A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF OPINION POLL RESULTS IN KENYA ON COVID19: A CASE OF TIFA RESEARCH AND INFOTRAK RESEARCH

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DECLARATION

This report is my own original work and has not been presented for the award of a Degree

in any other University or anywhere else for academic purpose.

Signed ……………………………………………   12th November 2021

Asava Amadi   **Date**

This report has been submitted for the award of Masters of Arts Degree in Journalism and

Mass Communication Studies with my approval as the University Supervisor.

Signature ————————————   18th **November 2021**

Dr. Samuel Siringi   **Date**

University of Nairobi

DEDICATION

To my parents, Philemon and Elizabeth Amadi for your support and reassuring presence. May you live a long and healthy life. For my siblings Joy, Mercy, Angela and Emmanuel, for your love and care, and for that extra push when I needed it. And my nieces Gracie, Natalie, Amana, Nadia, Natania and Tyanna. You are an endless source of joy.

Thank you and may you always be blessed.

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Table of Contents

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CA   Communication Authority of Kenya

CATI   Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing

COVID-19   Coronavirus Disease 2019

IRC   Infotrak Research and Consulting Ltd

KII   Key Informant Interviews

MCK   Media Council of Kenya

MSRA   Marketing and Social Research Association

SOP   Standard Operating Procedure

TIFA   Trends and Insights for Africa

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

WHO   World Health Organisation

ABSTRACT

The study sought to conduct a comparative study on opinion polls that were done on the coronavirus pandemic in Kenya. It focused on opinion polls conducted by two pollsters – Trends and Insights for Africa Research, and Infotrak Research and Consulting. The study was guided by the following specific objectives: To compare the key themes TIFA Research and Infotrak Research focused on in their opinion polls on the coronavirus pandemic in Kenya; To describe the communication strategies TIFA Research and Infotrak Research used to conduct opinion polls on the coronavirus pandemic in Kenya and; To explore the key findings of the opinion poll conducted by TIFA Research and Infotrak Research on the coronavirus pandemic in Kenya. The study was grounded in three theories; spiral of silence theory, social representations theory and social cognitive theory. A descriptive survey research design was employed to achieve the objectives of the study. The target population of the study was made up of two market research firms; TIFA Reseach and Infotrak Research and Consulting. Purposive sampling was used to draw up a sample of four respondents, two from each company, and six opinion poll reports – three from each company. An interview guide was used to obtain information from the respondents, while a code sheet was created to analyse the opinion poll reports. The findings revealed that the two pollsters had comparable objectives while conducting opinion polls on coronavirus. The other key finding was that they both put in place similar communication strategies, and the results were largely the same.

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter presents the background to the study. It also discusses the research problem, the objectives, research question, and justification of the study, limitations, and scope of the study.

1.1 Background Information

1.1.1 Coronavirus

The novel coronavirus is a highly infectious disease that was first reported in Wuhan, Hubei, China in late 2019 (Chomba, 2020). It then gradually spread to almost every country in the world and was ultimately declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 11th March 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). In Kenya, the first confirmed case was reported by the Ministry of Health on 12th March 2020 (Republic of Kenya, 2020). The Ministry then intensified surveillance, risk communication and testing, and proposed a raft of guidelines that the public would follow. Afterwards the presidency declared a dusk to dawn curfew countrywide and cessation of movement in the counties where the cases were concentrated.

A pandemic occurs when there are large scale epidemics afflicting millions of people across different countries (Taylor, 2019). Pandemics are usually caused by organisms, typically viruses or bacteria, for which most people do not have pre-existing immunity, transmit easily from one individual to the next and cause severe illness. The WHO declared pandemics are one of the leading health threats currently facing the world (World Health Organisation, 2019). Pandemics are frequently marked by uncertainty about the odds of becoming infected, confusion and a sense of urgency, and possible misinformation about the best methods of

prevention and management (World Health Organisation, 2005). These include severe disruptions of routines, separation from family and friends, shortages of food and medicine, loss of income, social isolation due to social distancing programs and school closure.

The above disruptions occurred in Kenya after the announcement of the disease in the country, and the subsequent measures that the government put in place to stem its spread. Several industries responded to the coronavirus threat by reducing their operation costs by scaling down their operations, laying off staff and other cost cutting initiatives. Medical and social uncertainty caused by the disruption of life causes people to search for information. Information sources can be divided into formals like news media, educational messages, government directives, and informal sources like social media, views of family and peers, and online blogs (Qazi, et al., 2020). Retaining situational awareness comprises of perception which relies on the information sources. One way of figuring out the perception of people on a situation is by conducting opinion polls.

1.1.2 Opinion Polls

Opinion polls are scientific and formal surveys that are used to measure and communicate public opinion regarding a particular issue of public concern. They are considered to be one of the essential ways of expressing and defining public opinion in society today (Carballo & Hjelmar, 2008). Opinion polls are conducted to draw insights on the attitudes and preferences a population holds on a set of issues, policies or personalities. Polls are useful in democracies because they are seen a tool to improve governance because they provide information to the citizens and the government. They provide the government with information that is important in driving policy and strategic communication, while providing a channel where citizens can provide feedback (Rossini, Hemsley, & Sikana Tanupabrungsun, 2018). Well designed and executed polls usually result in a perfect representation of the views held by the population with a minimal margin of error. Polling is the most contemporary way of representing public

opinion in democratic societies because, ideally, every citizen has an equal probability of being in the sample (Lee, 2016).

Price (2008), defines public opinion polling as a process where the general public get to assess and evaluate decisions made by the elite. He points out that the assessment by the public may be limited because they are usually asked to pick from a limited number of options in the poll, and most times they will have had only little or no engagement in the whole process until they are asked of their opinions at the evaluation stage. It places undue pressure on them because they are suddenly required to be knowledgeable in a process they have been unengaged in until that moment.

Public opinion refers to the distribution of the ideas and attitudes that a population holds about a particular issue or person. Bardes & Oldendick (2016) define public opinion as the aggregate views held by individual adults on matters of public interest. They are what the public thinks about a particular issue or set of issues at any point in time. According to Goidel (2011), public opinion is the aggregation of privately held individual opinion as revealed through carefully constructed questions posed to randomly selected samples.

Traditionally, public opinion had been understood as an aggregation of views of the elite because they were deemed to be better informed and consequently capable of reasoned judgement and qualified to participate in public debate and governance (Ginneken, 2003). However, in the modern era, as the wider public clamoured for more inclusivity in governance issues and public debate, they started to participate in public opinion. In this dispensation, a carefully sampled representative of the wider population speaks out to give a representation of how opinions on several pertinent issues are spread throughout the population. Despite this development, some sectors of the population still view opinion polls either as elitistic, or as a manipulative scheme to shift govenance and political issues.

In Kenya, as in many other democratic countries, regular opinion polls are conducted to measure what the public is thinking about the contentious issues in the society. This is because public opinion is one of the key elements that shape democracies. In the strict manner of things, public opinion polls measure and communicate the public sentiments at the time the poll is conducted (Cook, 2011). They are descriptive, and not necessarily predictive. When properly conducted, they offer a reliable evidence of how different opinions are spread across the selected population.

1.1.3 Opinion Polling in Kenya

Opinion polling has increasingly gained widespread acceptance in Kenya, particularly in the political space. Some scholars see it as a double edged sword arguing that while it has the potential to expand the democratic expression in the country, it also exposes the fragility of the Kenyan democracy (Mutahi, 2008). Polling was first conducted in Kenya during the early independence days, but it slowed down with the changing political environment in the following years (Kiage & Owino, History, Politics and Science of Opinion Polls in Kenya, 2010). Later in the late 70s and early 80s, the Weekly Review magazine regularly published constituency level electoral polls which were later gagged by the government (Nyanjom, 2012). Opinion polling eventually gained traction in the early nineties with the introduction of multiparty politics and consequently blossomed with the exit of the Moi regime (Wolf, 2009). The expansion of polling was driven by the expansion of media freedom and the democratic space.

Opinion polling in Kenya was first recorded in Central Nyanza in the early post-independence days (Kiage & Owino, History, Politics and Science of Opinion Polls in Kenya, 2010). In this period polling was mostly conducted by international agencies like USAID and magazines such as Weekly Review, but it was heavily monitored and eventually gagged by the government in the early 80s (Nyanjom, 2012). Opinion polling eventually gained traction

in the early nineties with the introduction of multiparty politics and consequently blossomed with the exit of the Moi regime (Wolf, 2009). The expansion of polling was driven by the expansion of media freedom and the democratic space. This development enabled several market research firms in the country to start to conduct regular opinion polls to measure the public feel on various political, social and economic issues. However, it is electoral opinion polling that is largely visible especially in the run up to general elections. Media organisations have also increasingly relied on opinion polls results for news (Kiambi, 2019).

Since 2002, as public opinion polling gained mainstream legitimacy in Kenya, opinion polls have been regularly conducted on two target groups in the country – the general public and business leaders (Ndati, Wambua, & Mogambi, 2012). The general public opinion poll seeks to provide systematic and representative perceptions on social, political, economic and cultural issues. In the run-up to the 2007 elections, Nation Media Group contracted three polling companies – Consumer Insight, Infotrak Harris and Strategic PR and Research to conduct simultaneous weekly opinion polls. Such developments led to the entrenchment of opinion polling into the Kenyan electoral landscape, although it has mainly focused on top leadership like presidency and gubernatorial levels, and party while largely neglecting parliamentary seats (Nyanjom, 2012).

Presently opinion polls in Kenya are so mainstream that they are an integral part of the political conversation. Public issue surveys in the country cover a wide range of subject matter that include voters' preferred candidates, public policy and governance issues like security, corruption, education, devolution, health matters, human rights, economy and development priorities (Wolf, 2020).

Every time opinion polls results are released in Kenya; varied reactions ensue. There often are accusations and counter-accusations on whether the poll's results reflect the genuine

opinions and expectations of the public (Mutahi, 2008). As Mutahi argues, this can be construed as evidence of high competitiveness and reliance on polls and different political actors as valid inputs in their strategy. In 2007, pollsters in Kenya were deemed to be complicit in the violence that followed a contested general election. They were accused of manipulating poll results, while the media was held responsible for failing to adequately scrutinise poll results before publishing them to the masses (Kiambi, 2019).

