

Table 4: Placement of articles by Size in the Daily Nation and the Standard

Placement by size	Frequency	Percentage
Full page	26	19.5
Half page	42	31.5
Quarter Page	63	47.5
News Brief	2	1.5
Total	133	100

Source: Researcher (2015)

When the two newspapers were analysed individually, it emerged that the *Daily Nation* had 27.2 per cent covering full page, 45.9 per cent of articles covering half page, and 27.2 per cent of articles covering a quarter page.

In *the Standard*, the majority of articles (69.2 per cent) covered a quarter page, followed by those covering half-page (16.6per cent) and full page (14.1 per cent). News briefs covered 2.1 per cent. This means that articles with direct reference to religious communities enjoyed modest coverage in terms of size.

4.3.3 Tonality of articles

The articles were analysed on whether they were positive, neutral or negative. Positive articles were defined as those which reported the attacks in ways that was likely to promote unity and tolerance between Kenyans of different religious affiliations in the face of Al Shabaab attacks. Such articles also challenged divisive narratives regarding the two attacks

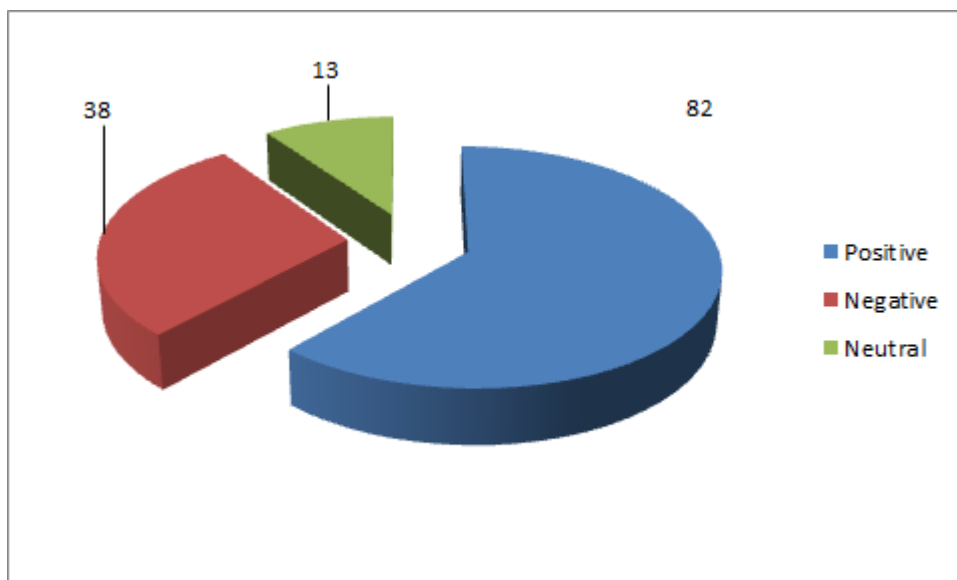
that suggested that the attacks are a conflict between Christians and Muslims. Such articles had no language that can be seen as inflammatory and inciting passions between Kenyans along religious lines.

On the other hand, negative articles were defined as those that contained statements that are likely to aggravate divisions and conflict between religious communities through the use of inflammatory and inciting language. They reinforced the narrative of a conflict between Christians and Muslims.

On their part, neutral articles were defined as those that relayed information about the attacks matter-of-factly, without injecting any noticeable slant, whether positive or negative.

From the analysis, it emerged that overall, the two publications had significantly higher fractions of positive articles compared to the negative and neutral ones in reporting the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University College. . This is shown in figure 3:

Fig 3: Tonality of Articles

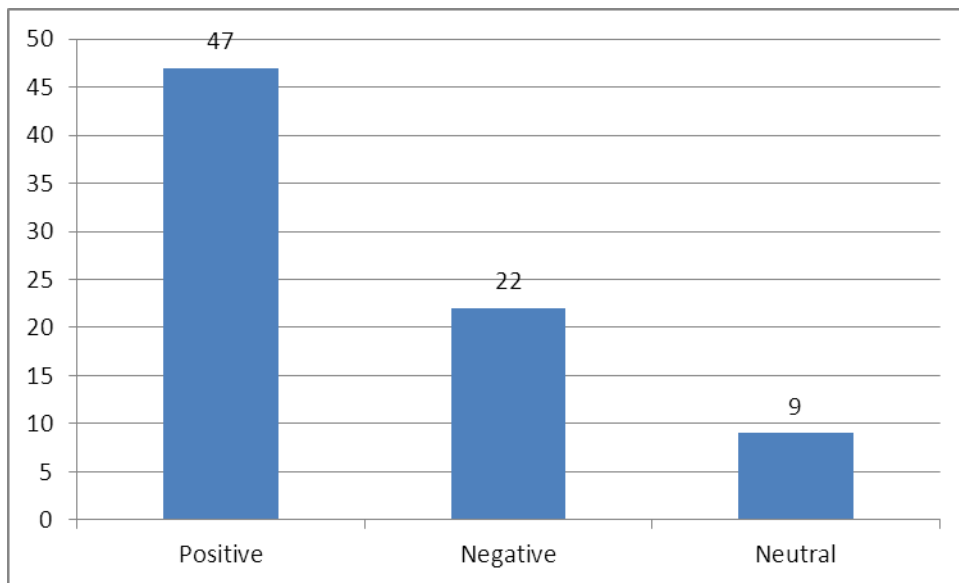


Source: Researcher (2015)

The fraction of the positive articles in both newspapers was 61.6 per cent compared to the negative articles which formed 28.5 per cent while the neutral articles were 9.7 per cent. The number of positive articles was more than double the number of negative articles.

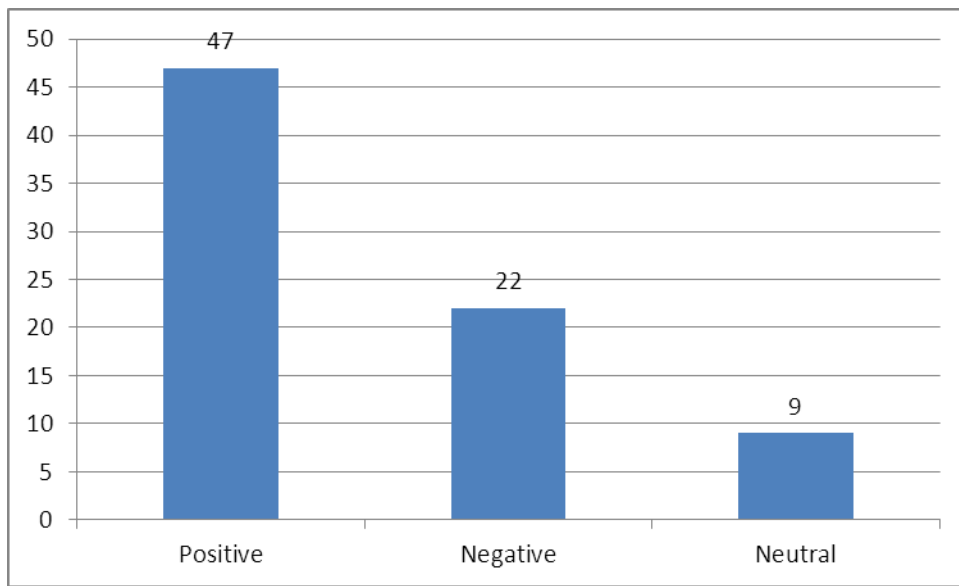
On the individual level, both *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* had significant fractions of the articles they published being positive as illustrated below.

