



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

**AN ANALYSIS OF MEDIA COVERAGE ON CULTISM IN KENYA: A CASE OF
CITIZEN TV's COVERAGE OF SHAKAHOLA CULT.**

BY

AISHAIMAN AHMED SHEIKH

REG NO: K50/41427/2021

**A research project submitted to the University of Nairobi in partial fulfillment of
requirements for the award of the degree of Masters of Arts in communication studies.**

2023.

Date of Submission: 9th November 2023.

DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been submitted in any other institution for examination, award of degree or publication. Where other people's work has been used, this has been acknowledged and referenced in accordance with the requirements of the University of Nairobi.

Signature  Date 23/11/2023

Declaration by the supervisor

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

Signature  Date 23/11/2023

Dr. Jane Wambui Thuo.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the Kenyan citizens who lost their lives in the hands of people they trusted the most in their most vulnerable moments in their lives; those families who lost their loved ones helplessly and who'll probably spend their lives wondering how this could happen in broad daylight, under the radar of authorities who could prevent these catastrophe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes to those mentioned hereafter, for the encouragement, guidance and motivation in the writing of my study.

I am most grateful to Almighty Allah for guiding me all through my course and giving me strength to conquer my fears when I thought I lost my battles.

My singular appreciation goes to my very able supervisor, Dr. Jane Wambui Thuo for guiding me accordingly throughout my project journey.

My parents, Mr. Ahmed Sheikh and Mrs. Halima Adan who supported me through thick and thin throughout this process.

My husband Feisal Elias and my three children Ummulkheyr, Khattab and Nabil for being my constant source of motivation.

Dr. Addams Mututa for selflessly mentoring my comrades and I on matters of research.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore media coverage on cultism in Kenya while focusing on Citizen's TV coverage of shakahola cult stories. The objectives of the study are as follows:- to analyze the messaging and the content of stories by media, to evaluate the depth and prominence given to shakahola cult stories by citizen TV and to find out the perception of citizen TV journalists/editors on cults. The theoretical underpinning of this study is adapted from the agenda setting theory. The study used a mixed methods approach employing both content analysis and survey data collection techniques. The sample frames of the study have been narrowed to one TV station, citizen TV and the stories on shakahola cult that were published between 17th march 2023 and 18th June 2023. The sample size of the content analysis incorporates all the footage of the shakahola cult story within this time frame. For the survey a total number of twelve journalists and five editors are purposely selected for the questionnaire. The purpose of the study is to find out whether or not citizen TV has contributed to the fight against cultism by how it has covered the story on shakahola cult. Additionally, whether the perception of the journalists/editors on cults has shaped how the shakahola story was framed, consequently influencing the public's take on issues around cultism in Kenya.

Definition of terms

- **Cult**- this term refers to a social movement or organization normally registered under a classic religious denomination that is unified under one purpose and is led by a charismatic leader to whom they venerate.
- **Manipulation**- this is defined as the act of controlling or influencing someone or something in a way that is beneficial to the controller.
- **Saint**- this term is defined as a person is recognized as being virtuous and having a degree of closeness to god.
- **Exorcising**- this is a ritual exercise during which evil spirits are said to be cast out of the one who is possessed by them.
- **Integrate**- to incorporate parts of something to make a whole of another.
- **Synthesis**- the act of combining different elements to form a whole.
- **Qualitative**- measurement of something by its quality.
- **Quantitative**- measurement by use of numbers.

- **Triangulation**- combination of different data from different sources to study a phenomenon.
- **Laggard reporting**- this term refers to slow reporting. Reporting that falls behind the stipulated time.

Indoctrinate- this term refers to the act of permeating someone's mind with new beliefs or principles to a point where they embrace them without any form of criticism.

- **Controversy** – this term is defined as discussions around a certain topic or subject for a period of time, usually accompanied by strong debates and disapprovals.
- **Coverage**- this term refers to the exposure a certain story receives from all types of media.
- **Media framing**- this term refers to a way in which the media angles a story to evoke a certain interpretation of it.
- **Media priming**- this is defined as ways in which media suggests ways in which specific noteworthy issues should be used to evaluate the performance of the leaders of that particular society.

Media gag- preventing a media organization from talking or writing about a particular subject.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
Definition of terms	v
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES.....	xi
ABBREVIATIONS	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1Background	1
1.1.1 Types of Cults.....	3
1.1.1.1Racist cult.....	3
1.1.1.2Religious Cults.....	4
1.1.1.3 Political Cults.....	5
1.1.2 Impact of cult coverage locally/internationally.	6
1.1.2.1 Cult tolerance	6
1.1.2.2 Increase in Violence.....	7
1.1.2.3 Victim blaming.	7
1.1.3 The Kenyan media.	8
1.1.4 Rule of law	9
1.3General objectives-:	11
1.3.1 Specific objectives of this study are as follows-:.....	12
1.4Research Questions.....	12
1.6Scope and limitations of the study.....	13
1.6.1 Time frame.....	13
1.7 Summary on Methodology.	15
CHAPTER 2	17
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	17
2.1Social construct of cultism.....	17
2.1.1 Isolation.....	17
2.1.2 Rejection of education	18
2.2Prevalence of cultism in Kenya	18

2.3Public perception of cults.....	19
2.4Media bias on ‘non-conventional religions’	21
2.5 Element of Conflict.....	23
2.6Where Lies the Truth?	23
2.7Media gag.....	24
2.8Media coverage on cultism	26
2.8.1 Media Framing.....	28
2.9 Gaps in existing literature	29
2.10Theoretical Framework.....	30
2.10.1 Agenda setting theory	31
2.10.2 Second-level agenda setting.....	32
2.10.3 Agenda setting and Framing.....	33
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	34
3.1Introduction.....	34
3.2Mixed methods approach.....	34
3.3Rationale for choosing mixed method	34
3.4Research Design.....	35
Figure 3.1 Illustration of exploratory sequential design	36
3.5Study population	36
3.6 Research sampling procedure	36
3.6.1 Sampling	37
3.7 Data collection techniques	37
3.7.1 Qualitative Data Collection.....	37
3.7.1.1Content Analysis.....	37
3.7.2 Quantitative Data Collection Method	39
3.7.2.1Survey	39
3.8Data collection tool.....	39
3.9 Ethical Considerations.....	40
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS..	41
4.1 Messaging and content of the shakahola stories covered by citizen TV.	41
4.1.1 Tone of the stories.....	41

Table 1: Tone of the stories.	42
4.1.2 Descriptors on issues of public interest within the stories covered.	42
Table 2: Issues covered.....	43
4.1.3 Analysis of the use of traits by citizen TV to describe the cult leader and members.	43
Table 3: Trait used to describe Paul Mackenzie.	45
Table 4: Descriptors for shakahola cult members.....	47
4.2 Findings on the level of prominence given to the shakahola cult story.....	48
4.2.1 Use of cult and leader’s name as titles of the story.....	48
Table 5: Shakahola cult and cult leader Mackenzie in the story title.	48
4.2.2 Amount of coverage of the shakahola cult story by Citizen TV.....	49
4.2.3 Coverage of shakahola cult story by month.....	49
Figure 1: coverage by month.	50
4.2.4 Placement of stories on shakahola cult.	50
Table 6: Position of stories in the running order.....	51
4.2.5 Format of the story.....	52
Table 7: Format of the shakahola story covered by citizen TV.	52
Figure 2: Length of shakahola cult stories.	53
4.3 Findings from survey with reporters and editors.	53
4.3.1 Perception of cultism.	53
4.3.2 Citizen TV’s coverage of the shakahola cult.	55
4.3.3 Cult members’ reaction to shakahola story.....	55
4.3.4 What makes the shakahola cult story newsworthy.	56
4.3.5 Factors to consider when working on a shakahola cult story.	57
4.4 Discussions of findings.	58
4.4.1 Discussions of findings on messaging and content of the shakahola story by citizen TV.	58
4.4.1.1 Descriptors for the story, cult leader and victims.	59
4.4.2 Discussions of the prominence and depth given to the shakahola story.....	60
4.4.3 Discussion of findings on a survey with reporters/editors.....	61
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....	62
5.1 Summary.....	62

5.2 Conclusions.....	63
5.3 Recommendations.....	64
5.3.1 To the government of Kenya.	64
5.3.2 To educational institutions.....	65
5.3.3 To Citizen TV.....	65
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	66
APPENDICES	70
APPENDIX 1: TV CONTENT ANALYSIS CODE SHEET	70
Appendix 2.....	75
Questionnaire guide on reporters/editors.....	75
Appendix 3.....	78
List of shakahola stories viewed from 17 th March- 18 th June 2023.....	78

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 3.1 Illustration of exploratory sequential design	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 1: coverage by month.	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 2: Length of shakahola cult stories.	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Table 1: Tone of the stories.	42
Table 2: Issues covered.....	43
Table 3: Trait used to describe Paul Mackenzie.	45
Table 4: Descriptors for shakahola cult members.....	47
Table 5: Shakahola cult and cult leader Mackenzie in the story title.	48
Table 6: Position of stories in the running order.....	51
Table 7: Format of the shakahola story covered by citizen TV.....	52

ABBREVIATIONS

TV	Television.
MCK	Media Council of Kenya.
KTN	Kenya Television Network.
NTV	Nation Television.
RMS	Royal Media Services
Et al.	And others.
NRM	New religious movements
KKK	Ku Klux Klan.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

A famous quote of politician Malcom X ‘media is the most powerful entity on earth. The media has the power to make the innocent look innocent and vice versa’. Throughout time, media has been regarded as a powerful tool that influenced the behaviors and attitudes of its audience. The media and religious organizations tend to have a symbiotic relationship (Wright 1997). Media choose to cover stories that capture the attention of the public, yet inform them (Hoover 1998, Altheide 1995). In this case, the coverage of religion is considered as public interest (Haynes 2000). Most lay understandings of the word ‘cult’ start from an assumption that the movements are social problems (Barker 2010). What is a cult for one is another’s religion, it is vital to construct boundaries between the two terms in order to keep them unambiguously differentiated (Baker 1991).