The polling industry responded to this challenge by organising itself into the Marketing and Social Research Association (MSRA), a self-regulating body that oversees the operations of the pollsters. They screen questions, standardise the format of the questions and recommend the timely release of the results to ensure relevance to context (Nyanjom, 2012). Parliament, on the other hand, responded by publishing an Act titled "The Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No 39 of 2012", which sought to regulate the way electoral opinion polls are published in Kenya (Ndati, Wambua, & Mogambi, 2012).

1.2 Problem Statement

Pollsters often perform the role of measuring and publishing public sentiments on pertinent political and social issues in the society. Ideally, polling should help align the views of the masses to the plans of the ruling elite. However, in Kenya there appears to be a substantial gap between what should be the role of opinion polling in Kenya, and the perception many Kenyans have of it (Theuri, 2015). One of the main reasons for this could be the association of opinion polling with electoral politics, and the biases that linkage engenders. This has been demonstrated by the readiness with which some sections of the population view opinion poll results and polling agencies with suspicion, and sometimes dismiss them all together (Mutahi, 2008). The attitudes towards opinion polling may differ between different groups. In order to enable better understanding of polling and polling agencies in Kenya, the triggers of the perceptions on opinion polls should be identified. Several major pollsters in Kenya have

conducted opinion polls to assess public sentiment towards the COVID-19 situation in the country, measuring their awareness, response, and socio-economic impact. This study will do that by conducting a comparative study on opinion poll results on coronavirus released by TIFA Research and Infotrak Research.

1.3 Research Objectives

General Objective

- To conduct a comparative study of opinion polls on the coronavirus pandemic in Kenya conducted by TIFA Research and Infotrak Research

Specific Objectives

- To compare the key themes TIFA Research and Infotrak Research focused on in their opinion polls on the coronavirus pandemic in Kenya

- To describe the communication strategies TIFA Research and Infotrak Research used to conduct opinion polls on the coronavirus pandemic in Kenya

- To explore the key findings of the opinion poll conducted by TIFA Research and Infotrak Research on the coronavirus pandemic in Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions

- What were the key themes in opinion polls conducted by TIFA Research and Infotrak Research on coronavirus in Kenya?
- What communication strategies did TIFA Research and Infotrak Research use in their polls on the coronavirus?
- What were the key findings in the opinion polls conducted by TIFA Research and Infotrak Research on the coronavirus?

1.5 Rationale

Despite becoming more commonplace and entrenched in the Kenyan political system, opinion polling is still a misunderstood, and sometimes maligned, practice in the country. Modern opinion polling was developed for its potential to enable the common man to contribute to decisions made by the elite and political institutions (Ferguson, 2000). However, this is not always the case, especially in a fledgling democracy such as Kenya. It has been observed that whenever opinion surveys are publicized, there always follows a highly charged discourse (Mutahi, 2008). This can be attributed to the fact most of the opinion polls results that gain wide attention are political therefore the inherent bias and competitive nature of elective politics derails the manner in which they are received and interpreted.

In the light of the unfortunate coronavirus pandemic that plagued the world since early 2020, the opinion polling became one of the ways information and feedback was exchanged between the general populace and the government. It is, therefore worth assessing how the major opinion polling organisations fared in conducting polls on this issue. Opinion polling has been shown to contribute to further strengthening of dominant views (Rothschild & Malhotra, 2014), and having an informational influence on individuals (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005). These effects have mostly been observed in opinion polls conducted on elections. This research, however, studies opinion polls on an issue that does not directly involve elective politics, therefore it has the potential to generate objective insights on the opinion polling practice in Kenya.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings and recommendations from this study can be useful to different groups of people. The critique of the themes used in the opinion polls could contribute guide the polling organisations on how to properly align the issues they conduct polls on to what people are

interested in. This could contribute to guiding them on how to execute well-designed polls. Secondly, this research is important because the findings and recommendations it engenders demonstrate the importance of opinion polling and also contributes to the knowledge on how best to scrutinize, report and analyse opinion poll results. It is also educative to the general public because they will know what to look for when consuming media content on opinion polls. To the polling firms it will show them the areas they need to clarify when giving media briefings on released poll results, and in turn that will increase their credibility as sources of information. Finally, it is hoped that future researchers undertaking studies in opinion polling will find this work a relevant reference.

1.7 Scope and Limitations

The research generally focuses on opinion polls on coronavirus conducted by two major market research companies in Kenya, namely: TIFA Research and Infotrak Research. These companies were picked based on two criteria; they are amongst the companies that have signed and committed the MSRA guidelines on how to conduct opinion polls in Kenya and they are the ones whose opinion polls on coronavirus have been most visible. This means that polls from non-complying institutions, non-governmental organisations and other pollsters will be excluded.

The two targeted market research firms - Infotrak Research and TIFA Research provided the researcher with the Key Informants and opinion polls reports. The study would have involved focus group discussions, but because most of the employees in the two firms worked from home it provided a major limitation. The study also limited itself only to the opinion poll reports on coronavirus. The sample and scope were adequate to meet the objectives of the study.

1.8 Definitions of Key Concepts Used in the Study

Public opinion: The distribution of the ideas and attitudes that a population holds about politics and policy issues

Poll: An instrument for collecting information about a group of people that is performed in a standardized manner

Opinion polls: Scientific non-biased surveys or inquiries designed to measure attitudes or opinions of a group of people on political, economic or social issues.

Media: Newspapers, radio, television and other platforms involved in mass dissemination of information to wide audiences.

Pollsters: They are the professional institutions dedicated to working with polls on matters relating to political and policy matters. In this study they are; TIFA Research and Infotrak Research

Knowledge: The awareness and familiarity an individual has about a phenomenon. In this study the phenomenon is COVID-19

Mainstreaming: The tendency of heavy media users to perceive similar reality to that painted on mass media even when it differs from reality

Resonance: When specific views have a marked relevance to and impact on a specific demographic like the youth or people from a particular region.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This chapter is a structured review of the relevant literature on opinion polling. It will shed light on the objectives of the study to create a better understanding of the issues discussed. To understand these issues, relevant literature and theoretical underpinnings are discussed.

2.1 Empirical Review

2.1.1 Key Themes in Public Opinion Polls

A theme is an idea, attribute or message that is explored and discussed repeatedly in a body of work. Ryan & Bernard (2003) describe themes as 'abstract, often fuzzy, constructs which investigators identify before, during and after data collection'. Other researchers consider it an implied issue that organises a group of repeating ideas whose interpretation is subject to differing understandings by the participants (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). In public opinion polling, a theme is the idea that provides the parameters to be explored and measured during a poll. As explained by Vaismoradi et al (2016), these parameters are interpreted differently as a result of varied lived experiences and expectations, especially when they are conducted during periods of national uncertainties on issues such as the coronavirus pandemic.

Themes are identified by analysing and spotting patterns within data and reports. A theme represents a noticeable facet of the data in a patterned way, without necessarily capturing the experience of the majority (Scharp & Sanders, 2018). They explain that analysing themes in a body of work involves a series of actions that begins with familiarizing with the data, grouping them into categories, and finally generating and naming themes. According to Ryan & Bernard (2003), one method of identifying and constructing themes is by discovery of key

words in their context since recurring words show that the matter is important. Other ways involve using categories that characterise the experience of the informants, comparing and contrasting reports from different sources, and using social science queries. Social science queries call on us to pay attention to conditions, actions, interactions, contradictions and consequences of a phenomenon (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

Themes are an unavoidable component of any opinion polling exercise because they provide a scope and focus within which the poll is centred. Most public opinion polls pay attention to the issues many citizens and stakeholders consider urgent in that moment (Hellevik, 2008). Pollsters, in turn, identify themes that reflect the ideals and standards of the society because they are primarily interested in values shared by many (Zetterberg, 2008). The themes polled often fall within the major life and society areas such as economy, politics, morality, health, art and religion. It is also these priority issues that capture the attention of the media, politicians and government (Eisinger, 2008). While planning an opinion poll, pollsters should ask themselves the following questions: In what ways will this survey be useful? What decisions might be influenced by the research findings? In what other ways will the survey be useful? These questions can be useful in identifying and clarifying the themes to focus on in the opinion poll.

A paper that studied the impact of public opinion polling on public policy found that it had a considerable influence on policy decisions, and that the more relatable the issue is, the bigger the effect of opinion polling (Burstein, 2003). The research noted that public opinion polling remains impactful even when influence from political organisations and leaders is considered. For public opinion polls to be impactful, they also have to be properly designed and conducted. Such polls can help us comprehend the citizens' views, assess the status quo in a country, contribute to policy and decision-making processes and clarify the hopes and priorities for the future (Conroy-Krutz, 2019).

12

Across the globe, political opinion surveys attract similar primary audiences. In a study in the Philippines, researchers found that the section of the public that was most interested in public opinion polls comprised of politicians, media, campaign advisors of candidates and the general public (Abad & Ramirez, 2008). Many studies have been done on elective politics opinion polling and it has been found that different users find different motivations for paying attention to opinion polls results. Politicians and candidates use the results of opinion polls as their primary inputs to their planning strategies. They use them to determine their goals and map out how to achieve them (Abad & Ramirez, 2008). Afterwards subsequent surveys can be conducted to track voters' responses to the efforts being implemented and their impact.

The media sometimes sponsor opinion polls to provide estimates of voters' preferences at various points before elections. The mainstream media in Kenya like the Nation Media Group, The Standard Group and the Star Newspaper consider this data newsworthy, that is why they are invested in sponsoring and reporting on them. For the academics, opinion polling data provides new opportunities for upending conventional theories and extracting new ideas (Conroy-Krutz, 2019). All these groups pay attention to opinion polling because polls have a significant influence on public policy debate, and provide communication linkage between the citizens and the policy makers.

Kiage & Owino (2010), wrote a holistic treatise into the polling industry in Kenya, tracing its infancy, growth, challenges and development through the years. They noted that opinion polling has been one the central gauges of public views and means of discovering perceptions since independence. The themes they explored in their write up include the historical aspects of opinion polling in Kenya, perception towards credibility and accuracy of opinion polls, state control of opinion polling industry, the impact of opinion polls on the political space, and pollsters' methodologies and execution of surveys (Kiage & Owino, 2010). They argue that while the opinion polling space in Kenya has been saddled with sporadic inadequacies, it

has generally made a positive contribution to the democratic development of the country. Opinion polls in the country measure relevant themes, therefore have been helpful in predicting political contests, formulating policy messages and structuring political communication (Kiage & Owino, 2010).