Fig 4: Tonality of articles in the Daily Nation



Source: Researcher (2015)

Fig 5: Tonality of articles in the Standard



Source: Researcher (2015)

From the above, it emerged that the reporting of the Mandera and Garissa attacks by *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* was largely not divisive and was not likely to aggravate interreligious divisions and conflict among Kenyans.

The significant proportion of positive stories in the two newspapers shows that they were alive to the risks of interreligious divisions and likelihood of conflict as a result of the Al Shabaab attacks and actively sought to mitigate those risks. They were not mere conveyors of information about the attacks but had active and conscious agenda of avoiding and preventing the ugly spectre of interreligious divisions and conflicts.

This is explained using the Agenda-setting theory cited in the literature review which asserts that the media has power to determine what and how people think about through the choice of information and news the media choose to present to the public.

An example of a positive article captured religious leaders both Christians and Muslims in a joint interfaith press conference condemning the Al Shabaab attack in Garissa University

College and urging Kenyans to be united in combating Al Shabaab rather than being divided along religious lines and seeing each other as enemies. Apart from the inter-faith press conference, the same article contains condemnations of the attack by the Head of the Catholic Church Pope Francis as well as Muslim leaders who disowned the attackers that killed in the name of Islam and Muslims (The *Standard*, April 4, 2015, p.5). Such articles are likely to minimise interreligious divisions and conflicts among Kenyans and send a strong signal of peace, harmony and in unity among Kenyans of all religious in combating Al Shabaab.

An example of a negative article that was seen as likely to aggravate interreligious divisions was published immediately after the Mandera attack. It quoted extensively from the polarising words of Al Shabaab spokesperson justifying the killings. The article also liberally quoted what the attackers reportedly told some of the Muslim passengers urging them to fight the “crusader government of Kenya” since it had “declared war on Muslims”. The article also cited verses from the Muslim religious book, the Qur’an that were quoted by the Al Shabaab apparently to justify the killings (The *Standard*, November 23, 2014, p.2).

In the article, the Al Shabaab attackers were uncritically allowed to pose as spokespersons and representatives of Muslims in Kenya with their message of violence against non-Muslims. However, contrary Muslim voices were not in the article to counter the Al Shabaab rhetoric and their interpretation of the Muslim scripture to justify the killings,

Therefore, to many Kenyans who are not Muslims and are not familiar with the teachings of Islam are bound to grow in hostility and aversion against Muslims in the country since they will view them through the lens of the polarising words of Al Shabaab.

An example of a neutral article explores the educational background of one of the attackers of the Garissa University who had been positively identified by police. The article interviews

former colleagues and teachers of the attacker who had taken his high school education in a Nairobi school. The article unveils the facts of the matter without blaming any religious community or religion for his unspeakable crimes (*the Daily Nation*, April 8, 2015, p.2).

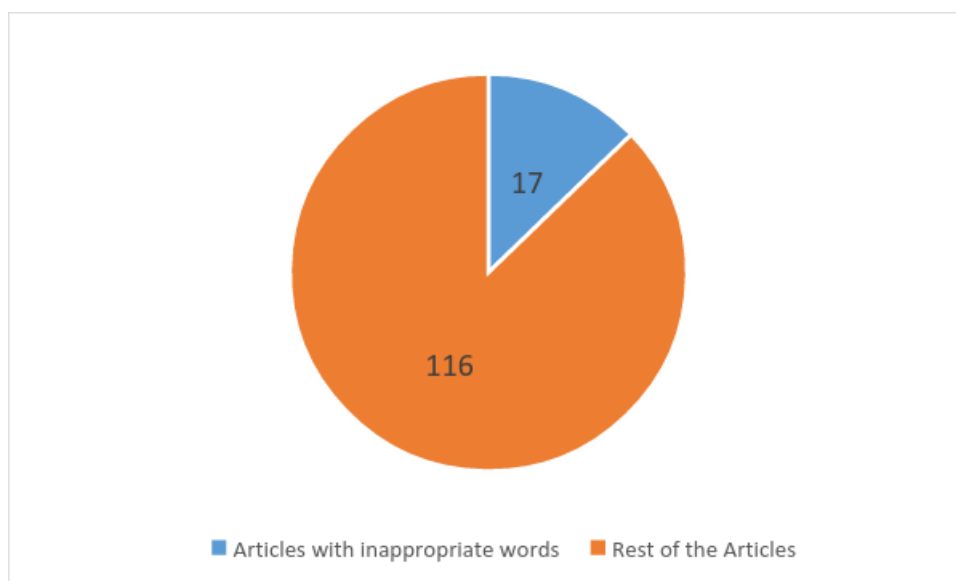
4.3.4 Language Used in the News Articles

Some journalists and editors struggle to find the right words to describe persons or groups amid the pressure of the newsroom environment that is characterised by tight deadlines and heavy workloads.

From the articles analysed, it emerged that a number of terms were used to describe Al Shabaab that associated them or their crimes directly with Muslims and Islam. The words used in the analysed articles included radical Muslim militants, Islamist militants, radical Jihad, radical Islam, Islamic extremists, Jihadists, Islamist militants, Somali Islamist militants, Radical Islamic groups among others.

A total of 13 out of the 133 articles analysed contained such language which are likely to create a polarising atmosphere against religious communities and enhance division and hostility between Kenyans of different religions. By directly linking the attackers to Islam and Muslims, it is likely to strengthen the narrative that Al Shabaab attacks are a religious conflict against Christians by Muslims. Thirteen of the articles with such words are found in *the Standard* while the rest are in *the Nation*. A study by the Media Council (2014) found the use of such terms to describe terrorist groups as inappropriate as it goes against the Code of Ethics for the practice of journalism in Kenya.