The word ‘cult’ has been used to define certain groups of people, sometimes loosely used since time in memorial. A lot of non-fictional stories have been published to illustrate the authors’ fantasies but in reality, what exactly is a cult? And what separates a cult from other religious sects known to the public? According to the Meriam Webster dictionary, a cult is defined as a religion that is regarded as unorthodox or spurious.

The term ‘cult’ was originally derived from the Latin word ‘occulere’, translating to something hidden or mysterious (Onwe &Thonia 2018). Ogunbameru (1997) defines a cult as an organization whose activities are carried out without knowledge of others. Aguda (1997) asserts that the said activities are covert in nature and only happen behind closed doors. In a cult, the followers often direct their veneration to their leader as opposed to a supreme being like other

conventional religions. Members of these groups oftentimes do not realize early enough they are members of a cult group.

According to sociologists the likes of (Richardson (1993), Miller (1996), Wessinger (2000) and Paul J. Olson (2006), they have agreed that the word cult has carried with it a negative connotation throughout the years. Cults have been traced back to the inception of Christianity.

Stephen Wilson in his book 'saints and their cults' (pg3, 4) posits that when the Christian religion became publicly recognized in the late Roman Empire, the people of Rome developed veneration towards the priests at the time, the likes of St. Jerome, therefore, there had to be clarity on the clear difference between the worship of God and the veneration the people of Rome had developed towards the saints. New concepts of sainthood came about and there had to be a clarification put across. (Lewis 2003;pg 206) has argued that religious sects that are regarded as minority are barely given any consideration on what they stand for, but are rather shunned too quickly and stereotyped as cults.

The term has since evolved to 'new religious movement' (Barker 1989) which is widely used to refer to any strange group that comes with uncommon religious practices, commonly branching out of the Christian denomination.

Although history has rooted the start of cultism to as early as the inception of Christianity, it has been effectively documented to be a social problem that cut across different religions. "Not all cults are religions, in the strict sense of the term, because not all represent systems of ultimate meaning" (Stark & Bainbridge 1979). In their study they posit that a sect usually takes the label of 'church' with them when they break away while on the other hand, a cult does not have to stem from any religious denomination.

1.1.1 Types of Cults.

1.1.1.1 Racist cult.

Racism in the west was prevalent in the 19th century. One cannot mention racism without including the infamous KKK cult in the conversation. The group was known to evoke terror in the black community during that time. They carried out their cultist activities in the wee hours of the night, covered in white costumes and committed heinous crimes against the black laborers, crimes that were never brought to book.

The group was founded in 1865 as a social club by a group of 6 individuals from a small town in Tennessee. The idea was to come up with something mysterious for the amusement of the group. (SPLC 2011,pg. 9). The group took a wild turn when new members from neighboring towns joined in and set their agenda as creating the ultimate terror experience on the local black community.

The cult group was involved in most of the racial violence that occurred in the south in the 1960's, drawing in support from non-.members in the execution of these attacks as stated by the Southern Poverty Law Centre.

The Ku Klux Klan initiated the use of dynamite bombs to upscale the terror they imposed on people. The first bomb blast happened in Martin Luther King Jnr's home in 1956. The most outstanding of the blasts being one that happened in Birmingham church in 1963, killing four young black girls therein. Ku Klux Klan's terror resulted in 70 bombings in Georgia and Alabama, the arson of 30 black owned churches in Mississippi and 10 racial killings in Alabama State alone. (SPLC pg. 27).

1.1.1.2 Religious Cults.

These types of cults cut across all conventional religions, from the sects that disintegrate from main denominations, quietly practicing their beliefs to those who impose full blown terror on a global scale.

The infamous gruesome image that the world woke up to on November 18th 1978 is one incident that has gone down the books of history. More than 900 followers of priest Jim Jones of the Peoples Temple were found scattered in his ranch in Jonestown.

(Jeff Guin 2007) in his book 'The Road to Jonestown' explained how Jim Jones became that charismatic leader who persuaded people from far and wide to join his church called the Peoples Temple. At a time when segregation was the order of the day, Jones assured his followers would converge in his church regardless of their racial profile. To escape from the cruel reality they faced, a lot of coloured people joined the church, in search for a safe haven. Even after colliding with the then government and fleeing to Guyana with his people, vulnerable followers who thought he was the solution to their problems cut off their families completely to join the preacher in his new found land. For years, speculations of the cult and the intentions the leader had towards his followers circulated, and when complaints from relatives of some of the cult members saying that they were held against their will reached the government, U.S congressman together with a group of staff and the press landed in Guyana. According to Guinn, armed men ambushed the group, fired mercilessly and killed the entire group. The pilot and 2 others fled the scene and conveyed the horrific tale. Officials from both the American and Guyanese government arrived at Jonestown after news of the shootings, but witnessed the most horrific sight in history. Dead bodies of 900 members of the temple church scattered all over the ranch.

Islamic terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and Al Shabaab fit the glove of a cultist group only so well. Known for indoctrinating their followers with extreme and misinterpreted teachings from Islamic religion, the two have been documented to have created havoc both locally and internationally. They fit the descriptions of a cult because just like any other cult, the groups target oblivious youth in various vulnerable states such as poverty, crime involvement, promising to give them a better life both in this life and in the hereafter. Youth from as far as western countries have sneaked out to join these groups. A documentary by Jamal Osman shows how the leader, charismatic, controls the happenings within the group and according to him, anyone seen to go against their teachings is given a severe punishment, sometimes even death. The leader encourages the youth to die for the cause, assuring them a reward in the afterlife. That mindset has seen a lot of lives lost in the local communities. The most horrendous attacks, by the two cultist groups being the 911 attack on the U.S twin towers, the Westgate attack, the Garissa University attack and the Somali truck bombing that killed more than 500 Somali civilians.

1.1.1.3 Political Cults.

The ‘Mungiki’ in Kenya is a cult that was established in the 1980’s (Henningsen & Jones, 28 May 2013). It mostly comprises one of the main ethnic tribes in Kenya, the Kikuyu. The group was inspired by Mau Mau fighters who won over the colonial rulers. They have extreme views on politics and culture and loathe any involvement in any adoption of western culture (Paul Harris, Jan 17, 2000). The group is well known for creating havoc by arson and even forcefully circumcising women in Central Kenya as a way of ‘preserving African culture’ (Mwangi Mwiruri June 28 2021). The group was outlawed by the government 2002 for holding such extreme views, but nonetheless are persistent in involving themselves in criminal activities. The

gang is known for its involvement in multiple killings of civilians and police officers during the post-election violence as reported by several news sources.

1.1.2 Impact of cult coverage locally/internationally.

Millions of people around the world watch a share of their local news broadcast daily. Among those who rely on news outlets, television is mostly preferred over newspapers. (Ansolabehere, Behr, Iyengar 1993). An organization with such appeal tends to hold power in shaping the views of the masses through how they frame their stories.

1.1.2.1 Cult tolerance

Thomas E. Nelson et al. carried out a study to find out whether framing of news stories of a Ku Klux Klan rally in Ohio State had an effect on the tolerance of the audience towards the activities of the group. In the experiment, a group of participants were presented with the story framed as a free speech issue while the other was framed as a disruption of public order. The researcher observed that the group that viewed the free speech story expressed more tolerance for the activities of the group as opposed to those who viewed the story that was framed negatively.

This shows how the angle that news outlets choose to disseminate stories that are sensitive to the public will determine the perception and the attitudes the masses carry around the discussions of these issues.

1.1.2.2 Increase in Violence.

Media coverage on cult/ terrorist stories can lead to the insurgence of violence by these groups, partly because they thrive on the publicity they get from news outlets. An apt example would be how radio was used to spread violence against the Tutsis in Rwanda, ultimately leading to the Rwandan genocide.

Religious cults such as Al Qaeda and al shabaab are known for their terrorist attacks both locally and internationally. Al Qaeda is considered the mother group, responsible for disastrous attacks like 911 in New York, while its affiliate group, al shabaab is behind assassinations of local Somali government officials, journalists and countless civilians in Somalia and Kenya.