2.1.2 Role of Communication in Opinion Polling

Opinion polling is considered a political communication tool because it encourages political participation and engagement across different cadres of stakeholders. Further, studies have demonstrated that public opinion polling spurs knowledge and information processing activities of general public (Zhou, 2009). Opinion polls are, therefore, an integral part of the political information chain, because they serve as in input factor for both the messages of politicians and their spokespersons, as well as the political reporting of the media (Erikson & Tedin, 2006). Communication is a key component in three major phases of the opinion polling process; within the polling organisation, during data collection phase and finally when disseminating the results to the public through the media and other channels.

Communication is a crucial process in organisations because it contributes to the formation and maintenance of linkages and cooperation within and outside the organisation (Illoafu, 2016). Internally, communication boosts the participation and cooperation of staff, coordination and planning of activities, and formation of key relationships that help in achieving an organisation's objectives (Bucata & Rizescu, 2017). It increases efficiency by providing the loop where the management are engaged in an information and feedback exchange. It is a tool that the management can utilise to establish harmonious interpersonal relationships, increase the skill levels of staffers, and mobilise employees to achieve set goals. Farace, Monge, & Russell (1977), condensed the role of communication within an

organisation into three main kinds – task-related communication, innovation related communication and maintenance-related communication. This is echoed by Keyton (2017), who found that communication is important in formation of workplace relationships and their dynamics with respect to their functions, power relations and role definition and cooperation. It plays a role in leadership, information exchange, feedback and appraisal and other related aspects like mentorship. All these internal communication dynamics are relevant in opinion polling firms.

Since the advent of COVID-19 pandemic, workplaces have had to restructure their internal communication because of the new barriers like limited in-person meetings and interactions. The channels of communications have changed. The primary medium of conducting meeting shifted from face to face to mainly computer-aided or electronic. Firms have had to develop their own best practices inorder to remain productive and competitive (Assaad & El-adaway, 2021).

The data collection phase of opinion pollling usually requires the researcher to be in direct contact with the respondents. Administration of surveys to the respondents may be in various modes including: self administered questionnaires, face to face interviews, telephone interviews or internet administered questionnaires (Weisberg, 2008). The method chosen to administer the survey is considered a communication issue because it will affect the accuracy of the responses. Besides challenges such as the cost and time involved in the process of carrying out the survey, there are other communication factors that should be considered like the ability of the respondent to comprehend the questions and judge the appropriate responses based on their knowledge and experience (Weisberg, 2008).

A study done in South America found that Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing CATI) is a valuable procedure to obtain information because the response rates are higher and it

reduced heavy work efforts and costs associated with surverys (Cecatti, et al., 2011). While CATI has been shown to facilitate fast data collection, it might provide challenges in cases where you need to stratify your sample into geographic locations. Also, many pollsters do not have access to a conclusive database that would ensure proper random sampling (Choi, 2004). Technological innovations in how polls are conducted has definitely led to a reduction in the cost of conducting polls. However, while they made data collection faster and cheaper, they also presented methodological challenges (Trougott, 2012).

How the general public perceives opinion polls is largely influenced by how the media reports on them. Opinion polls results are typically communicated to the public via mass media channels. Pollsters and the media often work together because media organisations usually treat poll results as credible news, while the pollsters see the mass media as a way to communicate their findings easily to the wider public and other actors (Sonck & Loosveldt, 2007). When reporting poll results, media often pick aspects that they deem newsworthy. News organisations generally prioritize their own interests and objectives therefore they will frame the news in a manner that will attract a wide audience. Media extends and gives new form to our senses and perceptual capabilities. Adults acquire public information mostly from mass media (Perry, 2009). He further argues that the media play a central role in the public acquisition, organisation and use of knowledge.

Communication technology has transformed vasty in the twenty first century with the advent and rapid spread of the internet, mobile telephony and digital media. However, the media is still perceived as a vital political and social messaging medium, and often the public pays attention to legacy media more than any other mass communication platforms (Lance & Iyengar, 2008).

Mass media's inclination to cover opinion polls can be interpreted as an endorsement of the perceived scientific and ethical integrity of the polls (Wolf, 2020). Journalism is widely thought to be a trusted source that packs information in understandable formats and interesting ways for the public. Ideally, journalists provide a public service as collectors and disseminators of information (Deuze, 2005). They are thought to be impartial, neutral, objective, guided by a code of ethics and therefore credible. This gives them a sense of validity and legitimacy.

Studies have, however, shown that media reporting of opinion polls results is fraught with a variety of issues. According to Patterson (2008), many journalists do not always respect or understand statistical parameters while reporting and interpreting poll data. Whether by design or ignorance, journalists rarely highlight the parameters and contexts that can skew the outlook of the poll results. He also observed that news media outlets have an operational bias towards covering political personalities and the policy community and their action. Bhatti & Pedersen (2015) found that in a vast majority of articles on poll results, the audience are not provided with clear information about the methodology employed and concepts such as statistical uncertainty. They further contend that it is not a big problem because the average media content consumer does not pay much attention to information about sample size, margin of error and confidence levels (Bhatti & Pedersen, 2015).

We also need to consider the manner in which news media outlets report stories. In order to make news palatable to wide audiences, many news organisations usually filter huge volumes of information into a few paragraphs in print media or into short sound bites on news broadcasts. This affects how they report on opinion polls. A poll may have a cross-section of issues, but the media usually pick the aspects that will grab instant attention and a level of controversy. TIFA Research conducted an opinion poll in late 2019 to collect Kenyans' reflections on the year on a cross-section of issues. The media reporting that the poll

engendered mostly centred the political rank because they are the ones who are deemed newsworthy. For example, in its top story from the poll, the Standard reported that the most admired personality in Kenya is President Kenyatta, followed by Deputy President Ruto and former Prime Minister Odinga (Omondi, 2019). While it is true that the poll found political figures to rank higher than personalities from other sectors like business, sports, religion and the arts, the reporting pushed to the periphery or completely obliterated aspects from the opinion poll that would have engendered a more impactful public discourse.

In a study to assess the level of knowledge of Kenyan political reporters on aspects of empirical research and opinion, it was found that a majority of the respondents did not understand what sampling error is (Kiambi, 2019). Further, many political reporters did not know that non-random sample could not be generalized to the population from which the study was drawn. This shows that a majority of journalists who cover opinion polls do not understand basic statistical and survey research concepts and that is detrimental to the accurate reporting on the same (Kiambi, 2019). We therefore cannot fully trust the journalists' ability to interpret poll results, because their lack of statistical aptitude can get in their way of meaningful interpretation (Bhatti & Pedersen, 2015).

Emerging infectious diseases such as the coronavirus pandemic transcend borders rapidly (Giddens, 2000). Mass mediated news about infectious diseases also travel fast increasing levels of awareness while also contributing to increased drama and uncertainty, and exacerbating spread of inaccurate and alarming claims about the dangers that portend (Holland, Michelle Imison, Fogarty, & Warwick, 2012). With time, though, information about emerging infectious diseases and how they are transmitted becomes debunked and clarified. On the other hand, sustained reports on the diseases and their associated fatality rates usually lead to sustained feeling of panic amongst the general public (Lau & Griffiths, 2011). This, in turn, makes them question the level of preparedness of the public health

system vis-à-vis availability of health personnel, prevention equipment, drugs and other interventions and may further increase anxiety levels.

According to Patterson (2008), content analysis of several media pieces indicates that the reality portrayed by the media is often inexact. He argued that the press distorts the reality by focusing on novelty, events and leaders. He observed that news is shortsighted and fast paced, with the latest news abruptly overshadowing the old. News coverage only flare up during peak action, even when the issue has been simmering for long, and quickly recede when the peak action dies out (Patterson, 2008). News is also mostly about events, therefore issues only surface in news when they take event form. Without events to lend them immediacy, social issues seldom get much attention in the news. One characteristic of the media is the tendency to be drawn to the outrageous, the bizarre and the dramatic (Ferguson, 2000).

In the study 'The Role of Communication in Creating Awareness About Electoral Opinion Polls in Kenya' Wambua, Ndati, Muthini, & Siringi (2016) noted that the way opinion polls are communicated give cues to the public on how interpret the poll results. It has the potential to sway a significant number of voters by imparting either a demotivating effect when the voters are certain their candidate might win so they abstain from voting or a motivation effect when individuals who had not intended to vote decide to do so or a free will effect where voters cast their vote to prove the polls wrong (Wambua, Ndati, Muthini, & Siringi, 2016).

The sequencing and timing of messages from electoral and policy campaigns can shape views over long periods of time. A 2010 study published in the American Political Science Review which focused on the short-term effects of a given on the public found that two competing, simultaneous messages can cancel one another out (Chong & Druckman, 2010). The study

found that how the media frames a message affects how people alter their attitude towards an object.

The study by Chong & Druckman (2010) found that the timing of media messages received by the audience is crucial. They argue that when competing messages are received simultaneously, people weight the relative merits of opposing arguments, but when they receive competing messages across different periods rather than concurrently, the accessibility of previous arguments tend to decay with time. This, according to Chong & Druckman, means that 'individually will typically give greater weight to the more immediate cues contained in the most recent messages. Democratic competition thus may reduce or eliminate framing effects only when people are presented with opposing frames at the same time'.

The result of their research suggests that the persistence of framing effects may be related to contextual factors such as the salience of the issue, the duration between messages, or the particular combination of frames received (Chong & Druckman, 2010). Overall, the study demonstrated that 'most individuals were shown to be vulnerable to the vagaries of timing and the framing of communication'. Therefore, as the study suggests, successful campaigns to win over public opinion should seek to communicate early to shape initial attitudes, often to compete with competing frames and late because of the decay of framing effects.

Scholars generally contend that demographic and socio-economic factors are significant predictors of the attitudes an individual may hold towards opinion polling. Demographic factors are those that describe people in terms of their size, composition in terms of age and gender, movement and social mobility as regards income and changes in income (Lundquist, Anderton, & Yaukey, 2015). Socio-economic factors, on the other hand, refer to society related economic factor which often correlate or influence each other; for example, your

income level correlates to your level of education. They include employment, education and income.

The demographic profile of respondents plays a role in swinging the total results of an opinion poll. According to Hassan (2017), the characteristics of the people polled in terms of their age, social economic profile, geographical variation and gender should reflect that of the general population. When a peripheral group is not reached they usually feel unincluded.