Fig 6: Use of Language in the articles



Source: Researcher (2015)

However, the language was used in a very small fraction of the articles, or 12.7 per cent. This suggests that the two newspapers exercised some level of restraint in using those words since the fraction of articles with the words could easily have been higher. The few times the words may have been may be due to a lack of appreciation about the impact of the words in reporting terrorism. It is hoped that in future reporting of terrorist attacks, such words may no longer be used altogether.

Although the word “terrorist or terrorists” were used widely by the two newspapers to describe the Al Shabaab attackers, they were not qualified with any references to religion such as “Islamic terrorists” or “Muslim terrorists” as has been common in the past. This means that no religious communities were prejudiced by the use of that term.

Table 5: Words Used to describe Al Shabaab

Words	Frequency of Use	Publication
Islamist militants	2	<i>The Standard</i> , April 6, 2015 , p 2 <i>The Standard</i> , April 15, 2015, p 8
Jihadists	2	<i>The Standard</i> , November 23 2014, p 1 <i>The Standard</i> , April 9, 2015, p 2
Radical Jihad	1	<i>The Standard</i> , April 6, 2015, p 5
Islamists	2	<i>The Standard</i> , April 7, 2015, p 4 <i>The Standard</i> , November 23, 2014, p2
Radical Muslim militants	1	<i>The Standard</i> , April 12, 2015, p 8
Islamist Militants	1	<i>The Standard</i> , April 15, 2015, p 8
Somali Islamist militants	1	<i>The Standard</i> , Apr 17, 2015, p 3
Radical Islamic groups	1	<i>The Standard</i> , April 17, 2015, p 3
Radical Islamists	1	<i>The Daily Nation</i> , April 16, 2015, p 5
Extremist Islam	1	<i>The Daily Nation</i> , November 30, 2014, p 3
Total	13 out 133	

Source: Researcher (2015)

4.3.5. Major Themes in the Articles

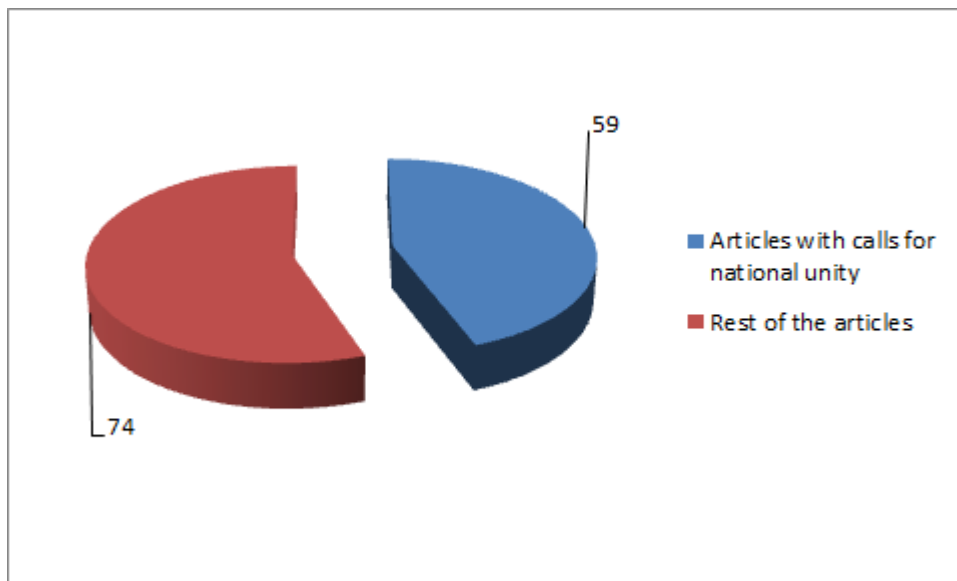
Analysis of the 133 articles that contained direct references to religious communities revealed four dominant themes that characterised the coverage in the two newspapers.

- condemnations of the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University College
- Calls for unity among Kenyans and avoidance of divisions along religious lines
- Criticisms of the government security systems
- Criticism of Muslims and Islam
- Defence of Muslims and Islam.

4.3.5.1 Unity between Kenyans in the face of attacks by Al Shabaab seeking to Divide Kenyans along Religious Lines

This theme featured prominently in the articles that were published by *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* regarding the Mandera and Garissa attacks by Al Shabaab. The total number of articles that contained specific calls for unity between Kenyans of different religions in combating terrorism and to resist being divided on religious lines by Al Shabaab attacks were 59 out of the 133 articles that were analysed.

Figure 7: Number of articles with religious personalities calling for National unity after the Mandera and Garissa attacks by Al Shabaab.



Source: Researcher (2015)

Almost half of the articles (44.3 per cent) contained calls by religious and other leaders, both Muslims and Christians, calling on Kenyans to be united and not be divided along religious lines in the face of polarising attacks from Al Shabaab. Therefore, it is clear that the two newspapers attached some considerable importance to the issue of unity of Kenyans of different religions that may have been undermined by the infamous Al Shabaab tactics of killing their victims based on religion. The *Daily Nation* had a higher fraction of articles containing calls for unity (45.5 per cent) compared to the *Standard* (30.3 per cent).

Calls for unity by persons specifically cited as Muslims were contained in 27 out of 133 articles analysed (or 20.3 per cent) compared to 32 articles (or 24 per cent) which cited persons identified as Christian or Christian leaders. This marginal difference shows that there was largely no bias in the two newspapers in the amount of space given space to persons of different religions in their calls for unity and against divisions along religious lines.

An example of an article calling for unity reported prominently on Christian and Muslim leaders who had a joint press conference in Mombasa to condemn the Al Shabaab attack on Garissa University College and cautioned Kenyans against seeing the attack as a war between Muslims and Christians but a war between a handful of criminals and terrorists against the rest of Kenyans. Such articles are likely to nudge Kenyans from the path of conflict to unity (*Standard* April 4th, 2015).

Despite the significant number of articles calling for unity, it is my submission that the number of such articles should have been higher considering the high threat of interreligious polarisation arising from the selective attacks on Christians by Al Shabaab.