Michael Jetter (April 2017) investigates how news coverage on Al Qaeda attacks can result in subsequent attacks by the group. He finds out that coverage on Al Qaeda attacks in international media like CNN, CBC and Channel 4 News actively leads to more attacks in the coming days.

1.1.2.3 Victim blaming.

Victim blaming is when a victim of a certain unfortunate act is faulted either partially or entirely for the incident. People who have never been in contact with a cult often cannot comprehend the psychology behind indoctrination and the power of manipulation of a cult leader. As was seen after Guyana's Jonestown massacre, the public was unsympathetic towards the victims of the tragedy. As Whit Denton in her (2018) paper puts it, "They were a little too trusting. They lacked the critical self-awareness not to join a cult, and as a result, paid the ultimate price of their lives."

The same case was seen as an aftermath of the coverage of Kenya's Shakahola cult story. It was unfathomable how educated men and women would allow themselves and their children to

starve on the instructions of one pastor. As Nation media group's editor, Peter Mwaura (April, 18, 2023) puts it, "There was universal disbelief and astonishment that people could be convinced to starve themselves to death in order to 'meet Jesus.'" "

1.1.3 The Kenyan media.

Kenyan media has over the years covered stories on cults either through mainstream channels or through their digital spaces. In the 1980's, Mary Akatsa, a female behind the inception of the Jerusalem church of God was brought to limelight by the media. Having a huge following and even a greater command over her followers, it was astonishing to see men getting physically abused willingly by a woman they adorned as their saint. (Nandi Jacob 1993, pg. 18) has explained in his study that despite the independent churches being attributed to colonialism, their emergence were still eminent even after the country's gain of independence.

Kitui County's Kavonokya sect was widely covered in the Kenyan media back in 2012. What was peculiar about the story is how the followers willingly refused to be treated from any ailments and denied their children the right to be vaccinated during a countrywide immunization exercise that year, resulting in the death of 11 children and the arrest of some of the group's followers.

In 2010, the emergence of 'the finger of god' church threw a vibrant TV personality, Esther Arunga in a swirl of controversies. KTN through Jeff Koinange's the bench show uncovered the dark side of the manipulation of the cult through a one on one interview with Arunga. The cult's

leader, who happened to be her husband, was later arrested in Australia for murdering his son, whom he claimed to be exorcising.

In April this year, the most dangerous cult of all time was unraveled by the Kenyan media. The Shakahola cult, which was founded by Paul Mackenzie under the good news international church. The cult story was discovered only after mass graves were discovered in an alienated piece of land in shakahola forest. An exclusive story by Citizen TV's Hassan Mugambi unraveled how the leader used misinterpreted biblical quotes to misguide his followers. From the story, McKenzie had his followers starving at the camp while a short distance away, he and his wife had a food table for their everyday meals. It still baffles the public's mind how the preacher managed to manipulate hundreds of his followers to their death.

1.1.4 Rule of law

With all these misdemeanors happening right in the open, the government has time and again given a cold shoulder to the issue of cultism in Kenya. This is contributed by the fact the constitution of Kenya gives total freedom of worship to its citizens. Articles 32 under chapter four of the 2010 Kenyan constitution posits every individual has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion. Further, that everyone has the right, either individually or in a community with others, in public or private, to manifest any religion or belief through worship, practice, teaching or observance, including observance of a day of worship.

Therefore, the constitution in Kenya acts as a canopy to shield despicable church leaders from facing the full wrath of the law.

This is where the media comes in. In as much as these culprits are left to walk scot free, it is important for the media to expose them for what they really are and educate the masses on flaws of being involved in cults, especially after the catastrophic loss of more than 400 Kenyan lives.

1.2 Problem statement

The Kenyan media plays a vital role in driving socio- cultural and political narratives in Kenya (ogenga, 2008, ugangu 2012).

The gruesome shakahola massacre in Kilifi County undoubtedly has sent both local and international media into a frenzy. International media powerhouses like CNN, Al Jazeera, Fox news, Indian Times and Wion, every media station wanted a piece of the shakahola story, weighing in on how such a heinous act took place right under the noses of the government and the local media.

The continuous investigation into the shakahola massacre mystery as seen through the lens of citizen TV, reveals that this is more than followers dying at the command of their leader. This story has shown the flaws that lie in our society; the disintegration of the basic foundation that holds our society together, the government. It is also critical to determine how the media plays its vital role in raising public awareness and educating the public about the dangers of involving oneself in cultism, rather than reporting the incident for the benefit of the media organization. It is also critical to determine who is setting the agenda in this story. Whether citizen TV is acting as a watchdog by holding the government accountable by ensuring that the issue is handled accordingly by the government and that the culprits involved in this heinous crime are brought to book.

According to a report by the office of international freedom (2002), approximately 85.5% of the Kenyan population is Christian, 11% is Muslim while groups constituting less than 2% include Hindus, Sikhs and those who practice traditional religions. According to the government of Kenya, over 4000 churches are registered in Kenya. Numerous church leaders have been in news headlines for their atrocious ways of leading their congregation. The said charismatic leaders often take advantage of the followers' social and financial vulnerability to indoctrinate them by using misquoted verses of their scriptures. For instance, Pastor Paul Mackenzie convinced his followers that education was the enemy of their progress and that for their prosperity, children had to drop out of schools and all his followers burn their academic certificates.

Cultism is a social issue that is impossible to eliminate completely. However, it is possible to have a collective effort from relevant bodies, including the media, to contribute to the control of the menace. Therefore, this study sets out to find out how framing of its cult stories has raised public awareness and sensitization of the public. Has the media upheld its agenda setting role in the coverage of cultism in Kenya? In this case, what is the contribution of citizen TV in the eradication of cultism in Kenya?

1.3 General objectives:-

The goal of this study is to analyze media coverage covering the gruesome shakahola incident in Kilifi County. Whether or not Citizen TV channel fulfilled its agenda setting role in giving the public what to think about and consequently contributing to the elimination of cultism in Kenya.

1.3.1 Specific objectives of this study are as follows:-

- To analyze the messaging and the content of the shakahola story covered by citizen TV.
- To evaluate depth and the prominence given to shakahola cult stories by citizen TV.
- To find out the perception and knowledge of journalists/ editors on cults.

1.4 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:-

- How was the shakahola massacre story framed by citizen TV?
- What was the prominence given to the shakahola cult story by citizen TV?
- What is the perception of journalists and editors towards cults?

1.5 Justification and significance of the study

In a contemporary world where a lot of innocent lives are lost and those whose hands are stained from these atrocities are enjoying their freedom, it is vital for more scholars to tap into research on cultism in Kenya. More specifically, the role of the media in creating public awareness and curbing this cult menace that has mercilessly engrossed our society and stolen the innocence of many Kenyans.

There has been inadequacy in the coverage of cultism stories by journalists all around the world. Most of the stories covered have been aired as news stories. Due to the limited time in the field and limited contact with members of cult groups, a lot of the information relied on by the media houses are from other sources like the government and witnesses. This aims to explore how

media framed coverage on cultism in Kenya. The findings will contribute to other scholarly work on how media coverage can contribute to the fight against cultism in Kenya. Additionally, the researcher hopes that this study inspires other scholars to undertake more research on media and cultism in Kenya and globally. It would be interesting to compare notes on different media outlets locally and internationally. As the researcher has noticed, studies on media and cultism are lacking in Kenya. A lot of literature found on the topic is drawn from news articles and studies on cultism that has no inclusion of the media aspect. Additionally, most of the studies carried out on media and cultism focus solely on print media. Therefore, a conclusion is fit that broadcast media's coverage on cultism is under researched. The scholar hopes to contribute to the notion that the media can contribute to the fight against cultism. The findings will be shared to relevant stakeholders namely:- media industry to make adjustments and improvements on their cult coverage, interreligious council and the government that are the other contributing bodies to the fight against cultism.

1.6 Scope and limitations of the study

Scope of a study gives an outline of the parameters around which the study will be conducted as well as the extent to which the research will be conducted. Therefore, in this study, the focus is on media coverage on cultism covering catastrophic stories such as the shakahola massacre.

1.6.1 Time frame

The shakahola story was first broke in March 23, when Pastor Paul Mckenzie was released on a 10,000 shillings bond from Malindi court. He was accused of starving and suffocating two children to death. Kennedy (April, 27, 2023) affirmed that the police believe that it was after this release that Mackenzie retreated to his ranch to execute his heinous plan. On April 14th is when

the police made a shocking discovery of the death of four people in a prayer session, while 10 others were rescued.