A study by Okinda, Ojwang, & Nyambuga (2020) found that socio-demographic features such as educational level, age, political knowledge and interest and civic responsibility could predict an individual's awareness and participation in governance issues. They concluded that these demographic factors contributed to the overall political attitudes individuals espoused, and had a broader implication on the sentiments people held. While their study was on electoral participation, the same can be concluded on attitudes held towards opinion polling. Another study conducted in South Africa found that public opinion was influenced by sociodemographic variables like gender, socio-economic factors, marital status, age and religiosity (Pudifin & Bosch, 2012)

In the US, attitudes about polls are positive and remarkably stable. However, a significant percentage of people are sceptical whether polls make any difference (Hildreth, 2008). A study showed that many people are willing to readily accept the credibility of opinion polls though most also qualify it with 'but not always' or 'most of the time'. Other studies show that people take into account the identity of the polling organisation before making a decision on whether to trust it or not (Hildreth, 2008). Also, the more enlightened and discerning individuals usually have an interest in the sponsor of the poll before they can evaluate the poll reports.

Individual pre-existing beliefs can affect how they perceive opinion poll reports. For most people, attitudes towards opinion polling are a result of their socialization. Socialisation is the process in which people acquire relatively enduring orientation in general and towards their own particular political system (Clawson & Oxley, 2017). Socialization agents include family, school, peers and news media. Differences in attitude is usually along age, class and ethnic differences. The differences are usually detected in the trust and efficacy individuals have towards opinion polling. Trust in this sense refers to the degree in which an individual agrees that the opinion reports are honest and in public interest, while efficacy is the belief that the opinion poll reports reflect their views and that the authorities will be responsive to them (Clawson & Oxley, 2017).

Credibility of a poll is often pegged on the mass media that report it (Kim, Weaver, & Willnat, 2000). Generally, people are inclined to quote polls when discussing pertinent issues because news media often include major polls in their reporting. A criticism of polls, however, is that their sample size is often not sufficient enough in size or representation to generalise the findings to the general population. Online polls, for example, may have large numbers of respondents but they often do not include all sections of the population (Kim, Weaver, & Willnat, 2000).

Studies also indicate that acceptance of opinion poll reports is also a function of the source credibility (Kim, Weaver, & Willnat, 2000). For example, an opinion poll report published by a lesser-known publication or in a publication that has had credibility issues before may be less believable to many people than that published by mainstream media.

While experts tend to evaluate credibility of polls based on survey methods used, data transparency, and vendor track record, it is unclear whether the general public uses similar

criteria (Madson & Hillygus, 2019). Studies show that respondents view polls as more credible when majority opinion matched with their opinion.

2.1.3 Results of Opinion Polls

The overarching role of opinion polls is to gather the representative opinions of a population, then extrapolate them to the general population but within confidence levels (Cook, 2011). The impact of opinion polling has mostly been studied in elective politics, and in this sphere, public opinion polls are seen as a mechanism that helps link the citizens to their political leaders and policy makers (Moy & Rinke, 2012). Opinion polls offer citizens a mechanism with which to express their sentiments on key issues of the day, but also provide policy makers with information about what their consitituents might or might not desire.

A study by Rothschild and Malhotra (2014) showed that public opinion expressed through opinion polls affects individual level attitudes, but they said that the size of the effect varies based on the issues. They further demonstrated that there are three principal ways by which polls can induce conformity. One major way is that people usually have the desire to adopt the majority position in order to feel liked and accepted and to be on the winning team (Rothschild & Malhotra, 2014). The other is the informational social influence where people take cues from the crowds and follow it because they believe that others' interpretation of an ambiguous situation is more accurate and will help choose an appropriate course of action (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005). Lastly people resolve cognitive dissonance by switching to the side they infer is going to win based on the poll.

Perry (2002) observed that substantial portions of content on popular media outlets like radio, television and daily papers involve an effort at persuasion even when packaged as news stories. Persuasion, as a media effects concept, is defined as attempting to change people's attitude through the written or spoken word. Perry (2002) further explains that attitude

consists of three components; cognitive, affective and conative. These components correspond to an individual's knowledge, feeling and behavioural intentions. He argues that a message affects the three components sequentially. We first gain awareness, then form or alter attitudes and finally we form behavioural intentions (Perry, 2002). All the three components can be tested in an opinion polling situation.

In a study to investigate the effects of legislation on electoral opinion polls in Kenya, Wambua (2013), found that electoral opinion polls had considerable effect on the voting decisions of voters in Kenya, although its influence was eclipsed by other factors such as party loyalty and ethnic considerations. The same study also found that the perceived competence of media personnel had an impact on how believable the public found electoral public opinion polls to be, and that had a direct influence on their voting decisions. The media's tendency to focus their reporting on only a few candidates while sidelining others has a direct effect on the public rating of candidates since the obscured ones gradually fade from public consciousness (Wambua, 2013).

Another study revealed that opinion polls only determine voting behaviour if cited by media and politicians. The study whose main objective was evaluate the public attitudes on opinion polls in Kenya, the findings showed that a majority of the respondents were not confident about public opinion polls because they either perceive them as not being credible enough, or they view them as manipulation tools used by politicians and media (Theuri, 2015). In this study, Theuri (2015) argues that the public are impervious to the effects of media reporting of opinion polls. She validates her findings by showing that opinion polls projections have consistently been proven wrong by the actual general elections results.

A paper that studied the impact of public opinion on public policy found that it had a substantial impact on public policy, and that the salience of the issue increases the impact of

public opinion (Burstein, 2003). The research noted that the impact of public opinion increases even when activities of political organisations and elites are taken into account.

Other scholars argue that to study the impact of media coverage of public opinion polls, we need to distinguish the three concepts of public opinion. The first one is the quantitative concept which regards public opinion as distributions of individual opinions with a population. The qualitative concept regards public opinion as the opinion of interested and well informed citizens on political issues. This concept of public opinion assumes that the well informed citzens pursue the collective good, derive their opinion from general values and detailed information abour current affairs and take a stand for their opinion in public

Wolf (2020) observed an interesting impact of opinion polls on the general public. He said that they found a significant degree of what he called a partisan selectivity with regard to which presidential candidate they remember leading in polls after the August 2017 elections. Whereas many of the respondents in the study could recall one or more specific poll result and the exact polling agents that released them, a majority of them reported they remembered the polls in which their preferred candidates was leading (Wolf, 2020).

Wolf (2020) says that many Kenyans believe that opinion surveys can actually influence voters, because of the media frenzy they usually attract. As observed by Rothschild & Malhotra (2014), people tend to conform to majority opinion. Therefore learning about prevailing public opinion via ubiquitous polls may produce bandwagon effect and polls can become self-fulfilling prophesies whereby majorities grow in cascading manner. However there is no substantial evidence of the bandwagon effect in Kenya because the other factors that influence voting decisions such as party and ethnic loyalty usually overshadow bandwagoning.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study will be guided by three communication theories: Spiral of silence theory, social representation theory and social cognitive theory. Griffin (2012) defines a theory as 'a set of sytematic, informed hunches about the way things work'. Theories attempt to explain phenomena based on a combination of speculation, observation and experimentation. The four theories that guide this study will be useful in fulfilling its core objectives because they are the key theories that explain the process of opinion formation, particulary where mass media is the main source of information.

2.2.1 Spiral of Silence Theory

The spiral of silence is a media effects theory by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann that attempts to explain the formation and spread of public opinion. She says that individuals do not openly reveal their views on issues when they think their opinions do not correspond with what the majority hold to be true. This theory considers public opinion as the opinion which can be voiced in public without the fear of sanctions and upon which action in the public can be based (Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

Spiral of silence is the idea that people balk to the most prominent opinions of the day and publicised via different media, while keeping the contrarian views to themselves (Baran & Davis, 2013). According to this theory, the observations made in a context such as mass media spread to another and encourage people either to proclaim their views or to swallow them and keep quiet until, in a spiralling process, some views dominate the public while others disappear from public awareness as its adherents become mute. The spiral occurs when opinion expressed as dominant by mass media contrasts interpersonal support for deviant opinion. This results in a number of people not openly expressing deviant opinion and changing from deviant opinion to dominant opinion because of the pressure they feel. This is driven by people's fear of isolation because they understand that their choices might increase

their likelihood of isolation. They therefore become reticent to express their minority views for fear of being isolated.

Noelle-Neumann (1974) posits that individuals gain information outside their immediate personal sphere from the mass media, who then exert a big influence on how the individuals will evaluate the climate of opinion. She explores the possibility of prevalent public opinion being a result of the media system promoting or inhibiting certain points of view. This theory relates directly to the central objectives of this study since it postulates that media publicization of public opinion leads to the spread of the dominant views and gradual diminishing of peripheral opinion.

2.2.2 Social Representations Theory

This theory attempts to explain how societies, organisations and groups develop common meanings about societal and political issues of the day (Hoijer, 2011). This theory links society and individual, media and public. Further, as explained by Wagner, et al. (1999), 'social psychological phenomena and processes can only be properly understood if they are seen as being embedded in historical, cultural and macro social conditions'.

Social representations can be understood from two perspectives. One, it can be viewed from the perspective of individual knowledge systems, where formation processes, change dynamics and elaborations in social interactions occur in everyday discourse. Second, from the perspective of collective discourse, social representations explain how social processes lead to individual socially grounded representations (Wagner, et al., 1999).

When entering the public arena, scientific knowledge is gradually transformed through media communication and interpersonal communication. It is through communication that emerging social representations are replicated and evolve into stable forms in collective consciousness (Mayor, et al., 2012). In a study to investigate how public makes sense of sudden disease

outbreaks over time, Mayor, et al. (2012) analysed changes in how lay persons attribute responsibility and blame over the course of the disease outbreak, and found that there are shifts in social representations of diseases as they change from an abstract far-flung threat to a more local, immediate and concrete danger.

This theory is relevant to the study because it connects how individual and societies form opinions and how they relate with polling agents. The theory can be used to study and explain the views individuals have towards the polling companies in the study.

2.2.3 Social Cognitive Theory

This theory was advanced by Albert Bandura, and it provides a framework within which to examine the determinants and mechanisms through which symbolic communication influences human thought, effect and action (Bandura, 2001). The theory recognises individuals as self-organising, proactive and self-reflecting. Human self-determination, adaptation and change are embedded in social systems. Therefore, personal agency operates within a broad socio-structural influences. This theory provides a blueprint with which we can understand how individuals and societies evaluate and react to opinion polling.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

In this chapter, we discuss the research design, area of study, population, sampling technique, instruments of data collection, administration of the instruments and methods of data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

A research design involves laying down the plans and conditions that would make data collection and analysis sufficient. It is the outlines the structure within which the research is conducted and it contains the plan for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kothari, 2004). A properly outlined research design ensures that operations planned for the research run efficiently, while being cost effective and economical on resources such as time and money. Ultimately, a good research design ensures that there is minimal bias, while keeping the reliabililty of data collected and analysed high (Kothari, 2004).