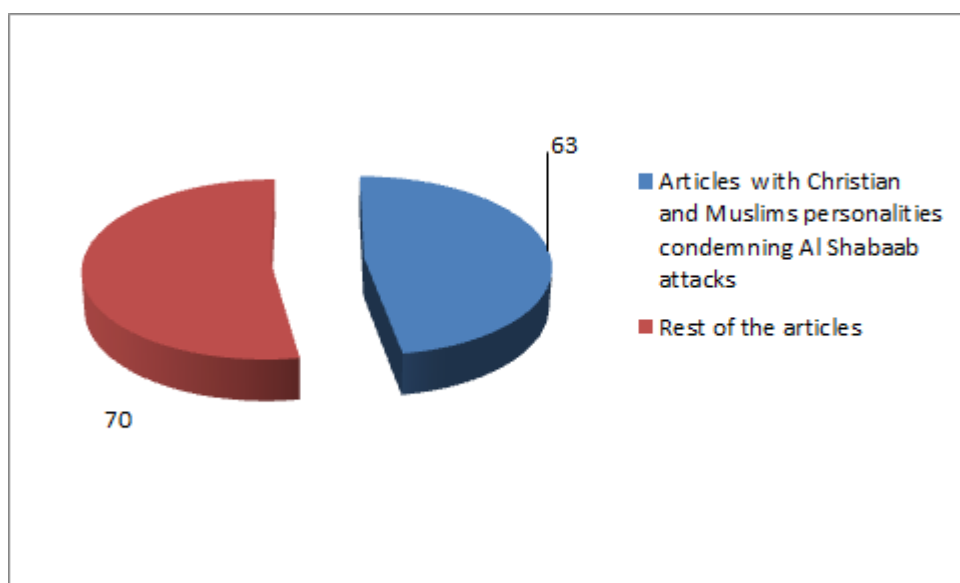
In line with the agenda-setting theory, the two media houses should have focused more on the theme of Kenyans avoiding divisions along religious lines by devoting a higher number of articles.

4.3.5.2 Condemnations of the attacks by Al Shabaab by religious personalities

The articles in *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* had a considerable number of articles containing condemnations of Al Shabaab by persons specifically identified as Muslims or Christians.

Out of the 133 articles that were analysed, a total of 63 contained specific condemnations of the Mandera and Garissa attacks by religious leaders, both Muslim and Christians. This represents 47.3 per cent of the articles. Such articles carrying condemnations of Al Shabaab were more in *the Daily Nation* (52.7 per cent) than *the Standard* (45.2 per cent).

Fig 8: Number of articles with Christian and Muslims personalities condemning Al Shabaab attacks



Source: Researcher (2015)

Overall, in both publications, a higher fraction of articles analysed contained condemnations by personalities identified as Christians (27 per cent) compared to those that had persons identified specifically as Muslims (20.3 per cent).

The relatively prominent spaces that were given to condemnation of the attacks, especially by Muslim personalities and to distance Islam and Muslims from the killings by Al Shabaab is likely to have contributed to lessening interreligious divisions and hostilities. This is because it challenged the narrative of Al Shabaab attacks being a war between Muslims and Christians and that Muslims were backing the attacks by Al Shabaab.

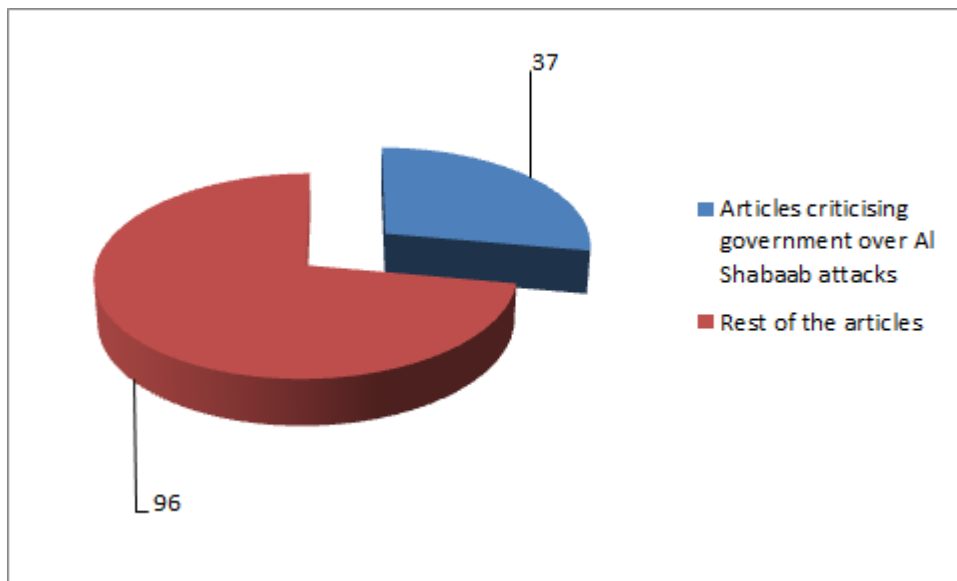
4.3.5.3 Criticism of Government and Security Agencies

In the articles published in *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard*, religious personalities, both Muslims and Christians, were cited as pointing accusing fingers at the government for allegedly failing in its duty to protect Kenyans from Al Shabaab attacks.

Out of the total 133 articles, 37 of them (or 27.8 per cent) contained statements by religious personalities criticising the government shortcomings in protecting Kenyans. In the articles, the religious leaders demanded an overhaul of security apparatus, including sackings of top security chiefs. They also blamed graft in the security agencies as contributing the attacks by Al Shabaab. *The Standard* had a higher fraction of such articles (15.7 per cent) compared to the *Daily Nation* (12 per cent).

From the above, it emerges that the number of articles criticising the government alleged security failures are less than those condemning the attacks by Al Shabaab or those emphasising unity among Kenyans of different religious affiliations. The religious personalities may have more concerned about condemning the killings and preventing interreligious divisions and conflicts than criticising the government failures in security.

Figure 11 Number of articles with Christian and Muslim personalities criticising government's alleged failure to protect Kenyans from Al Shabaab attacks.



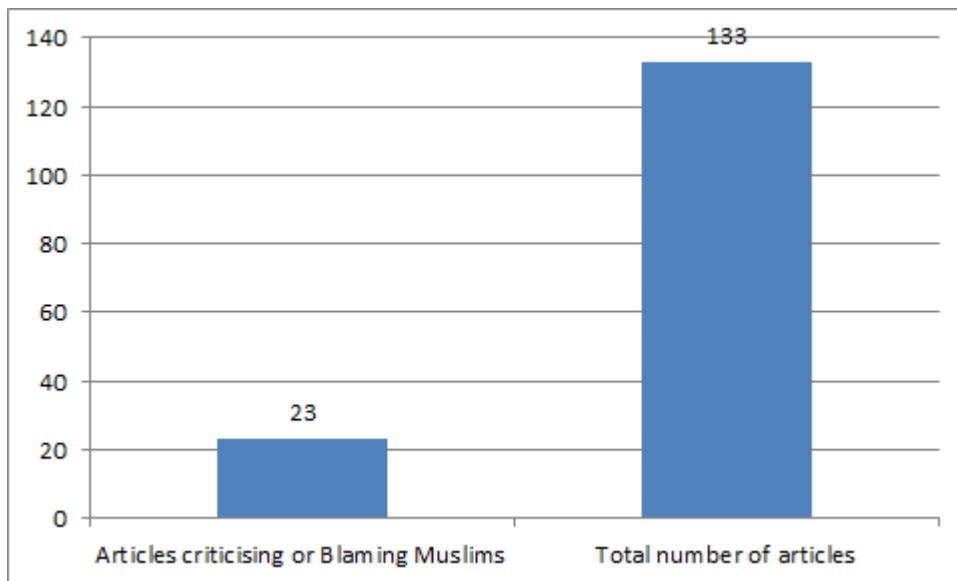
Source: Researcher (2015)

4.3.5.4. Criticism of Muslim community after the attacks by Al Shabaab

The two publication carried some articles quoting statements that pointed fingers at the Muslim community with regard to the attacks, but they were very few as a proportion to the to the total number of articles that were analysed.