This study aims to cover stories from the shakahola cult from 1^{7th} March when citizen TV aired its first shakahola story, to the 18th of June. The study also confines itself to Citizen TV channel. Reason for this choice follows a report established by the MCK on the state of Kenyan media in 2023 which confirms that the most watched TV station in Kenya is citizen TV with its viewership rated at 38%, followed by NTV and KTN Home at 13% and 12% respectively. The same report confirms that citizen TV has been the leading TV station consecutively from 2021. For the trust in media, the report denotes RMS fraternity as the most trusted media organization by the viewer, the biggest reason given by the respondents being that the organization was spot on in reporting important issues that affects the Kenyan society. Due to the big margin citizen TV leads by, the scholar believes that the findings from this media channel will be an apt representation of local broadcast media channels.

The study additionally seeks to research on the shakahola cult story and not any other.

This is because 1) This particular cult story has broken quite the record for being a disaster with the highest number of casualties in the history of Kenya. Now known as the shakahola massacre, the cult has claimed more than 400 lives, while hundreds of bodies are still reported missing. 2) Media frenzy by both local and international media outlets, most of them having more questions than answers as to how the cult was unearthed. 3) Disintegration of families by the cult. A lot of family members have been sucked into the shakahola group, with or without the knowledge of their immediate family members and relatives.

Since cultism is a taboo, not many researchers have embarked on studies to investigate more on the matter. Even worse, there is limited research on the role media plays in fighting cultism, both locally and internationally.

1.7 Summary on Methodology.

This study aims to use a mixed research approach. (Denzin 1989) posits that triangulation is a method by which the researcher analyzes data and presents it to others to understand the experience of a common phenomenon. Use of triangulation methods can increase the reliability of the study results. (Stavros & Westberg 2009).

Mixed methods were used by 20th century sociologists who blended qualitative and quantitative data in studying their communities, the likes of (Hollingshead 1949) and (Lazarsfiel & Leis 1959). But it was not until much later that the idea of combining the two types of data was named as mixed methods (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner2007).

In social sciences, Campbell & Fiske 1959 article is believed to have officiated this phenomenon by introducing the triangulation method. (Johnson et al. 2007). This approach was used more efficiently from the late 80's and early 90's from academics in different fields such as sociology, anthropology and health. The approach has since evolved due to the advancement in technology. Researchers who have outlined this growth include (Creswell & Plano clark2011, Teddie & Tashakkori 2009).

The researcher depends on analyzing data solely from one media station, Citizen TV .This is followed up by a survey conducted on select journalists and news editors from the station. Their opinions are seen by the researcher as vital in placing meaning within the study. To decide the

aptness of the two research methods used, that is content analysis and survey, literature regarding the same was sought. On choosing a mixed methods approach, the researcher came across literature from Todd Jick (1979) stating the advantages of this approach as follows:- more confidence in results, room for creativity, credible data, easy to point out inconsistencies. For content analysis, the researcher came across literature that distinguished qualitative content analysis from quantitative content analysis. In comparison, quantitative content analysis is criticized for missing semantic information embedded in the text (Weber 1990). On the other hand, qualitative content analysis is used to explore the meaning in physical texts. According to (Berg 2001), the perspective of texts in qualitative content analysis is better understood by the researcher as well as the readers of the results of the study.

The researcher also conducts a survey on a select sample of journalists and editors at citizen TV station. Editors are the arbiters of what news stories are aired as well as their placement in the running list. The journalists on the other hand are the collectors of first primary or secondary information from sources on the ground. Therefore, finding out the perception of these two groups towards cultism and how that affects how cult stories are framed to influence the public is important to the study

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter gives an overview of cultism in a global, regional and Kenyan context. The chapter summarizes media coverage on cultism and its impact locally and internationally. Additionally, the chapter discusses the two levels of agenda setting theory and its relation to media framing. This is summed up with justification, scope and significance of the study.

2.1 Social construct of cultism

A social construct is a set of norms established and accepted by a certain group of people. In a cult context, extreme ideas such as:-

2.1.1 Isolation.

Most of the cult leaders have been able to convince their followers to isolate themselves from the rest of the world. This is often a strategy that allows them to indoctrinate them without the interference of foreign logical minds. Neil in one of his book road to Jonestown (pg. 353-357) explains how Jim Jones, a charismatic cult leader migrated his church followers from California where he was getting unwanted attention from the government and the press to Jonestown in Guyana. In this piece of land, followers were completely isolated and had to follow strict rules on. Every activity was done upon Jones's approval. All incoming mail was checked before reaching its recipients and outgoing mail was censored. New members' passports were confiscated and kept under close watch by the leader and his officials.

The same case was evident in the shakahola cult. Kenyan media reported that Paul Mackenzie moved his followers to a piece of land in shakahola forest, away from people so that he could have his way with his followers.

2.1.2 Rejection of education

Televangelist Paul Mackenzie through his broadcast channel has evidently refuted the importance of education. He has severally commanded his followers as captured by Kenyan media, to drop education and set their academic certificates on fire.

Citizen TV captured a story in 2009 of Mwingi police commissioner rescuing 23 children who were believed never to have set foot in school or even taken to a hospital for medical assistance. The family consisted of two men who shared 5 wives and raised their 23 children in complete isolation from the rest of the society. The parents were said to have been followers of the Roho mtakatifu sect that has commanded followers on the same.

Extreme lengths of starvation to see Christ as seen in the shakahola cult case was an idea created by the leaders and accepted by followers. Kenyan media covered cult followers on the brink of death, who refused medical aid because they believed they were moments away from meeting Christ.

These extreme ideas are shared among the members but are seen as utterly irrational by an ordinary person. Carl Ratner (2005) asserts that cultism of arbitrary beliefs is a license for demagoguery, dogmatism and mindlessness.

2.2 Prevalence of cultism in Kenya

Cultism has been widespread in Kenya since time in memorial. However for some reason, it is spoken of in hushed tones by communities and ignored by the government altogether. A journal

by international research journal of social sciences (2016) asserts that cultism is a social problem. Eileen Barker (2004) agrees that NRMs have characteristically given rise to suspicion, fear and frequent discrimination and persecution. According to Denga (1998), cultism is a major contribution to destruction of human and economic resources in Nigeria.

A study done by Nandi Jacob (1993) on Mary Akatsa's Jerusalem church of Christ to look into the historical background of the church, the rituals performed in the church as well as how the bible was used in healing of its members. One of the observations she made was that Akatsa's charisma overshadowed her lack of education, her youth and the fact that she was a woman.

But with the negativity that revolves around cults and sects, what exactly attracts masses to join them nonetheless? Psychologist Albert Bandura posits that one learns or imitates behaviors they pick from observing someone else or from the environment that surrounds them.

Bandura (1961) conducted a controlled experiment he named bobo doll. Herein, he tested a total of 72 children aged between 3 and 6 years. The findings were that the children who were exposed to aggressive behaviors towards the dolls quickly imitated the actions they witnessed. The study concluded that individuals adopted behaviors by observing those around them. From this context, an assumption can be made that most of those who joined the shakahola cult were recruited by family members and friends who were already members of the group.

2.3Public perception of cults

Over the years, cults and sects have developed a negative connotation to their meanings, either through what people heard about them from others or the media or through primary or secondary contacts with the group. Opinions were formed to characterize cultist groups to differentiate

them from the classic religious groups, the main of these being that a cult is a group of manipulated individuals who venerate a charismatic leader. The public has always been baffled by how one leader could indoctrinate a mass successfully to its doom.

Stanley Milgram, a psychologist at Yale University, decided to get to the bottom of this. In a series of experiments carried out to find out if Germans were obedient to their leaders, a phenomenon that would explain the Nazi killings during World War II. He in (1963) conducted an experiment whereby participants were selected to play the role of the teachers while a colleague played the role of the student. Electrodes were attached to the students' arms and the teacher was instructed by the observer to administer shock every time the students gave a wrong answer. Through stringent behavior of the observer and the stern instructions he gave the participants, 65% of the participants continued to the highest level of voltage. This then brought to the conclusion that undoubtedly the situation that one is in and the people surrounding them caused them to behave differently from how they would normally behave, even when it could potentially lead to destruction. They feel like they are trapped and have to behave the way that they do.

Another explanation for these cult characteristics could be given by the conformity experiments conducted by Solomon Asch in (1953). His aim was to find out whether an individual would conform to the pressure of a group even when they realize the group is not on the right track. He brought in real participants and actors to match a picture of a line on the left with a picture on the right with different sizes of the same line.

The actors deliberately gave wrong answers to control the experiments. Asch found out that all the real participants at one point chose the wrong answer even when it was obviously wrong.

Upon interviewing them, they admitted that they gave a wrong answer because they were afraid of being odd and getting ridiculed by the rest. From this, he concluded that people are willing to conform to the pressure of the masses for fear of rejection and in order to fit in.

2.4 Media bias on 'non-conventional religions'

News on cults and unconventional religious practices have been covered by media from across the globe. Studies conducted to find out the impartiality of media channels in reporting NRMs as in (, Beckford and Cole 1988, Beckford 1994, Bromley and Breschel 1992, Richardson 1995 and Shuppe and Hadden 1995) have found that media has in all sorts been biased against new religious movements.