To achieve the objectives of this study, descriptive survey design was adopted. Descriptive design relies on observation as a means of collecting data (Walliman, 2011). Observation can take many forms including interviews, questionnaires and visual recordings. The important thing is that the observations are written a way that they can be subsequently analysed. According to Orodho (2009), descriptive survey design is used for collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits of social issues.

A descriptive survey design is suitable for this research because it seeks to get information that describes the current situation. It describes trends and patterns and also helps to clarify and explore the current and existing status of two or more variables at a certain point in time.

Surveys are also used in data collection from a scattered population that is not easy to observe directly.

3.2 Study Location

The study location was conducted in Nairobi, and it targeted employees of TIFA Research and Infotrak Research who were contacted online.

3.3 Research Approach

The study adopted a case study approach. According to (Crowe, et al., 2011), 'a case study is a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context'. This approach is suitable for the study because it can be used to explain, describe and explore the opinion polling industry in the contexts in which polls occur. The researcher employed key informant interviews and document analysis as a way to get information to meet the study objectives. This allowed for obtaining indepth information.

3.4 Target Population

Population is the collection of all items of interest to a study. It is the entire collection of elements about which a researcher wishes to generalise study findings (Leavy, 2017). The target population for the study comprised of two opinion polling companies in Kenya. The companies are TIFA Research and Infotrak Research and Consulting. The study targeted to interview four key informants drawn from the polling companies and opinion poll reports on the coronavirus produced by the two companies. The informants from the companies held the position of manager and were involved in the entire process of conducting the opinion polls on coronavirus. Further, the study also did document analysis on reports of opinion polls conducted by the two companies on the coronavirus.

The target population of the study was appropriate because they were well placed to respond to the research questions. Additionally, the two polling companies are ….

3.5 Sampling Techniques

Sample size is the subset of the population selected to make inferences about the population and therefore should be adequate to make useful conclusions, and small enough to use resources effectively (Lenth, 2001). In qualitative research, small samples are often used and they are usually purposefully selected because of the kind of information they have.

For this study, key informants were drawn from the top management TIFA Research and Infotrak Research because they have the information about the entire process of opinion polling.

The sample for the interviews was 4 key informants comprising of the two Top Managers and two Lead Researchers from each of the polling companies.

Table 3.1 Sample size

Polling Agency	Number of Respondents	Number of Documents
TIFA Research	2	3
IRC	2	3
Total	**4**	**4**

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer the stated research questions, test hypotheses and evaluate outcomes (Kabir, 2016). The goal of data collection is to capture quality evidence that then translates to rich data analysis and allows the building of a convincing and credible answer to the research question. It involves the process of getting information from all the relevant sources to find the answers to the research questions. Data

collection can be divided into two broad categories: primary and secondary methods of data collection (Kothari, 2004). Primary data for this study was collected using key informant interviews, while the secondary data will be collected using content analysis. The data collected for this study was qualitative. Qualitative data is mostly non-numerical and is usually descriptive or nominal in nature. It addresses the 'how' and the 'why', and it is collected using methods such as interviews, document analysis, observations and open-ended questionnaires.

3.6.1 Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews are in-depth interviews that target individuals with expert knowledge and extensive experience in a particular field. They are conducted in order to gain information about the issue under investigation (Berger, 2016).

An interview guide was used to collect data from the 4 key informants. The key informants for this study were the top executives from each companies and the lead researchers of the opinion polls on coronavirus conducted by the companies. The interview guide was semistructured to allow for follow up questions and the respondents were encouraged to give information on the topic freely. The interview guide contained questions arranged in three broad sections based on the objectives of the research; i. Key themes in opinion polls on coronavirus, ii. Communication strategies during the opinion polls on coronavirus, iii. Key findings of opinion polls on coronavirus.

The interview guide was appropriate for this research because it allowed for a one-on-one interaction with the key informants and this allowed for detailed discussions on the research topic.

To collect the data from the key informants, the researcher arranged for meetings with each of the respondents at a time of their convenience. The meetings took place online, and the

researcher explained the purpose of the exercise beforehand. Each interview took approximately 35 minutes. The researcher recorded notes during the interview so as to capture all the information that was shared.

3.6.2 Document Analysis

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents. Documents are examined and interpreted in orfer to elecit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009).

For the purposes of this research, the documents that were examined were the reports of opinion polls on coronavirus conducted by TIFA Research and IRC. The reports taken for analysis were the first three opinion polls on coronavirus from each of the companies. These were gotten by making enquiries from the firms.

The key variables that were highlighted from the reports were:

   i.   The date the survey was carried out.

   ii.   The objectives of the survey

   iii.   The methods of data collection

   iv.   The key results

3.7 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

The research instruments used to collect data for this study were an interview schedule and a coding sheet for document analysis. By default, qualitative research produces subjective results. However the role of the researcher is to avoid bias and assure replicability.

3.7.1 Validity

Validity is concerned with the findings of the research are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant or the readers. It checks whether the research instrument is measuring or capturing what the research intends to (Creswell, 2014). A key measuring

instrument for this research was the interview schedule and its validity was checked by revising it with my supervisor and pretesting it.

3.7.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency throughout a series of measurement. It is concerned with the consistency of the research instrument to produce similar results when the same test is measured twice with the same subjects or by using multiple researchers or observers (Leavy, 2017). The reliability of the research instruments was tested by running a pilot.

3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis is the process a researcher uses to reduce large amounts of collected data to a story and its interpretation (Kawulich, 2004). It involves converting the raw data into forms that can be used to extract meaningful insights. The data will be analysed then used to answer the research questions. During data analysis, there main things occur: i. data are organised, ii. Data are reduced through summarization and categorization and iii. Patterns and themes in the data are identified and linked. Analysing qualitative data involves preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes and through a process of coding and finally representing the data in figures, tables or a discussion (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative data for this research was analysed according to the research objectives.

Data for this research was presented in a narrative form. Qualitative data involved in-depth discussion between the researcher and the interviewees, therefore the most appropriate way to present it was in narrative form. This form of presentation allowed for further discussion of the information. While presenting the data, the respondents were largely left anonymous.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) ethical considerations are important for any research. Ethical research does not harm. It gives informed consent and respects the rights of

individuals being studied. It is important to consider the potential harm the research might have to the participants. Ethical issues form an important component of research as far as conduct of researchers is concerned. Ethical considerations ensure anonymity and confidentiality, that participants are not harmed, that there is voluntary participation, no deceit and ensures fair reporting (Babbie, 2011). Ethics was observed by the researcher throughout the process of the research.

Permission was sought from University of Nairobi before embarking on the research. The purpose of the research was communicated to the respondents through the introduction and the interviewees were assured of of confidentiality. The data that was collected will be used for the purpose of the study only.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Overview

This section highlights the research findings by presenting, interpreting and analysing them

within the context of literature and theoretical frameworks discussed in chapter two. The

study focused on the opinion polls on coronavirus conducted by Infotrak Research Consulting

and TIFA Research. The key informant interviews were, therefore, carried out to understand

the perceptions of the lead researchers regarding their experiences in conducting opinion

polls in Kenya, particularly on the coronavirus situation.

The findings are based on the following objectives:

- To compare the key themes TIFA Research and Infotrak Research focused on in their
  opinion polls on the coronavirus pandemic in Kenya

- To describe the communication strategies TIFA Research and Infotrak Research used
  to conduct opinion polls on the coronavirus pandemic in Kenya

- To explore the key findings of the opinion poll conducted by TIFA Research and
  Infotrak Research on the coronavirus pandemic in Kenya.

The main aim of this study was to compare opinion polls which TIFA Research and Infotrak

Research conducted on the coronavirus in Kenya with the key focus areas being the themes

they adopted, the communication strategies they lay down and the findings from the polls.

The polls selected for study were done in the early days of the pandemic. The opinion polls

reports from these period provided the documents for analysis for the purposes of this study.

Interviews with key informants were conducted to understand their perceptions, experience

and insights.

4.1 General Characteristics of the Sample

The sample consisted of two levels; key informant interviews and document analysis as illustrated below.

4.1.1 Key Informant Interviews

4 key informant interviews were conducted with interviewees drawn from the two polling agencies that were a part of the study. The participants were experienced opinion polling professionals at managerial level and were directly involved in designing, executing and reporting opinion polls on coronavirus in their respective companies. The table below summarises the key informants.

Table 4.1: Summary of Key Informants

Polling Company	Rank	Years of Experience in Polling
Infotrak Research and Consulting	Manager	10
	Manager	6
TIFA Research	Manager	16
	Manager	7

4.1.2 Document Analysis.

The document analysed for the study were 6 reports on opinion polls that were conducted on the coronavirus by the two polling companies (3 from each company). The reports are summarised in the Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Summary of Reports of Opinion Polls on Coronavirus

Polling Company	Field Work Dates	Title	Data Collection Method	Key Themes	Key Results
Infotrak Research and	30th March -2nd	Infotrak COVID 19 Polls	Computer Assisted Telephone	▪ Knowledge/ Awareness ▪ Lockdown	▪ High awareness of the disease and symptoms ▪ Government and

Consulting	April 2020	Wave 1	Interviews	▪ Access to Healthcare ▪ Social Issues ▪ Economic Issues	Ministry of Health are trusted sources of information. ▪ Confidence in Ministry of Health and the President ▪ People considered COVID to be a health threat. ▪
Infotrak Research and Consulting	28th May-2nd June 2020	Infotrak COVID 19 Polls Wave 2	Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews	▪ Health Concerns ▪ Source of Information ▪ Cost of Living ▪ Education ▪ Curfew ▪ Government Performance ▪ Social Issues (Church/Education)	▪ Fear about reopening of school ▪ Ministry of Health and government doing an exemplary job ▪ Support for reopening of places of worship ▪ COVID 19 is a significant health and finance issue ▪ Loss of jobs ▪ Reduction in income for both salaried and business people ▪ Cabinet Secretary of Health and President are the key and most reliable source of information on COVID-19
Infotrak Research and Consulting	21st June 2020	Socio-Economic Impact of Coronavirus: #wecantbreath	Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews	▪ Financial challenges as a result of coronavirus ▪ Mental health and psycho-social wellbeing ▪ Trusted sources of information	▪ Significant number of Kenyans unable to meet basic necessities like rent promptly ▪ High cost of food and other basic home utilities. ▪ Cases of defaulting of formal and informal loans. ▪ Government intervention measures like VAT reduction have not been felt by the common man ▪ Majority of the respondents said their earnings hadreduced ▪ COVID-19 is still a significant health issue