Out of the total 133 articles that were analysed, about 23 contained statements that were directed at Muslims community with regard to the attacks by Al Shabaab. This translates to 17.2 per cent of the total number of articles analysed.

Fig 10: Articles criticising the Muslim community after the Mandera and Garissa Attacks by Al Shabaab



Source: Researcher (2015)

The Standard had a higher number of articles in this regard (15 articles or 11.2 per cent) compared to the *Daily Nation* (a total 8 articles or 6 per cent). In terms of photos, only 1 out of the total 58 blamed Muslims or 1.7 per cent.

A major characteristic of the criticisms that were directed to the Muslim community is that they were largely not inflammatory but sincere pleas to do more in the efforts to combat Al Shabaab. This was especially true when it was Christian religious leaders speaking.

For instance, an article in the *Standard* (April 5, 2015, p.10) cites the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret Bishop Cornelius Korir appealing to Muslims in the country to play their part in combating the activities of Al Shabaab. Although his comments were not clarified beyond that, he seemed to have suggested that the Muslim community need to stand up against Al Shabaab because they are using the religion of Islam and hiding within Muslim communities

to execute attacks against Kenyans. But this appeal was made in a non-threatening, non-combative manner that is unlikely to enhance interreligious polarisation.

Another instance of Christian religious leaders making statements directed towards Muslims is when Head of Anglican Church appealed to Muslims after the attack on Garissa College to control any teachings by Muslim preachers who may incite youths to take the lives of people of other faiths (*The Standard*, April 6th, 2015, p2). This appeal was also made humbly and in a non-threatening way.

On his part, the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims Secretary General Adan Wachu is quoted as blaming radicalisation of Muslim youths on rogue preachers operating within the Muslim communities and proposed that a vetting process of such preachers be put in place. (*The Daily Nation*, April 8, 2015, p 4).

However, politicians spoke in more harsh terms towards the Muslim community after the attacks. For instance, after the Al Shabaab attack on Garissa College President Uhuru Kenyatta blamed Muslim religious leaders and parents for doing little as radicalisation of youths happened within their communities in mosques and Madrassas (*The Standard*, April 5, 2015, p.9)

Similarly, politicians from the Muslim-dominated North Eastern region blamed some religious institutions belonging to Muslims for radicalisation of youth including mosques and madrassas. They also accused the Muslim community of harbouring Al Shabaab members and sympathisers who are behind the frequent attacks on Kenyans. (*The Standard*, April 7, 2015 p. 2).

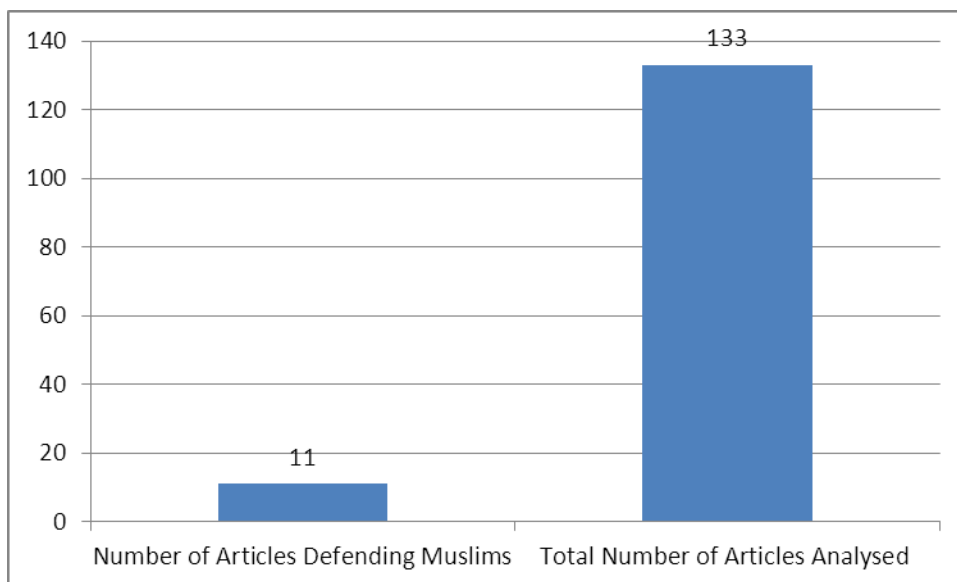
All in all, the articles in both newspapers carried statements criticising the Muslim community but an overwhelming majority of such statements cannot be described as

polarising except a handful made a few politicians. But the comments attributed to Christian and Muslim personalities were largely restrained and non-inflammatory.

4.3.5.5 Articles in defence of the Muslim community after the attacks

The two newspapers carried a number of articles in which speakers are quoted defending Muslims and Islam against blame after the Mandera and Garissa attacks by Al Shabaab. Out of the 133 articles analysed, 11 carried comments defending or distancing Muslims and Islam from the attacks by Al Shabaab. This represents 8.2 per cent of the articles.

Fig 11: Articles in defence of Muslim community after the Mandera and Garissa attacks



Source: Researcher (2015)

A close look at the articles in defence of Muslims shows that the main speakers quoted are from Muslim leaders who are keen to distance the community from the Al Shabaab killings in Mandera and Garissa. It may be remembered that the Al Shabaab was justifying its killings on religious grounds with some articles analysed in this study giving them liberal amounts of space to do so often quoting verses from the Muslim sacred book, the Quran. The

attackers also claimed to be acting on behalf of the “oppressed” Muslim community in Kenya.

For instance, the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) are quoted as saying that the killings in Mandera have nothing to do with Islam and that Al Shabaab are not the defenders or spokespersons of Muslims in Kenya. (*The Standard*, December 3, 2014, p 9). Similar statements were quoted from the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (Supkem) Secretary General Adan Wachu (*The Daily Nation*, November 23, 2014, p.4).