In his (1997) journal on media coverage of unconventional religion, Stuart A. Wright posits that the lack of knowledge is not the only factor that contributes to the bias shown by the media, but rather the fact that journalists find non-classical religious practices distasteful and offensive. In his study, he criticized the media for unfairly covering cult stories without utmost knowledge of what they are all about.

He accused media houses for bringing in 'cult experts' to talk about social issues that put sects in a negative light in the eyes of the society. Wright says that most journalists have limited time to conduct adequate fieldwork that would enable them to interact with sect members and learn their values. Instead, they find these new groups to be culturally offensive and therefore innately carry their prejudice in their news pieces.

Further, he listed that the factors contributing to media bias as being the journalists' unfamiliarity with the group, the degree of cultural accommodation of the religious group, economic resources available to the journalists, time constraints of journalists and source of information. In his findings, he concluded that a dialogue between representatives both from the new religions and the media would clarify uncertainties and put a lot of issues into perspective.

Paul J. Olson in his (2006) study on public perception of cults and new religious movements, interviewed 98 students on views of both Catholic and minority religious groups. A lot of the students had the view that minority groups were manipulating people. Additionally, 75% of the respondents viewed new religious movements as negative, with close to 92% of the respondents based their claims on some sort of media representation (p. Olson pg. 99, 2006).

Lonnie Griffin (2004) analyzed print media reporting on both established religions and new religious movements. She claims that print media and media in general require items that are worthy of publication. Citing (Haynes 2000), he says that reports on issues to do with religion have proven to be a topic of interest to the public. Griffin claims that because media is a business entity that is sponsored by corporates, they only pick on trending news and in this case, by reporting on deviance of new religious movements that will air sensational news to the public (Hill, Hickman & McClendon 2001; Richardson & Van Driel 1997 & Wright 1997). The purpose of his study was to analyze the three prominent newspapers the New York Times, Washington Post and Los Angeles Times portrayed both established and new religions in their publications. He wanted to find out whether the findings of earlier researchers like Wright, Hill et al. on media bias still held water. His research gave support to his hypothesis that new religious movements stories were covered in a more negative light as compared to established religions. In his

findings, 94% of the total frequency of the group descriptor 'cult' was used to describe new religious movements while 'sect' was used at 72%.

2.5 Element of Conflict.

Beckford (1994) argues that an observation of how broadcast and print media convey news about new religions only when their actions yield conflict. Because conflict attracts curiosity and curiosity brings in more viewers, he notes that activities by these sects are regarded as newsworthy only when they can yield profits for media houses. According to him, "conflict is the Leitmotiv which connects journalistic portrayals of NRMs together."(1994:pg. 20). According to his study, broadcast media has the tendency of using elements of conflict such as 'conflicts are problematic' in their stories, even when they try to get both sides to the story, presentation of the accounts to the story is always on the negative side.

2.6 Where Lies the Truth?

Despite studies showing that the media is unfair by disseminating narratives to the public that taint the reputation of cults or sects, evidence by the same media has shown that the media only conveyed the story as it received from its various sources, which most of the time is the truth. When the shakahola story hit headlines in March this year, it was evident through the pictures of the mass graves and the stories from surviving victims of the starvation cult just how horrible the situation was.

Beckford (1994) in his article, the mass media and new religious movements, he denotes cult groups to be the center of controversies in most cases. The groups operate in manners that are

parallel to the norm in the society, which in turn attracts a lot of attention from the media and the public. For instance, in the early 70's, allegations of economic exploitation of the youth, manipulation and their isolation from their families spread among the public and it was not until the 1978 tragic incident of the mass suicide of 900 followers of the peoples' temple church of Guyana that all the speculation roaming around, turned into a painful reality.

In an article by Peter Mwaura(2023) of the nation media group about the reporting of the shakahola story, he accounted that in spite of the story blowing up international media spaces, local media channels were still struggling to get a clear picture out of the story even after talking to pastors and insiders. A lot of details are still up to date missing that have not been clarified by the media.

Heather Kavan (2005) conducted a research to find out how the print media in Australia and New Zealand covered stories on Falun Gong, a Chinese meditation group that had stirred controversy in China, garnering negative publicity from both the Chinese press and the government. Citing Patsy Rahn (2000), the researcher saw the need to go behind the publicity and look into what was really happening.in her analysis, contrary to previous studies on media prejudice by researchers like Beckford (1999),Richardson & van Driel 1997,1998 and wright 1997), this study found out that media was extremely supportive of Falun Gong group. In the analysis, 61% of the reports were favorable to the group,33% were neutral and only 6% were negative.

2.7Media gag

Media freedom is enshrined in the 2010 constitution of Kenya. Article 34(2) of the constitution guarantees that the state shall not in any way exercise control over or interfere with any person

engaged in broadcasting, the production or circulation of any publication or the dissemination of information by any medium. Similarly, article 35(1a) confirms that every citizen has the right of access to information held by the state.

Ironically, the same government has had a history of gagging media from disseminating information that is vital to the public. In the case of the shakahola mystery, the interior cabinet secretary Kithure Kindiki barred media access to shakahola forest to get the raw story as should be done. Instead he opted to be the one to give bits and pieces of information to the press that would then be broadcast to the masses which totally violated the freedom and rights of the press as well as the citizens.

James Jarso (2010) in his study on the media and the anti-corruption crusade in Kenya, he attempts to explore the role played by the media in fighting corruption in Kenya by weighing their achievements against challenges. In the study, he denotes that despite their being clear laws that guard freedoms of media and even organizations that fight for the media, the governments somehow finds ways of interfering with daily practices of the media, especially when a story implicates the reputation of the government, as seen in the coverage of shakahola cult story .Besides receiving constant blockage by the government from fully uncovering the shakahola mystery to its full potential, it is imminent that a lot of victims of the cult, primary or secondary, are hesitant to come out and give revealing details of the mysterious cult.

Elisabeth Noelle Neumann (1993) explains the power and the growth of public opinion. Neumann's line of thought was inspired by the infamous political philosopher, John Locke, whose political philosophy points out that there are three types of law namely divine laws, civil laws and opinion laws of which, opinion laws are the most abided by the public.

Spiral of silence refers to the pressure a certain person feels to want to conceal their opinions when they realize they hold uncommon views. She found out that the main reason as to why this happens is due to the fear they have of being isolated by society.

According to Neumann, mass media provides us with information of the happenings around and therefore, it is a tool that greatly undermines the other side of the story, the opinions held by the minority of the masses.

In the Kenyan context, a lot of cult survivors are in the shadows, in fear of coming out to share their encounter simply because they are scared of repercussions. It is not a secret that Kenya is a deeply religious country. According to government statistics, more than 85% of the Kenyan population is Christians, making it a Christian dominated nation. It is then only natural to expect uproar against sects with unconventional teachings and practices.

It is possible that ex cult members are before anything ashamed and regretful of their actions and secondly do not want to be at the receiving end from the public. Hence, it is hard for them to give out meaningful information that could educate the mass of the potential dangers of involving oneself with cults. This therefore, could be one of the reasons the media is not able to cover an in-depth story of the shakahola mystery.

2.8Media coverage on cultism

Appah et al. (2021) conducted a study to find out the coverage given to cult killings in the south-south Nigerian state. The region produces oil and gas that accounts for 80% of the federal government revenue and 95% of Nigeria's export earnings (Francis, Lapin and Rosiasco 2011). According to the study, there has been an insurgence of cult related killings due to the rich

resources in the region. Amnesty International (2020) reported that at least 60 people from different communities in the regions have been killed in 2019 alone. The study adopted content analysis and survey research designs to analyze content of 3 state newspapers and interviews on their editors respectively. Citing Nwosu (1996), the researcher denotes that front page, back page and inside back pages stories are considered of utmost importance while stories placed in inside pages indicate less relevance. The findings of the study concluded that the media did not give enough prominence to cult related stories. Reason for that being 93.3% of all reports on south-south cult stories were placed in inside pages of the newspapers while only 3.8% and 2.9% of the stories were found in the front page and opinion page respectively.

A similar research was carried out by Queen Nneka (2023), to find out newspaper coverage given to cult stories in Emohua local government area of river state. According to the study, there has been an increase of cases of cult activities with little being done by the states. Citing Okedi (2020), Nneka affirms that cultist activists in the river state are linked more to social, economic and political factors more than religion. This is because their conflicts are always around issues to do with social, political and economic survival within the society. The study adopted content analysis as a research design, analyzing three national newspapers, the punch, the guardian and the nation. The objective of the study was to find out the level of prominence given to cult stories in Emohua and how these stories were framed. Findings showed that there were other factors to the publications of these stories, excluding public interest. The study also found out that action frames were used for most of the stories, and combining that with the straight news presentation of cult stories drew to the conclusion that cult stories were disseminated as any other story that was happening in the area, with no special treatment.