					- Rise in anxiety and stress issues amongst a majority of Kenyans - Reduction in consumption of news related to COVID-19 because they find it stressful - Increasingly people started considering COVID-19 news as stressful, repetitive, complicated and exaggerated. - Cabinet Secretary Health and the President still the most trusted source of information on COVID. - Social media and close relations are the least trustworthy sources of information on COVID-19
TIFA Research	25th March 2020	COVID-19: Knowledge & Practice Baseline Survey	Telephonic Interviews	- Knowledge Levels - Sources of Information - Behaviour change	- High awareness of the disease and how it spreads - Knowledge gaps at grassroots level - Very little behavioural change in adopting prevention measures. - Government pronouncements the most reliable source of information - Government sensitizes the public through media, social media and mobile phone platforms.
TIFA Research	25th April-27th April 2020	The Covid-19 Global Pandemic in Nairobi Low-Income Areas:	Telephonic Interviews	- Awareness and knowledge levels - Socio-economic impact of COVID-19	- High, almost universal knowledge of the disease. - Low awareness of someone who had tested positive for the disease. - Gender disparity in

		Socio-Economic and Governance Aspects			- on personal lives - Sources of Information - Health Expectations and coping mechanisms - Opinion on government enforcement efforts	knowledge. - Declining anxiety about contracting the disease compared to the baseline study. - Virus impacted daily lives of a majority of respondents. - Reduction in income for a significant number of respondents. - Financial challenges resulting in difficulty in meeting basic needs like housing, food and healthcare. - Concerns about rise in crime - Concerns about a rise in cases of domestic abuse.
TIFA Research	2nd-15th June 2020	COVID-19 Stigma & Mental Health Survey	Telephonic Inteviews		- Stigma - Psychological Distress - Mental Health Issues - COVID-19 Testing	- Very few knew someon who had tested positive for the virus - Significant number of respondents would not voluntarily visit recovered patients - Less than half would not attend a funeral of a COVID-19 victim - More than half reported feeling anxiety, nervous or stress because of COVID-19 - Majority said they would voluntarily take a COVID-19 test - Slightly less than half would hesitate to take the COVID-19 test because of the discomfort of the test, the mandatory quarantine and fear of stigmatization.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Findings

The main findings from the study were based on questions raised in the interview guide for key informants and analysis of opinion polls reports.

Table 4.3 shows the summary of the transcibed, organised, coded and validated qualitatative data collected from interviews with the key informants selected for this study. The detailed findings have been presented according to the respective objectives.

Table 4.3: Summary of Opinion polls on coronavirus in Kenya

Theme	Categories	Codes
Key Themes	Awareness	Existence; prevention measures; sources of information;
	Social Issues	Disruption of normal life; mental health; school; church; curfew; social distancing
	Public Health	Access to emergency care; cost of medical care; preparedness of the k
	Economic Issues	Loss of income; rise in cost of living;
	National Security	Rise in crime; police brutality
	Performance of Key Stakeholders	Ministry of health; presidency; provision of PPEs; health workers
Communication Strategies	Effect of social distancing and restriction of movement	Adopted telephone interviews; lack of access to a database for a truly randomized sample; training research assistants
	Challenges in conducting press releases and conferences	Virtual dissemination of press releases; social media team; contigency plan in case of unprecedented issues
	Switch to digital platform for information dispensation	New in-house communications team; switching to digital platforms in dispensing information
Key Findings	Significant knowledge gaps	'coronavirus is just like any other flu'; young people cannot get coronavirus; black people cannot get the virus; there is no coronavirus in rural areas
	Trusted sources of information.	Ministry of Health; Cabinet Secretary; President; Media; Social Media; Family; Friends
	Social Isssues	Curfew; restriction in movement; rise in domestic abuse cases

	Economic issues	Loss of income; challenges in providing for family; job losses; salary cuts;
	Health	Psychological distress; COVID-19 is a health risk; Stigma; Anxiety; Depression; Hopelessness; Substance abuse
	Performance of key offices and individuals	PPEs for health workers; Ministry of Health; County government; Ministry of Health; Government

4.2.1 Key Themes

The purpose of this objective was to compare the key themes the two pollsters focused on in their polls on the coronavirus. These themes were expressed in the information from the key informant interviews and document review. Themes represent the key issues in the polls, and they determine the direction the opinion poll goes and what exactly they measure. One of the key informants said this about how they arrive at the main issues they conduct opinion polls on.

> Opinion polls are conducted to garner or collect opinion of public on matters of public interest, and find people's preferences. They are conducted on current issues being debated heavily by the public and they track public perceptions on contentious issues. (Key Informant)

This objective will help us have a good understanding of the motivations pollsters usually have when conducting polls. As another respondent elaborated:

> We do not only conduct polls on political issues. Our surveys are commissioned to gauge people's perception on wide variety of issues. The key driver of our polls are issues affecting Kenyans. The polls we conduct often cut a niche across the Kenyan society, and they sometimes trigger action like sometimes they affect policy making and decision making (Key Informant).

The key themes that the pollsters focused on were similar, with the key differentiating factor being that TIFA focused on low income areas in urban centres, while IRC conducted theirs on Kenyans as a whole. A respondent from TIFA explained:

> We felt that people in low income localities in Nairobi would be more at risk, because of the high population, difficulty in observing social distance and lack of infrastructure to support handwashing and other measures. We made the decision to prioritise our surveys there and hoped that it would result in resources and interventions being taken there (Key Informant)

The respondent's sentiments are echoed by studies which show that socioeconomic factors such as overcrowding, poor housing conditions, lack of access to clean water and general poor health increase the chances of spread (Taylor, 2019). In Nairobi a study showed that measures such as social distancing were challenging for a majority of individuals in informal settlements because it would risk their income (Karen Austrian, et al., 2020).

IRC approach, on the other hand, was different. A respondent from IRC said their motivation was to understand the most pressing issues Kenyans faced. The respondent explained as follows:

> The first question we asked in all the opinion polls was 'what key issue concerns you the most as a Kenyan?'. This gave us a good understanding of where COVID ranked alongside other issues like unemployment, insecurity and the economy (Key Informant)

An analysis of the opinion polls by the two companies show that the following are the key themes they focused on:

- Knowledge levels

- Socio-economic issues

- Public health issues

- Government and key stakeholders performance

4.2.1.1 Knowledge levels

Knowledge level is the awareness and depth of information people have. This, often, is a function of a variety of factors including socialisation, sources of information, level of education, social and economic level, exposure, kind of media consumed. Knowledge is defined as the subjective storage of aggregate information or expertise (Akbar, 2003). The process of knowledge creation involves conversion of unorganised cocktail of data into relevant and purposeful information. After this process, many people usually see the knowledge they have as the objective truth.

Scholars consider knowledge levels to exist on a spectrum, from the rudimentary level where an individual may possess short snippets that are disjointed, to the expert level when the individual has deep and clear understanding of a phenomenon (Akbar, 2003). Since COVID-19 was a new phenomenon, both TIFA and IRC conducted baseline studies and gauging the level of knowledge was one of the key objectives of the opinion polls. One of the key informants explained it as follows:

> The COVID-19 pandemic was the first one many Kenyans had experienced.
> Because this was unprecedented, we felt as an organisation the pandemic had an
> effect on individuals and Kenyans as a whole. It was important we measure the
> awareness Kenyans had because that would then lead to better messaging from
> the government and concerned people (Key Informant)

Knowledge levels was a consistent theme in all the polls both the companies conducted. Initially in the baseline studies, the pollsters mainly sought to find out the awareness people

had of the disease. Knowledge levels questions in the surveys took the form of inquiring about awareness of the disease and its symptoms, prevention and spread, and the respondents' trusted sources of information.

4.2.1.2 Socio-Economic Issues

These are issues that are concerned with the interaction between social and economic habits of a people. Hawkins, Charles, & Mehaffey (2020), illustrated that socioeconomic factors like level of education, unemployment, poverty level and quality of housing impact our health and quality of life. In their study, they found that socioeconomic factors accounted for disparities in COVID-19 cases and mortality. One of the interviewees for the study said the following:

> COVID-19 is both a social issue and an economic issue. It is a social issue because of things like quarantine, isolation and social distancing requirements. It is also an economic issue because it affected work, income and movement of people (Key Informant).

The key informants for this study said that socioeconomic factors like level of income, education and religion were a major motivation for conduction polls. The researcher related this with the impact government directives such as restriction of movement and the curfew had on daily lives of Kenyans. The key informants said the following as to why socioeconomic issues was one of the key themes in their polls:

> The pandemic had a general effect on individuals and Kenyans as a whole. It had an effect on trade and tourism, for example. It was important to measure just how much it affected Kenyans. As a developing country, our main concern was how it would affect us. (Key Informant)

> As an organisation, we wanted to find out the aspects of Kenyans' lives that had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Things to do with jobs and financial impact,

you know, lay-offs, schools closing, when they think normalcy will return (Key Informant)

Both pollsters prioritised socioeconomic issues, and questions about the ability of Kenyans to adjust to the new protocols and realities featured prominently in their polls. They both sought to know the financial and social adjustments that Kenyans had to contend with in the wake of the new restrictions in movement, diminished social interactions, possible reduction in income, and closing of schools and places of worship.

It was important we measure how Kenyans were adjusting to the new realities. We conducted polls on issues to do with food security, possibility of being quarantined, rent, how they are meeting their financial obligations, restricted movement, insecurity and how they are feeling about all this on a personal level (Key Informant)

The informants also had the view that their polls would make the government aware of the pertinent issues people were facing. They all reported that one of the key drivers of the polls was the need to clarify issues so that the concerned government authorities would make more informed decisions. This was emphasised by one of the respondents who said:

The circumstances surrounding COVID-19 made it a big concern. We considered it a huge social issue because of issues like quarantine, isolation, social distancing, reduced social interaction interrupted the social fabric of the Kenyan society. It was an economic issue because the restricted movement affected how people work. And we also thought it would affect insecurity. (Key Informant)

4.2.1.3 Public Health Issues

Public health is concerned with preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through organised efforts of society so as to achieve physical and mental well-being of all members in a society (Scheider, 2017).