Apart from Muslim leaders, the two newspapers also quoted politicians and government officials defending the Muslim community from collective blame after the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa. For instance, in his speech after the Mandera attacks, President Uhuru Kenyatta cautioned against blanket of the Muslim community saying the majority of Muslims in Kenyans are peaceful and have nothing to do with the killings by Al Shabaab. He also described Islam as a religion of peace. He was quick to caution against victimisation of all Muslims after the attack. (*The Standard*, April 5, 2015, p 9).

In addition, the then Cabinet Secretary of Interior Joseph Ole Lenku was also quoted as saying the attack in Mandera by Al Shabaab should not be blamed on the Muslim community collectively but on a few criminal elements that are misusing religion to justify violence (*The Standard*, November 23, 2015, p 13).

Such articles are likely to go a long way in minimising the risks of interreligious divisions, tensions and conflict since it undercuts the narrative of Al Shabaab attacks being a conflict between Muslims and Christians.

However, the articles distancing Muslims and Islam from the attacks are too few in the two newspapers, meaning there was no adequate space grant to them. Doing so would have

contributed a great deal in minimising interreligious tensions, divisions and conflicts and countered narratives in the public domain that may have portrayed Muslims as sympathisers and supporters of the Al Shabaab attacks.

In addition, the articles quoting Muslim leaders in defence of Islam often didn't go beyond the statement that "Islam does not condone the killing of innocent persons". The leaders were not given enough space by the two newspapers to elaborate by quoting from the Muslim scriptures just as Al Shabaab was given some opportunities to quote scriptures to justify their killings.

4.3.6 Use of Photos

A total of 58 photos that were published during the period of study were found to be relevant for this research. This is out of total 294 pictures that were published about the Mandera and Garissa University College attack during the period of study. This means that the relevant photos touching on religious communities were 19.7 per cent of the total. The relevant photos included 43 from the *Standard* and 15 from the *Daily Nation*.

The relevant photos published by the two newspapers had religious personalities, both Christians and Muslims, condemning the killings by Al Shabaab. In some instance, Christian and Muslim leaders were captured in the same photos condemning the attacks jointly and calling on Kenyans not to be divided along religious lines. Such photos are likely to go a long way in minimising interreligious divisions and conflicts.

However, in some instances, the choice of photos or graphics run the risk of reinforcing the narrative that the Al Shabaab attacks were a war between Muslims and Christians.

For instance, the *Standard* (April 4th 2015) had a front page headline about the killing of the 142 students of the Garissa University. Accompanying the headline were mug shot photos of four personalities with their quotes condemning the attack.

They were opposition leader Raila Odinga, Cabinet Secretary for Interior Joseph Nkaissery and his Education counterpart Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi as well as the Head of the Catholic Church Pope Francis. However, there was no corresponding photo or quote from a Muslim personality also condemning the attacks by Al Shabaab. The picture of the pope was accompanied by the following text: “Pope Francis condemns act of senseless brutality” and prays for change of heart among perpetrators.”

It would have been wise to also include a similar photo of a Muslim leader, local or international condemning the attack. However, the condemnations by the Muslim leaders were in the inside pages of the same paper.

A similar approach is used in the second and third pages of the same paper which carried mug shots and quotes of eight leaders including two Christian leaders —Head of Catholic Church Cardinal John Njue and head of Anglican Church of Kenya Archbishop Eliud Wabukala. But in the same page, there was no Muslim leader condemning the attack and distancing Muslims from it. Such one-sided representations by the media creates a false picture that the Al Shabaab attacks are a conflict between Christians and Muslims.

4.3.7 Presence of Stereotypes

Stereotypes represent features ascribed to social groups and involve not just beliefs about what a group is like, but also causal chains that relate group characteristics to one another (Witternbrink, Gist, & Hilton, 1997).

This study analysed the articles in search of stereotypic narratives that are likely to aggravate interreligious polarisation. This study looked for the following stereotypes in the article:

- Muslims are terrorists or potential terrorists.
- Muslims are generally supporters or sympathisers of terrorism and should be blamed for terrorism.

From the analysis of the articles, it emerged that the majority of articles (83.4 per cent) did not only have stereotypes but in fact challenged some of the stereotypes cited above. This is shown in table 5 below:

Table 5: Analysis of stereotypes in the articles

	Reinforces stereotype	Challenges stereotypes	Neither Challenges or reinforces
Standard	17	25	36
Daily Nation	5	24	26
Total	22	49	62

Source: Researcher (2015)

From the foregoing, it emerged that the two newspapers had only a few cases of such stereotypes (16.5 per cent), compared to the big number of articles that actually challenged those narratives.

For instance, Muslim students in the Garissa University College which had been attacked by Al Shabaab were reported repeatedly by the two newspapers that they frantically attempted to save the lives of their non-Muslim colleagues by trying to persuade the attackers not to kill

them but they did not succeed. Some were even threatened with death if they did not follow orders of the attackers to depart from the scene of killings (*The Standard*, April 4, 2015, p.2).

Another one is when Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims Adan Wachu is reported as shedding tears while addressing the press in Nairobi after the attacks. He was speaking at Chiromo mortuary where the families of the victims had gone to identify their bodies of their loved ones. (*The Standard*, April 4, 2015, p.4).

Examples of articles that reinforced the narrative include one which quoted the Pope praying to an end to persecution of Christians, but his comments were immediately followed by a statement by the writer saying the massacre was done “Islamist militants” in Garissa. The use of the words “Islamist militants” were not the words of the pope but were inserted into the story by the writer or editor. By using those words to describe the Al Shabaab killers, the articles directly links the killings with Islam or Muslims, suggesting that Islam or Muslims have sanctioned the killings (*The Standard*, April 6, 2015, p.2)

An example of an article that specifically challenged the stereotype or narrative of Muslims supporting terrorism or being terrorists is one which extensively quotes the then Chairperson of the Council of Governors Isaac Ruto saying that the terrorists who killed Garissa University students should not make Kenyans stereotype the Muslim and Somali communities in the country as terrorists since only specific individuals were criminals.