Nigerian citizens have for decades decried the infiltration of cult gangs in their tertiary institutions. Several studies have been carried out on how to curb cult menace in these institutions. Angie Osarieme's research particularly intended to find out how Nigerian media covered cultism in tertiary institutions. The aim was to find out the responsibility the media put on to cover these stories. The study used a public health model to evaluate media coverage on campus cults. Cole et al (2005, pg. 25) citing Steven defined the model as "reporting that includes risk factors, causes and prevention strategies in stories about injuries or death". It is vital for media to report on a social issue as it resonates with the public. Citing Coleman et al (2005, 26-28), Angie says that the public health model has roots in framing, which involves selection and salience of stories. How the media frames its stories highlights some aspects of the story while obscuring others. The study's findings were that the Nigerian media did not report on cultism as much as it did on crime and corruption stories.

2.8.1 Media Framing.

A frequently used definition of this phenomenon is that it is a central organizing idea for news content that gives content and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration (Tankard et al., 1991, pg. 3). In other words, the media molds a story to fit the narrative it promotes and consequently, influences the perception the public has towards the reality of the subject under discussion. Oftentimes, a media channel chooses to highlight one aspect of the story to its viewers while playing down the angles from which the story could be told. For instance, western media have had a track record for framing stories from the African continent with hunger, conflict and an alarming mortality rate. Although there might be a slight bit of truth to that, it is not the entire truth. This is because, in a bid of displaying that narrative to the world, these media channels downplay the socio-economic and political developments that

are rapidly taking over the African continent. By so saying, it is important to understand that for a story to be categorized as newsworthy to begin with. Journalists/editors use a variety of criteria to determine which stories to select for news. Some of these factors are as follows:-

1) timeliness- this is a very important factor to consider for a media practitioner. A journalist or an editor chooses a story that is happening right then or is relevant to a current issue that is in news. News dies down quickly. What is news today can be stale by tomorrow. It is therefore vital for the media to capture the news as it unfolds.

2) proximity- journalists give priority to news that is happening locally. To gain more viewers, journalists choose stories that affect the local communities. A story that the viewer can relate to.

3) Impactful- another factor to consider while choosing a story is whether or not it has an impact on the viewers watching. For instance, stories by the Kenyan media on the ravaging drought in 2022 impacted farmers all over the country. News interest increases when more people are affected by it.

4) prominence- a story gains more coverage when it is about a prominent person or organization.

5) Human interest- these kinds of stories draw attention from the public simply because of the human element in them. They speak to our shared experiences and are warming to the heart.

6) Conflict. Journalism thrives on stories with an element of conflict or controversies in them.

2.9 Gaps in existing literature

There have been a few studies done on the educative role of media on cults on a global scale. Studies the researcher has come across have been conducted mainly on general media coverage

of cultism. (, Beckford and Cole 1988, Beckford 1994, Bromley and Breschel 1992, Richardson 1995 and Shuppe and Hadden 1995). The primary objectives of these studies were to establish media bias against new religious movements. In these studies, new religious movements have been painted as acceptable yet misunderstood by the public due to the negativity disseminated about them by the media. Some of the authors of these studies are from western countries.

Additionally, many news articles, journals and studies on prevalence of cults in the society and in tertiary institutions have been done primarily in African countries such as Nigeria, South Africa and our very Kenya (Gboyega2005, Nyaga 2014, Babarinde et al 2005, Ajayi et al 2010, and Chinwe 2015). Nonetheless, the researcher has not come across any scholarly research on the media's positive educative and informative role on cultism in Kenya. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap.

News articles, not necessarily scholarly giving more insights on cultist sects and how the world viewed Kenyan media, have emerged in numbers after the massive coverage of the now globally famous shakahola cult massacre. (AFP 2023, Biko 2023). The existing literature also insufficiently gives details of the happenings within the said cults, not enough to sensitize the readers on the dangers of these groups.

2.10Theoretical Framework

This study will be guided by agenda setting theory in light of creating public awareness as well as educating the masses on noteworthy issues that grapple our society.

2.10.1 Agenda setting theory

The concept of the agenda setting role of the media was first fathered by the veteran political journalist Walter Lipmann who authored the famous book on the same called public opinion in 1922. In the book's first chapter, Lipmann titled 'the world outside and the pictures in our heads', he explains that the world people have to deal with is often out of their sight or reach. It has to be reported, explored or imagined. He further says that man has invented a way of hearing and seeing what his naked eyes could see and therefore creates for himself a picture inside his head that depicts the outside world. From this, it can be deduced that the picture and the belief an individual holds on to is their public opinion, which can in turn be influenced by what they experience or see firsthand and what is reported on media channels.

Agenda setting theory was founded by two professors, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw. They both decided to assess the connection between the what the public held as important issues in their society and the messages that were then being disseminated by news outlets during the 1968 U.S presidential elections; in other words, they concluded in their findings that media did not dictate how the mass thought, rather it gave the mass what to think or talk about.

This theory asserts that the media has the role to create public awareness and educate the masses on the happenings within the society. Additionally, different media have different agenda potentials in regards to their popularity among the people. To borrow from Lipmann's public opinion (1992 p.29), the world we have to deal with is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind'. Outside our private spaces, we tend to deal with second hand reality that has been created by media channels.

The frequency in which media outlets disseminate information about issues affecting the public in daily news constitutes the media's influence on its audience. This results in the move of news rather quickly from being an agenda by the media organization to public agenda. A study carried out by King et al. (2017) found that media agenda turned into public agenda within six days.

2.10.2 Second-level agenda setting.

As (McCombs & Valenzuela 2007,pg 47) put it “the agenda setting role of the news media is not limited to focusing public attention on a particular issue, but also influences our understanding and perspective on the topic in the news.” Rather than giving the public what to think about, the media could also influence the public through highlighting the attributes of the agenda at hand, be it a public figure, an organization or anything else that is the focus of attention. These agenda of attributes emphasize the journalist’s attitude towards the agenda and consequently influences the public’s perception on the issue. This influence of the agenda of attributes on the audience is what is referred to as second-level agenda setting (McCombs& Valenzuela 2007,pg 47).

Translating this concept to media coverage on cult stories, it could be said that inadequate coverage on cult stories by media as was seen in some researches could lead to the public turning a blind eye on the issue entirely. Thomas E. Nelson in his study found out that media reporting on the Ku Klux Klan using positive attributes led to the tolerance of the group activities by the public.

2.10.3 Agenda setting and Framing.

(Tankard et al 1991,pg 3) define media framing as the organization of ideas for news content, building context by use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration. Framing can also be defined as the creation of media frames in a way that will be used by the public to interpret social reality (McCombs& Valenzuela 2007,pg 48). The two concepts go hand in hand and as McCombs, Shaw and weaver (1997) suggested, framing is an extension of agenda setting. Media audiences apply information they get from media in their real lives (Bara & Davis 2009). It is therefore important for the media to frame stories appropriately so as to affect the perception of the audience as needed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will give an overview of the research design to be used for the study, the type of research, the data collection method as well as ethical considerations while conducting the research.

3.2 Mixed methods approach

As Bryman, Creswell et al. explain, this phenomenon is an approach used in research whereby qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and designs are used, with the aim that the latter approach will add more insights that have not been captured by the previous data collection approach. Qualitative and quantitative approaches should not be viewed as rigid, but rather represent different ends of a continuum (Bryman 2012, Creswell, 2015; Newman and Benz 1998). Mixed methods approach lies in the middle of this continuum for it incorporates both qualitative and quantitative approaches. (J. D Creswell, J.W.Creswell 2017).

3.3 Rationale for choosing mixed method

Norman Denzin in his (1978) study, outlined how to do the triangulation method. He defined the method as ‘a combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon’ (pg 291). He further listed four types of triangulation namely: - data triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation and data triangulation. According to Denzin, by using the triangulation method, the biases in each element of the research will be nullified (pg 14).

Todd Jick (1979) stated the advantages of using triangulation method in research as follows;-

- It enables the researcher to have more confidence in the outcome of the research.
- It gives more room for creativity while collecting data.

- It yields more credible data.
- Through this method, contradiction, inconsistency or contradiction can be identified.

This study aims to use a mixed methods approach. The researcher intends to use content analysis on citizen TV's shakahola coverage to assess whether media has played a role in elimination of cultism in Kenya. This will also be backed by a survey conducted on citizen TV editors and journalists to add more information and make more sense of what the study is trying to achieve.

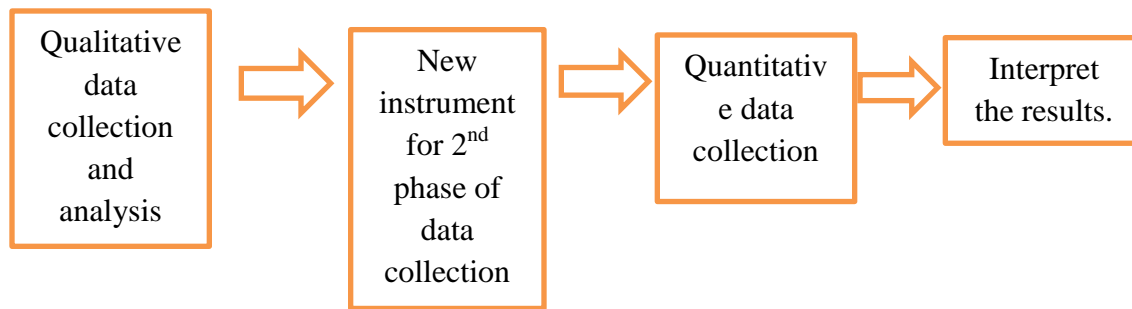
3.4 Research Design

A research design is an inquiry within the research approaches that gives a sense of direction for the procedures in the study. (J. D Creswell, J. W. Creswell 2017). Others have called them strategies of inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

This research seeks to take an exploratory sequential mixed method design approach to this study. As elaborated in (Shields, Rangajan 2013), exploratory design is used in cases where there is limited or no prior research conducted on the study, as is the case here. In this approach, the researcher first starts with conducting qualitative research whereby the data analyzed from this phase is used to build more on the quantitative research.