Whereas public health issues featured prominently in the opinion polls both companies conducted, IRC leaned towards institutional and government efforts to promote public health, while TIFA Research tweaked their focus on the measures members of the public were taking.A key public health area that featured prominently in the polls conducted by IRC was the welfare of health workers. One of the key informants from IRC explained as follows.

> We wanted to understand the issues health workers face. Things to do with how well protected they felt they were because they work in a risky environment. Matters to do with their personal protective equipment and how well prepared the hospitals were for the pandemic. (Key Informant)

The above sentiments by the key informant are supported by experts in the public health field who say that while health professionals are at risk due to their constant interactions with infected patients, their welfare is largely ignored by the authorities (Biana & Biana, 2021).

TIFA, on the other hand, concentrated on the prevention measures individuals took in their homes. A key informant to the company said:

> After the government gave the government gave the guidelines on how to prevent contract and spread the disease, we were interested in finding out just how many people were taking up the measures. We wanted to know the ease with which individuals in low income communities within the city adhered to the directives. We focussed on low income areas in Nairobi because we understood there were

infrastructural and life challenges that would make activities such as frequent

handwashing and social distancing a challenge (Key Informant)

Studies show that non-adherence to the prevention protocols is a significant health threat especially for a fast spreading infection like COVID-19, while individual and community efforts to willingly follow the prevention measures decrease the chances of transmission (Urban, Paksi, Miklosi, Saunders, & Demetrovics, 2021). The decision by TIFA Research to centre the community in their opinion polls was therefore also a well informed call. Informal settlements in Nairobi provided big challenges in implementing the new guidelines.

Another public health issue that both pollsters handled was mental health. In their survey, 'Socio-Economic Impact of Coronavirus' whose report was released on 21st June 2020, IRC had the objective of finding out the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of Kenyans in the wake of the pandemic. A respondent from IRC explained that they considered mental health because of anxiety the pandemic caused.

We asked our respondents how they were feeling and whether the news about

coronavirus was causing anxiety and stress in their lives. We considered this to be

a key marker in the general mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of people.

This was important to us because cases of mental anxiety can manifest themselves

in other areas that might inflict harm on people (Key Informant)

TIFA also had mental health as one of the key questions they asked in their polls. In their survey conducted between 2nd to 15th June, the main objective was to find out the mental health challenges the disease brought. They included variables such as stigma against victims, anxiety, stress and depression due to the disease and whether the respondents would willingly go for a COVID-19 test. A respondent from TIFA Research said:

The public had been fed the same kind of information on COVID-19, you know, mostly about the number of infections in a day, number of deaths, recoveries and so on. This constant bombarding of such hard data, plus the fact that the virus had reached community level, made us consider doing a survey that focussed exclusively on mental health. We could see that the effects of the pandemic on people's mental health had not been spoken about enough as important as it was. That is why we did a survey on it (Key Informant).

The informant's views are echoed by professionals in public health who say that pandemics cause anxiety, stress and stigma therefore understanding the effects they have on the mental health of different groups of population is as important as understanding the clinical aspects, prevention and management (Javel, Sarwer, Soto, & Mashwani, 2020).

4.2.1.4 Performance of Government and Key Stakeholders

Both TIFA Research and IRC had questions on performance of key role players in a majority of their polls. A respondent said that:

Apart from gauging how prepared the Kenyan public were, we also wanted to find their views on whether they deemed the government to be up to the task of averting the spread of the virus. Consequently, we sought their views on the performance of key state actors and other players in dealing with the virus (Key Informant)

The pollsters wanted to find out who the public trusted the most. Literature suggests that the key performance areas that the government, policy makers and related authorities should focus on are: the capacity to detect cases early so as to curtail further spread, the capacity to isolate infected individuals and keep them in quarantione, the capacity to conduct contact

tracing fast and efficiently, and capacity to communicate prevention protocols and reinforce behaviour that is necessary of community well-being (Teo & Nabarro, 2020).

Both TIFA Research did not capture the above in their opinion polls. They, instead, identified collectives who were central in the COVID-19 response activities in Kenya and then asked their respondents to rate the confidence they had in them. The groups of people the pollsters identified were: Health workers, the presidency, the ministry of health and the media.

4.2.2 Communication Strategies

This thematic area sought to describe the communication strategies the two pollsters utilised to conduct opinion polls in a time of coronavirus. This was in line with the second research question: What communication strategies did TIFA Research and Infotrak Research use in their polls on the coronavirus? The main aim was to find out how the pollling companies adjusted the role communication plays in executing their polls, particularly considering the changes that government directives such as social distancing, restriction in movement, curfew and working from home brought. One of the key informants responded as follows:

> Since COVID-19 began, most of the staff work primarily from home. So we have had to make fundamental on how we run our projects. For us, the safety and health of our colleagues is important therefore we have been having online meetings and co-ordinating our projects via the phone and other digital tools (Key Informant).

Another key informant said:

> Initially we had challenges adjusting from in-person meetings to online meetings. We no longer could no longer easily form and maintain the usual office interactions because because most of us were working remotely. We were afraid that without face to face interactions and physical communication, our work would fall behind.

However, most of us adjusted to the new reality pretty fast and we have been comfortably working from home since then (Key Informant)

Both companies had to cope and adjust to the altered work environment that COVID-19 brought. The key strategy they had here was to shift to utilising the internet and digital media. A respondent said:

We leveraged the power of internet and mobile telephony to make working from home effective. There were cost implications because we had to facilitate our staff so that they had access to stable internet at all times (Key Informant)

…opinion polling is not cheap. You know some of the opinion polls are self-financed and that was a huge challenge to overcome. There were also other challenges like surmounting backlash from the public. I think the public does not appreciate or understand the information given through opinion polls, and also political polls tend to generate a lot of angst and misunderstanding especially in a young democracy like ours. All in all the opinion polls were done in public interest for the public so if you were to get it right we had to start from the office, you know, the planning, coordination between collegeaus, to ensure a smooth process… (Key Informant).

An analysis of the opinion polls done by both TIFA Research and IRC shows that the main method they used to get information for the polls was through telephone interviews.

….because of the lockdown and social distancing rules, we used CATI predominantly to interview our respondents. We drew our respondents from a database we have of respondents we had recruited in previous face to face surveys.. (Key Informant)

…we went the CATI route because we wanted to protect our data collection staff…. There were challenges along the way, like it was not easy to get to health workers during some of the surveys. Also we realised that in some cases the response rate was low, so it increased the cost (Key Informant)

The above key informant's assertion that CATI increased the cost of the survey contradicts with previous studies which have shown that it resulted in higher response rates and reduced costs (Cecatti, et al., 2011). The discrepancy is what is in the literature, and the reality the polling companies in Kenya face can be explained by the fact that the implementation of CATI was still in early stages locally and the initial investment is usually large (Choi, 2004).

About releasing the findings to the public the respondents had this to say:

Before COVID we used to have press briefings to communicate the findings from our polls. that changed with COVID and we had to restrategize. We started presenting virtually because a number of media houses could no longer attend our press conferences, and also we started dispensing the highlights of our reports on digital platforms (Key Informant)

Another informant said:

Going forward we are developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) to guide on how we will be communicating. The plan is to have an inhouse team of trained communication professionals to run that department. We will also ensure we tweak our social media so that it is automatic, and we will have specific people as the contact persons. We already have a social media team, and now we want to put in plan a contigency plan in case of unprecedented issues (Key Informant)

Both TIFA Research and IRC envision a situation where they will mostly carry out their surveys via telephone. One of the responded said that has been in their long term plans:

One of our long term plans was to invest in computer based interviewing for our surveys. Covid only accelerated this. We are now considering partnerships with communication agencies to run specific roles so that most of us care focus on our core mandate (Key Informant)

4.2.3 Key Results of Opinion Polls on the Coronavirus

The third objective of this study was to explore the key findings of the opinion poll conducted by TIFA Research and Infotrak Research on the coronavirus pandemic in Kenya. The key informants for the study revealed that their objectives in conducting the polls were to understand what Kenyans were facing, effect strategy and behavioural change, and ultimately so that Kenyans can live a better life. They all felt that these objectives had been met. A respondent said this:

I think we did an outstanding job. Our motives were to find out the preparedness of the Kenyan public, rate the performance of state actors and find out the social and economic effects of COVID-19. We delivered this and definitely contributed to public discourse on matters to do with coronavirus. Our polls spurred debate on key issues to do with coronavirus (Key Informant)

On this another respondent explained as follows:

We wanted to understand what Kenyans were facing, and to move the authorities into action and effect change in strategy and policy. We believe we were successful because the ministry responded to the issues that were raised in the opinion polls. We also noted that in the subsequent polls, the general public had changed in how they carried themselves and they had become more adherent to the prevention measures (Key Informant).

From the above we can see that the respondents were confident that the objectives they set out for the polls – triggering public discourse, influencing policy decisions and motivating change in conduct – were all met to a certain degree. Studies have shown that an increase in the number of infections usually show that there has been a shift in public knowledge and perception. When the disease reaches community spread phase, people start to perceive a higher susceptibility of contracting the disease (Lau & Griffiths, 2011)

In response to the question about what highlight they remember from the findings, a respondent said:

> Several things surprised me from the findings in the opinion polls. The ones that stood out for me are, I remember being surprised that a lot more people were worried about the economic effects of the disease more than the public health disease. Also people seemed to have very high levels of confidence in various government offices, particulary the Cabinet Secretary in the Ministry of Health, and the president. The other thing I remember surprised me was the support people had for the curfew and its enforcement, with a substantial number of people even calling for a total lockdown (Key Informant).

The sentiments above show that, in moments of crises, the general public can rally behind the authorities even when the government decrees what would be adjudged to be punitive directives. This is supported by information from the opinion polls reports which show that government offices – the presidency and the ministry of health – received the highest approval rating in the way they handled the coronavirus crises. Others who received high approval ratings were health workers and the media. However, analysis from the reports show that county governments received very poor ratings. Two things contributed to their low ratings. For one, county government had been in the news for not providing adequate

PPEs to health workers, and also because their services were more proximal to the general public therefore they were more likely to be appraised objectively.