“Ruto said that every Kenyan community has its own criminals and urged the public to be vigilant and report any suspicious elements in their midst,” (*Daily Nation*, April 7, 2015, p.8)

4.3.8 Use of Headlines

Analysis of the headlines used in the 133 articles studied shows that 125 of them (93.9 per cent) had headlines which were descriptive, informational and neutral giving a snapshot of the contents of the articles. Only a few of them (6.1 per cent) contained alarming statements that were likely to stir interreligious passions among Kenyans. This shows that the two newspapers were largely responsible in the headlines they employed with their articles as shown in Table 7:

Table 7: Nature of headlines in the articles

	Descriptive and Informative	Alarming and provocative
Standard	71	7
Daily Nation	54	1
Total	125	8

Source: Researcher (2015)

An example of a headline that was found to be alarming went like this: “Church wants halt to Killing of Christians” followed by the first paragraph of the article saying that church leaders will not be quiet as Christians are massacred by the Somali militia group. It carried the implicit message that all Somalis and by extension Muslims are to blame for the killings. It also carried a veiled threat to the Muslim and Somali community that they will face reprisal attacks in future if the killings don't stop. (*Daily Nation*, April 10, 2015, p.5).

Another headline that was found to be alarming and provocative was as follows: “Al Shabaab in mass recruitment drive (*The Standard*, April 7, 2015, p.1). The headline was in the front-

page suggesting that Al Shabaab has recruited many Kenyan youths although the contents of the article did not support the headline. Such a headline is bound to spark alarm bells and polarise Kenyans. The same article had another headline in the second page where it had flowed into. This time, the headline was “Al Shabaab: the enemy within”. Such a headline is bound to create panic within the country and give the impression that Al Shabaab has more members within the country than could actually be the case.

4.3.9 Frames used in the articles

The analysis of the articles revealed some dominant frames that emerged in the coverage of the Mandera and Garissa attacks by Al Shabaab. Among the frames included:

- Responsibility frame
- Conflict frame
- Human interest
- Morality frame

The responsibility frame emphasised the responsibility of the government and the citizens in ensuring security from attacks by Al Shabaab. The conflict frame emphasised the conflict between Al Shabaab and Kenyans or among Kenyans themselves. The human interest frame focussed on the plight and suffering of those affected by Al Shabaab attacks while morality frames presented the Al Shabaab attacks as morally repugnant.

In both newspapers, majority of frames (36.8) were responsibility frames in which the government was primarily blamed by religious personalities for failing to protect Kenyans against Al Shabaab attacks. In addition, Muslims communities in Kenya were also blamed to some extent for not doing enough to combat the threat of Al Shabaab with some religious institutions and teachers fingered for allegedly recruiting youths to join Al Shabaab

The morality frame featured prominently in the condemnations of the cold-blooded killings by Al Shabaab in Mandera and Garissa which were termed as divorced from all religious and moral principles. The same picture played out when *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* were analysed individually,

Generally speaking, the framing of the majority of articles with references to religious personalities was not likely to aggravate tensions and divisions among Kenyans of different religions. They focussed more on putting the government to task for the alleged failure to protect Kenyans from the attacks by Al Shabaab.

Table 8: Framing of articles

	<i>Responsibility Frame</i>	<i>Conflict Frame</i>	<i>Human interest frame</i>	<i>Morality Frame</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
TOTAL number of articles	49	24	35	25	133

Source: Researcher (2015)

4.4. Findings of Key Informant Interviews

Over and above analysing the newspaper coverage of the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University College, this study also explored the views and insights of key informants within the print media to help illuminate the subject matter at hand. A total of six journalists were interviewed, three each from *the Standard* and *the Nation*. In addition, two editors were also interviewed, one from both newspapers under study.

To start with, the key informants were asked whether the coverage of the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University College in *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* was done professionally in line with the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism by the Media Council (2013) so as not to polarise Kenyans along religious lines.

All the respondents insisted that to the best of their knowledge, the coverage was done professionally since the attacks were covered accurately and responsibly. One of the editors (Editor 1) said that a few mistakes may have been made such as publishing articles or photos that could polarise Kenyans along religious and ethnic lines but said that the on the overall, the coverage had been done more professionally than in the past.

“In the Mandera and Garissa attacks, we were keenly aware not to repeat past mistakes of collective blaming of communities for the Al Shabaab attacks. We didn’t want to portray certain religious and ethnic communities as guilty of the attacks as was previously the case in previous coverage. Since then we have learnt our lessons,” said Editor 1 during the interview in a city hotel on October 2, 2015.

On his part, Editor 2 said that the coverage of terrorism in the Kenyan print media is evolving and becoming more professional as journalists and editors gain more experience and internalise the lessons from the coverage of the previous attacks.

“If you look at the media coverage of terrorism say five years ago, you will notice a big difference with how it is covered now journalists and editors appreciate more the values and precautions that go with such coverage. If mistakes were committed in the Mandera and Garissa attacks, be sure that lessons will be learnt,” said Editor 2 at his office on October 4, 2015.

However, six out the eight informants said that more in depth articles should have been done after the attacks to comprehensively explore the concerns and viewpoints of religious communities. They said that many of the articles touching on religious communities were shallow and did not illuminate their issues adequately.

“Religious leaders both Christian and Muslims should have been given more coverage not just the politicians who are experts in politicising everything including security. But articles about religious leaders were either not published or minimised,” said journalist 3 during the interview at a city Hotel on September 30, 2015.

Journalist 1 said that mistakes that may have been made in reporting the two Al Shabaab attacks may have been partly contributed by shortage of knowledge about religious communities by journalists and editors.

However, Journalist 2 admitted that there were some instances of bias against religious communities, especially Muslims, among some journalists and editors in the reporting of the attacks.

“Majority of journalists and editors in print media newsrooms are largely Christian and in their work, they may not have been totally professional and objective in reporting the attacks. Some ended up creating an atmosphere of us vs. them. In some few instances, the Muslim community was being cast as the guilty party as a whole, when the Al Shabaab attackers were carried out by individuals,” said Journalist 2 during the interview in a city Hotel on September 29, 2015.

Secondly, the key informants were asked whether the general coverage of the Mandera and Garissa attacks in *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* by Al Shabaab was likely to polarise Kenyans along religious lines or not?

All the informant interviewees first agreed that the attacks by Al Shabaab in Mandera and Garissa had polarised Kenyans along religious lines because of their tactic of profiling and killing only non-Muslims.

But the eight informants said that the majority of articles in the coverage of the two attacks did not incite interreligious polarisation. The two editors especially said that they were very conscious of how the reporting of the attacks was done to avoid causing trouble among Kenyans of different religions. They said that a few mistakes may have happened in which articles that can be deemed polarising were published but that was not the general trend. Editor 2 also suggested that the Kenyan media is gradually getting experienced and more professional in the reporting of terrorism.

“As an editor, I was keen to weed out or tone down articles that seemed polarising to me because I feared that without doing so, we could easily contribute to plunging our country into anarchy,” said Editor 2 at his office on October 4, 2015.

On his part, journalist 5 said:

“Editors and journalists are human beings and may often experience lapses in judgment. That is why you may see that a number of articles that seem polarising were published about the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa,” said journalist 5 in an interview at a city hotel on September 19, 2015.