The researcher chooses to use this design as a way of digging for more answers to explain further on the outcome of the content analysis. The use of surveys to find out the perception of the journalist and editors will assist in putting to perspective the findings in the content analysis.

Figure 3.1 Illustration of exploratory sequential design



3.5 Study population

For the content analysis, the population will include news items, feature stories, news analysis and shows aired by Citizen TV on issues dealing with cultism. This station has been deliberately chosen for the study because according to the media council report of 2022, it is the most watched and the most trusted television station in the country in 2021 and 2022.

The researcher therefore aims at analyzing the coverage of cultism over a period of three months, starting March 17th 2023 to June 18th 2023. The said time frame was chosen for this study because it is the period from when Citizen TV first picked up on shakahola story to when believed to have been the peak for media to air news from the shakahola cult.

3.6 Research sampling procedure

The researcher aims to use purposive sampling technique, which is a form of non-probability sampling in which the researcher deliberately chooses a particular setting to provide vital information that can otherwise not be obtained from other choices (Maxwell 1996).

In this case therefore, the researcher aims to purposively analyze content from citizen TV as well as deliberately choose to sample the stations' editors and journalists.

3.6.1 Sampling

This part of the study elaborates on the population as well as the sampling methods to be used in the research.

The researcher uses non- probability sampling which is in other words known as non- random sampling. Reason for this choice is that the selection of the sample is made subjectively by the researcher. In this case the study population is journalists and editors from citizen TV. The study narrows down the sample to journalists and editors who have worked on the shakahola story for the 9p.m news, the news gang section,JKlive, and morning breakfast show.

Since the researcher has an idea of who to choose for the study, they intend to use judgmental sampling as their type of non-probability sampling for the research.

3.7 Data collection techniques

The section of the study discusses the data collection techniques the researcher intends to use for their study. The researcher will use content analysis to collect primary data from video footage and thereafter conduct a survey to retrieve information from editors and journalists.

3.7.1 Qualitative Data Collection.

3.7.1.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis is widely used in contemporary studies across all fields. Many current studies use qualitative content analysis to address the weakness of the quantitative approach (Zhang & Wildemuth). Qualitative content analysis is a method where the content of a data is subjectively

interpreted through the process of coding, identifying themes or patterns. (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, pg 1278). Alus (1980), has listed the steps of content analysis from raw data to results as follows: - a) Unitizing of texts, images, voices and other observables that are vital to the analysis. b) Sampling of the data to a manageable subset of units. C) Recording or coding of the data. D) Reducing the data for efficient representation.

This technique will be used in this paper whereby content analysis on reports from citizen TV on the shakahola story will be conducted.

Content from shakahola story from 17th March to 18th June. This will be analyzed based on how the story was framed, the language that was used therein, the choice of reporters for the stories, how in-depth the stories were covered, whether experts were called in to further the discussions around cultism for public awareness and the frequency of the story on the TV channel. To conduct content analysis, the researcher uses a code sheet to find out the coverage of shakahola story in terms of the framing of the content of the stories, the frequency of the coverage within the time frame of the study, the placement of the story in the running list, the tone of stories, the language used in the story and headlines and even the journalist given the responsibility to cover the shakahola cult stories.

3.7.2 Quantitative Data Collection Method

3.7.2.1 Survey

A survey gives a quantitative description of trends, attitudes and opinions of a population (Creswell 2006). According to Creswell, a survey seeks to answer descriptive questions as well as the relationship between variables.

The primary purpose of using this study is to find out through a survey the perception the journalists and editors of citizen TV have towards cultism.

The survey will be guided by a questionnaire that will be administered either in person or through mail depending on the availability of the participants of the study.

The researcher seeks to carry out a cross-sectional study due to time constraints. Cross sectional study is the collection of data from many different individuals at a single point in time (Lauren Thomas, June, 22,2023).

3.8 Data collection tool

Fowler (2014) has listed the data collection tools for survey as, mail, internet, on phone, one on one and group administration. Internet surveys have been discussed extensively in literature. (Nesbary 2000, Sue & Ritter 2012)

Due to the small number of participants involved in the survey, the researcher intends to use a questionnaire with a mixture of open and close ended questions that will be printed and handed to the participants. Reasons for this choice is that it is conveniently cheap, quicker to administer and get maximum responses from the participants.

The study chooses to conduct the survey on a group of twelve citizen TV journalists who have so far covered shakahola cult stories as well as five editors in charge of the newsroom. This will assist in better representation of the media house as well as drawing a more precise conclusion of the study. The aim of this survey is to find out whether or not, the perceptions of the editors and the journalists has had an effect on how the shakahola cult story was covered.

In this study, it is eminent that both content analysis and survey will produce both qualitative and quantitative data. In fact, the study will get more quantitative data from content analysis and more qualitative data from the survey due to the open ended questions in the survey.

3.9 Ethical Considerations.

In the execution of this study, ethical principles will be considered. The researcher will ensure that the aim and objectives of the research will be disclosed to the participants without any exaggerations. Protection of privacy of personal data of the participants will be observed as well as confidentiality of data collected from the survey participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS.

This chapter presents the study's findings as well as its interpretation. The paper seeks to answer the following in accordance with the objectives: - the messaging and content of coverage including the type of stories, the tone of the stories, public interest descriptors on the cult story as well as traits used to describe the cult leader and members. The level of depth and prominence given to the shakahola story by citizen TV in terms of use of cult and leader's name in the title of the story, placement of the story, format of the story as well as the length of stories. Lastly, the perception of the journalists and editors towards cults.

4.1 Messaging and content of the shakahola stories covered by citizen TV.

This section presents data collected from content analysis and presented in descriptive statistics.

4.1.1 Tone of the stories.

Through content analysis, the study sought to find out the tone used by the journalists in coverage of shakahola cult stories. Findings were that a bigger percentage (46.7 %) of the stories had a negative tone. None of the stories had a positive tone. This could make an effect on how the story was conveyed to the public.

Table 1: Tone of the stories.

Tone	Frequency	Percent
Positive	0	0.0%
Mixed	16	17.4%
Neutral	33	35.9%
Negative	43	46.7%
Total	92	100%

4.1.2 Descriptors on issues of public interest within the stories covered.

The study sought to find out the extent to which citizen TV used public interest frames in the coverage of shakahola cult stories. Descriptors of public interest issues included but not limited to constitution, poverty, crime, human rights, terrorism and death. The study found out that citizen TV included at least one of these descriptors in 100 percent of the stories on shakahola cult.

Table 2: Issues covered

Issue	No. of stories.	Percentage
Corruption	0	0.0%
Constitution	6	6.5%
Poverty	1	1.1%
Crime	8	8.7%
Human rights	7	7.6%
Unemployment	1	1.1%
Terrorism	5	5.4%
Radicalization	9	9.8%
Survivor	14	15.2%
Death	44	47.8%
Rescue	31	33.7%
Massacre	11	12%
Genocide	3	3.7%
Horror	8	8.7%
Other	26	28.3%

4.1.3 Analysis of the use of traits by citizen TV to describe the cult leader and members.

This study sought to find out whether citizen TV framed Paul Mackenzie who is the individual behind the shakahola cult using traits. The aim in this section was to find out how many stories

had mention of each of these presented descriptors. Some of the traits used to frame him were and not limited to controversial, criminal, cult leader, preacher and pastor. Similarly, traits to describe the members included but were not limited to victims, followers, believers, faithful and cult members.

Table 3: Trait used to describe Paul Mackenzie.

<i>Descriptor</i>	<i>No. of stories</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Controversial</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>28.3%</i>
<i>Cult leader</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18.8%</i>
<i>By name</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>48.9%</i>
<i>Criminal</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5.4%</i>
<i>Evil</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2.2%</i>

<i>Rogue</i>	4	4.3%
<i>Pastor</i>	4	4.3%
<i>Preacher</i>	2	2.2%
<i>Extremist</i>	2	2.2%
<i>Errant</i>	1	1.1%
<i>Suspect</i>	1	1.1%
<i>Culprit</i>	1	1.1%
<i>Father</i>	1	1.1%

Table 4: Descriptors for shakahola cult members.