An analysis of results from the opinion polls show the following:

- More people regarded COVID-19 as an economic challenge than a medical concern. This shows that people are more concerned about their more immediate needs like source of a livelihood, and settling their bills even in the face of a highly transmittable disease.
- The most trusted sources of information on the pandemic were government offices and the media. The least trusted were social media and close family and friends.
- A section of respondents still thought that COVID-19 was a hoax even months into the pandemic.
- Government offices like the presidency and ministry of health, and health workers were the most trusted cadre of professionals in the fight against coronavirus. Policing and parliament did not a positive review.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

This chapter presents the summary of the study, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary

The main purpose of the research was to conduct a comparative study of opinion polls on coronavirus in Kenya conducted by TIFA Research and Infotrak Research and Consulting. The variables singled out by the researcher for comparison were: key themes in the opinion polls conducted on the coronavirus in Kenya, communication strategies the firms employed in the wake of the COVID-19 restrictions and the key findings from the opinion polls on the coronavirus.

The study used a qualitative approach because this approach helps the researcher to understand a particular phenomenon from the perspective of the respondent. The data for the study was collected through an interview guide and document analysis. The study targeted two firms that conduct opinion polling Kenya, that is TIFA Research and Infotrak Research and Consulting, focusing on the top executives from the firms. Purposive sampling was used to identify 4 respondents and 6 opinion poll reports that would be part of the sample.

Data collection instruments used were an interview schedule and a document analysis code sheet. The data collected was analysed and presented in narrative form.

5.2.1 Key Themes

This study sought to compare the key themes TIFA Research and Infotrak Research focussed on in their opinion polls on the coronavirus in Kenya. The findings revealed that both TIFA Research and Infotrak Research centrered their opinion polls around similar themes. The

themes both firms used in those opinion polls revolved around knowledge levels, social and economic issues, public health issues and performance of key offices that were core to the response to the pandemic. The baseline studies from the firms were almost identical in terms of the issues polls. Slight differences would be observed in subsequent surveys, and that was attributed to the approach the firms took. TIFA Research focused on niche populations, conducting their surveys on low income populations in major cities, while Infotrak's surveys remained holistic, targeting all Kenyans as a whole and focusing on government offices and health professionals.

5.2.2 Communication Strategies

The study also aimed to describe the communication strategies TIFA Research and Infotrak Research adopted while conducting opinion polls on the coronavirus in Kenya. This objective was informed by the fact that COVID-19 directives changed the way people interacted at work due to the restriction in movement and social distancing rules. The companies tweaked their communication strategies by changing how they communicate in the office, how they interact with their respondents and how they relate with the media.

Most staff from both firms started working from home, and therefore utilised the internet and digital platforms for communication and coordination of activities. The management in both firms facilitated the staff members so that they had stable internet and could work comfortably from home. The other changes that they made included switching from conducting surveys face-to-face to conducting them over the telephone. The last communication strategy they made was with regard to relations with the media, and both firms started presenting their press briefing virtually and concurrently releasing their reports through the digital platforms.

5.2.3 Key Results

The research also sought to explore the key findings from the opinion polls conducted on the coronavirus in Kenya by the two firms. The highlighted findings were; one, more respondents regarded the COVID-19 more as an economic issue than as a health challenge, then the trusted sources of information on the coronavirus were the ministry of health, the president and the media, and that Kenyan had high confidence in the government to stem the spread of the disease.

Respondents from both the firms were confident that their opinion polls had contributed to the decisions that government authorities made in management of the pandemic, and also, they had contributed to the public discourse on the matter and the general public change in behaviour in relation to the disease.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concluded that TIFA Research conducted similar opinion polls on the coronavirus in Kenya. When conducting opinion polls on the same phenomenon within the same geographical confines, pollsters will most likely draw up similar objectives, focus on comparable themes, draw from relatable motivations and face similar challenges. In the end their findings will also be alike because their target population is the same. The difference only arises when they focus on specific target population as seen with the TIFA Research opinion polls that targeted people in low income communities in Nairobi.

Another conclusion drawn from the study was that there are challenges in conducting telephonic surveys in Kenya despite their huge potential. This conclusion was drawn from the respondents compaining that telephonic interviews are workload intensive, time consuming and expensive. This is despite evidence to show that they are the most cost effective method to collect survey data within a short period of time (Cecatti, et al., 2011). The study also

observed that neither TIFA Research nor IRC explained clearly how they obtained the sample for the telephone interviews.

A further conclusion drawn from the study was that polling companies in Kenya are adopting a digital first strategy in dispensing information on their opinion polls. The respondents from both firms said that they were setting up dedicated communication teams to deal with information dissemination and media relations.

Finally the study concluded that while public opinion polls measure what people believe, how they feel about something and in what ways they will act, results usully depend on who is interviewed, under what conditions the survey took place, the timing of the polls and who conducted the polls.

5.4 Recommendations

The researcher made the following recommendations:

i. Polling companies should streamline their Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) and adopt it as their main method of conducting surveys because of its potential to reduce costs, time and effort of collecting information.

ii. Polling companies should have within their staff professionals from different fields so that they can come up with well grounded objectives and themes when planning to conduct opinion polls.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher made the following suggestions for future research:

i. A study can be conducted on the methodological strengths and weaknesses of Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) as a survey method in Kenya.

ii. There is need to evaluate the attitude social media users have towards opinion polls released through digital platforms.

iii. A survey can be done on the use of opinion polls data by government authorities and policy makers

iv. A comparative study on international surveys from different countries to compare their purpose, challenges, methodology and results.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Consent Form

Dear Key Informant,

Thank you for agreeing to this interview.

My name is Asava Amadi, an MA student from the University of Nairobi. I would like to talk to you about opinion polling in Kenya. The purpose of this interview is to collect data for an academic research project titled '**A comparative study of opinion poll results in Kenya on COVID19: A Case of TIFA Research and Infotrak Research'.** Please share your experiences and views about this issue.

All responses will be kept confidential, and will only be used for academic purposes. Your personal details will not be revealed to anyone except if required by the university for verification purposes.

Please sign below that you accept this request for an interview, and that you authorise me to use part of this interview for my school work.

Interviewee   Interviewer

Signature _____   Signature _____

Date _____   Date _____

APPENDIX 2: Interview Schedule

Dear Respondent,

My name is Asava Amadi, a student at the University of Nairobi.

I am conducting a research on opinion polling in Kenya, with a specific focus on opinion polls on coronavirus and I would like to ask you some questions on the topic.

Please share your honest experience and knowledge on the issue.

The information will be used for academic purposes only. Your personal details will not be revealed to anyone except if required by the University of Nairobi for verification purposes.

Information on Key Informant

1. Professional Role at the polling firm _____

2. How long have you worked in opinion polling?_____

In this firm?_____

Key Themes in Opinion Polling

3. What role does opinion polling play in Kenya?

4. What informs the issues you conduct polls on?

5. What were the main reasons you conducted opinion polls on the coronavirus?

6. What were the key issues you conducted opinion polls on the coronavirus on?

7. Why did you pick these particular issues?

Communication Strategies

8. In what ways has conducting opinion polls in Kenya changed since COVID-19 was reported here?

9. What adjustments have you had to make in order to continue operating optimally?

10. What communication strategies have you put in place to ensure that the opinion polls you conduct run smoothly?

11. If you are to plan an opinion poll right now, what practical measures would you take to surmount any communication challenges you might encounter?

Key Findings

12. What objectives did you have when planning the polls on coronavirus?

13. In your opinion, did you meet these objectives?

14. What findings from the opinion polls you conducted stood out for you?

15. What findings and conclusions from the opinion polls were highlighted by the media?

APPENDIX 3: Document Analysis Code Sheet

Opinion Polls Reports

Date:

Polling agency:

Title:

Objectives:

Results:

APPENDIX 4 Certificate of Fieldwork

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

Telegram: Journalism Varsity Nairobi
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Email: soj@uonbi.ac.ke

P.O. Box 30197-00100
Nairobi, GPO
Kenya

REF: **CERTIFICATE OF FIELDWORK**

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Committee of Examiners meeting held on **1ˢᵗ November 2021** in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project can be allowed to proceed for fieldwork.

Reg. No: **K50/7324/2017**

Name: **AMADI JOEL ASAVA**

Title: **A Comparative Study of Opinion Poll Results in Kenya on Covid19: A Case of Tifa Research and Infotrak Research**

Dr Samuel Siringi   16/11/2021
SUPERVISOR   SIGNATURE   DATE

Prof. George Nyabuga   15ᵗʰ November 2021
PROGRAMME COORDINATOR   SIGNATURE   DATE

Prof. Ndeti Ndati   01-12-2021
CHAIRMAN   SIGNATURE/STAMP   DATE

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
CHAIRMAN
0 1 DEC 2021
DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

APPENDIX 5: Certificate of Originality

Turnitin Originality Report

- Processed on: 25-Nov-2021 08:27 EAT
- ID: 1712455328
- Word Count: 19798
- Submitted: 1

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF OPINION POLL RESULTS IN KENYA ON COVID19: A CASE OF TIFA RESEARCH AND INFOTRAK RESEARCH By Asava Amadi

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF OPINION POLL RESULTS IN KENYA ON COVID19: A CASE OF TIFA RESEARCH AND INFOTRAK RESEARCH Asava Amadi K50/7324/2017 A Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of requirements for the award of Master of Arts Degree in Communication Studies at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Nairobi October 2021 DECLARATION This report is my own original work and has not been presented for the award of a Degree in any other University or anywhere else for academic purpose. Signed ……………………………………… Asava Amadi ………………………… Date This reportl has been submitted for the award of Masters of Arts Degree in Journalism and Mass Communication Studies with my approval as the University Supervisor. Signature……………………………………… Dr. Samuel Siringi University of Nairobi …….………………………… Date ii DEDICATION To my parents, Philemon and Elizabeth Amadi for your support and reassuring presence. May you live a long and healthy life. For my

APPENDIX 6: Certificate of Corrections

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

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REF: CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTIONS

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Committee of Examiners meeting held on 1st November 2021 in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project can be allowed to proceed for binding.

Reg. No: **K50/7324/2017**

Name: **AMADI JOEL ASAVA**

Title: **A Comparative Study of Opinion Poll Results in Kenya on Covid19: A Case of Tifa Research and Infotrak Research**

Dr Samuel Siringi   16/11/2021
SUPERVISOR   SIGNATURE   DATE

Prof. George Nyabuga   15th November 2021
PROGRAMME COORDINATOR   SIGNATURE   DATE

Prof. Ndeti Ndati   5-12-2021
CHAIRMAN   SIGNATURE/STAMP   DATE