However, journalist 4 insisted that it is sometime a challenge to draw the line between accurate and truthful reporting of terrorism and what can be deemed as polarising. He expressed his dilemma that what may seem polarising to one person may not necessarily seem so to another.

Thirdly, the key informants were asked what the media can do to report attacks accurately by Al Shabaab without polarising Kenyans along religious lines.

All the informants agreed that attacks by Al Shabaab can be reported comprehensively and accurately without inflaming passions between Kenyans of different religious. They said that the issues can be reported without using inciting language or collectively blaming entire communities because of the actions of a few criminals. The informants suggested that journalists and editors need to familiarise themselves and internalise the Code of Conduct of the Practice of journalism by the Media Council of Kenya which lays out the best practices in reporting terrorism among other issues.

“Most journalists and editors are not really familiar with the Code of Conduct but what can help to improve professionalism in reporting of terrorism is continuous feedback to journalists and editors from research, experts and the public by pointing out mistakes that are made. Only this can help media practitioners internalise the values and principles contained in the Code of Conduct in a practical and timely manner,” said journalist 6 in an interview at a city Hotel on September 20, 2015.

Editor 1 cited a recent research study by the Media Council that critiqued media coverage of terrorism in the country as an example of feedback that helps journalists and editors improve their professionalism despite the pressures of their work environment.

But journalist 4 expressed concern that fear of polarising Kenyans along religious lines when reporting terrorist attacks should not result in forcing media to sidestep pertinent issues related to terrorism such as the role played by religious communities in such attacks.

“The issue of avoiding polarisation is quite legitimate but it should not lead to censorship of the media from discuss vital areas of concerns, but this should be done

objectively and respectfully,” said journalist 4 during an interview at a city Hotel on September 30, 2015.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations in relation to the print media coverage of religious communities by Al Shabaab in Mandera (November/December 2014) and Garissa University College (April 2015).

5.2 Summary of Findings

This study analysed 133 articles from *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* newspaper with regard to the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University College. It also had key informant interviews with journalists and editors of the two newspapers to gain more insight into the subject under study and better answer the research questions that motivated this study. The study focussed specifically on the coverage of religious communities (Christians and Muslims).

From the findings, it emerged that the coverage of religious communities in the two newspapers was largely professionally done in line with the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism by the Media Council of Kenya (2013). It was an improvement from the coverage of previous attacks which were found to be unprofessional and polarising. This study found that the coverage in *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* was not done in a way that could polarise Kenyans along religious lines.

The main themes that emerged in the coverage were unity of Kenyans in the face of Al Shabaab attacks that were described as an attempt to polarise Kenyans along religious lines. Other themes that emerged were strong condemnations of the attacks by persons specifically

identified as Christians or Muslims as well criticism of the government failure to protect Kenyans from the attacks. In addition, criticism of the Muslim community also emerged among the themes but such criticism was largely done in a non-polarising manner.

The study also found that in some instances, the language used in the articles was inappropriate as it linked Al Shabaab attackers to the Muslim community or Islam thereby increasing the likelihood of religious polarisation. Such words included “Muslim militants”, “radical Islamists” among others. However, the articles that contained such words were rather minimal (17 out of 133 articles). This suggests that the media is gradually becoming more careful in the use of such words during the coverage of terrorist attacks.

It also emerged that photos used were largely appropriate with little likelihood of polarising interreligious tensions and divisions since they showed no gory or bloody images. They also prominently showed religious communities, both Muslims and Christians, condemning and protesting the Al Shabaab killings. However, in some few cases, the choice of photos was likely to strengthen the polarising narrative that the Al Shabaab attacks are a conflict between Christians and Muslims.

The articles analysed were also found to be largely free of stereotypes of religious communities while the headlines used were largely not provocative or polarising but descriptive and informational.

The findings of the key informant interviews showed that journalists and editors interviewed are increasingly appreciating the dangers of interreligious polarisation in the coverage of terrorist attacks and the need to adhere to the Code of Conduct in the coverage of such attacks. They acknowledged the need for more caution and professionalism in future coverage.

5.3 Conclusion

Overall, the study concluded that by and large, the coverage of religious communities in the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa was done professionally with a few minor shortcomings in the adherence to the Code of Conduct for the practice of journalism in Kenya. It is hoped that in the coming years, professionalism in the coverage will increase. Secondly, the coverage of the attacks was done in a manner that is not likely to polarise interreligious relations in the country.

5.4 Recommendations

After analysis of the articles in *the Daily Nation* and *the Standard* in their coverage of the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera (November/December 2014) and Garissa University College, this study notes that there are areas of improvements for newspaper coverage of terrorist attacks. The study therefore recommends as follows:

- The media should promote articles that enhance unity of Kenyans in the face of polarising attacks by Al Shabaab and actively counter narratives that divide and polarise Kenyans along religious lines.
- Journalists and editors should do their best to be objective in their reporting of terrorist attacks and avoid biases against any group or persons. Biased reporting may polarise Kenyans along religious lines.
- The media should avoid stereotyping religious communities in their reporting of terrorist attacks and instead actively challenge such stereotypes. Instead, they promote objective portrayals of such communities to minimise hostility and antipathy towards them.

- Media houses should exercise more care in the language they use to describe groups like Al Shabaab to avoid associating them unfairly to religious communities. Doing so feeds the narrative that Al Shabaab attacks represent a conflict between Muslims and Christians.
- Criticism of religious communities in the reporting of terrorism should be done robustly and objectively but without polarising Kenyans along religious lines.
- There should be systematic capacity building for journalists and editors in the country's media houses on reporting of terrorism to enhance professionalism.
- Media houses should establish clear channels through which members of the public can share feedback to individual journalists and editors with regard to their articles, including those on terrorism. This will help address emerging concerns regarding the coverage in a timely basis.

5.4 Areas for further research

A similar but larger study on all media houses, print and electronic, with regard to their coverage of the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University College would be useful to get a more comprehensive picture of their performance.

In addition, more research is needed with regard to all aspects of the media coverage of terrorism within the local Kenyan context in order to develop a sufficient body of knowledge and insights that will go a long way in improve the practice of the media. Currently, much of the research material available in this crucial subject is foreign.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

1. In your view, was the print media coverage of the Al Shabaab attacks in Mandera and Garissa University College done professionally in line with Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism by the Media Council of Kenya (2013) so as not to polarise Kenyans along religious lines?
2. Did the print media coverage of Mandera and Garissa attacks by Al Shabaab likely to polarise Kenyans along religious lines or not and why?
3. What can the media personalities do to report attacks accurately by Al Shabaab without polarising Kenyans along religious lines?