Descriptor	No. of stories	Percentage
Victim	13	14.1%
Follower	24	26.1%
Believer	6	6.5%
Faithful	3	3.3%
Cult member	9	9.8%
Loved ones	8	8.7%
Mackenzie's group	1	1.1%
Starved	2	2.2%
Indoctrinated	1	1.1%
Sect member	1	1.1%
Manipulated	1	1.1%
Brainwashed	2	2.2%
Coerced	1	1.1%
Lured	1	1.1%
Worshippers	2	2.2%

Deadly cult	1	1.1%
Abused	1	1.1%
Vulnerable	1	1.1%

4.2 Findings on the level of prominence given to the shakahola cult story.

This section of the study presents findings as well as prominence given to the shakahola story by citizen TV. The findings here indicate that 59.8 percent of the stories include the name of the cult in their headlines. A larger percentage of shakahola stories appeared on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd positions on the running orders while fewer appeared lower positions on the running order as seen on the table below. The packaging formats of the stories determine their lengths and depth whereby, package stories are more in-depth and elaborative and are therefore lengthier. On the other hand, Natsup and Nats stories have summarized narrations mostly from other factors besides the reporter, that is, witnesses or authority figures for Natsup and natural sounds from the environment for Nats. This study finds that 78.3 percent of the stories were done in a package format. The findings in this section confirm that stories on the shakahola cult was given prominence by citizen TV and this contributes to the outburst of public opinion around this story.

4.2.1 Use of cult and leader's name as titles of the story

Out of the 92 footages analyzed covering the shakahola story, this paper found out that 59.8 percent of the stories mentioned the name of the cult in their titles. 32.6 % of the titles mentioned the name of the cult's leader while the rest mentioned neither.

Table 5: Shakahola cult and cult leader Mackenzie in the story title.

Present in the title	Frequency	Percentage
-----------------------------	------------------	-------------------

Cult by name	55	59.8%
Cult leader by name	7	7.6%
Neither mentioned	30	32.6%
Total	92	100.0

4.2.2 Amount of coverage of the shakahola cult story by Citizen TV.

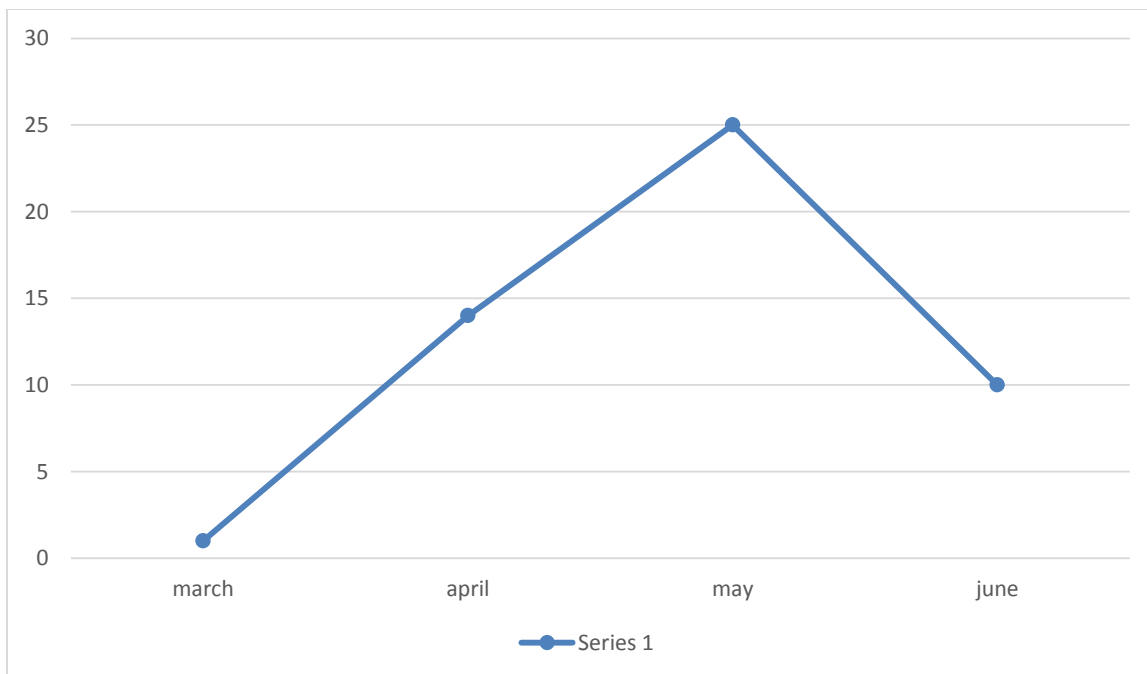
Here, the findings were that citizen TV gave a sufficient amount of coverage to the shakahola story when it trended the most. This could imply that the TV station regarded this particular cult story as newsworthy. Findings were that after the story was first discovered on 17th of March, no investigations were conducted regarding the issue until the 23rd of March, when a story of ‘Unearthed Malindi cult’ was aired. It’s not until April 14th that citizen TV really rigorously covered the story on shakahola. From the 19th of April, the station covered at least 2 stories on shakahola cult for the rest of April and May. In June, the coverage of the shakahola story began to spread out with an interval of two to three days between coverages.

4.2.3 Coverage of shakahola cult story by month.

In terms of monthly coverage, it is evident through collected data that the shakahola story received the highest coverage in May. This could be attributed to the fact that the international community was waking up to this unlikely atrocity that was discovered in Kenya. The story of missing persons gave way to a story of 4 dead bodies in Chakama ranch. The investigation gave leeway to the discovery of mass graves where numerous bodies were retrieved. It was after this gruesome discovery that the coverage of the shakahola story gained momentum. Coverage was therefore lower in the months of March and June. Reason for this is that after the story of the

whistleblower calling out to the media and authorities regarding his missing family in shakahola forest, the story died down as no investigations were carried out.

Figure 1: coverage by month.



4.2.4 Placement of stories on shakahola cult.

The study sought to find out where stories on shakahola cult were placed within the running order of the news. The findings were that 44.6% of the stories on shakahola were placed in the first three positions of the running order.

Table 6: Position of stories in the running order.

Position	Frequency	Percentage
1	21	22.8%
2	10	10.9%
3	10	10.9%
4	16	17.4%
5	8	8.7%
6	6	6.5%
7	8	8.7%
8	3	3.3%
9	5	5.4%
10	4	4.3%
11	1	1.1%

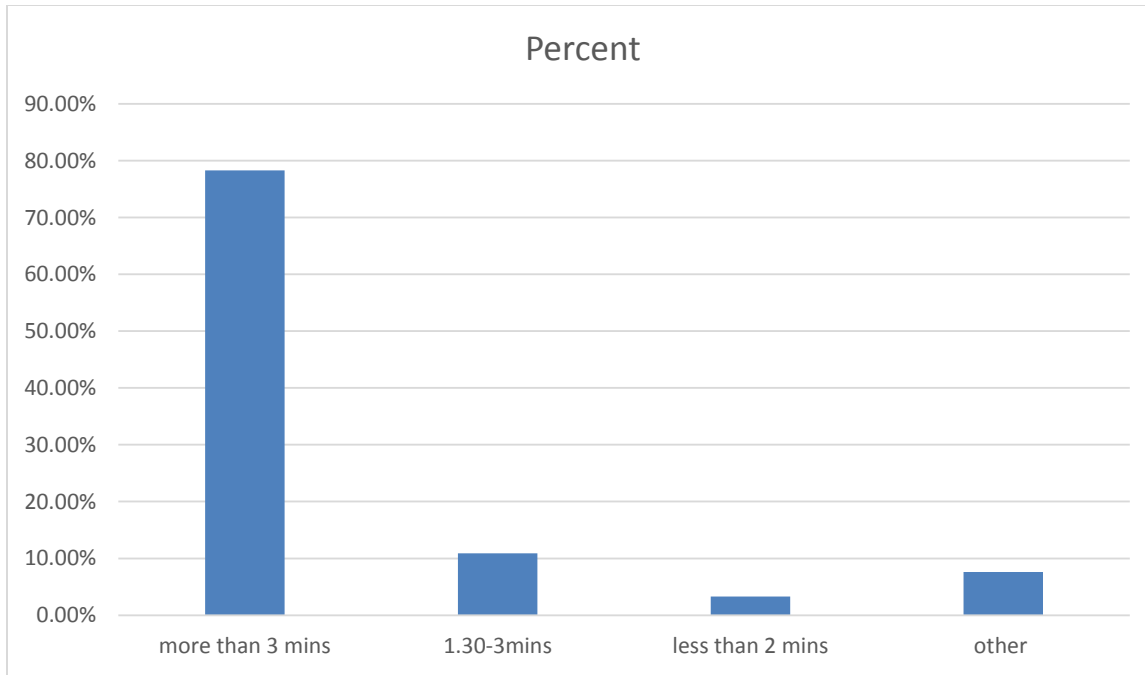
4.2.5 Format of the story

On the length of the story covering the shakahola cult in citizen TV, the study found that the format of the story went hand in hand with their length. Stories covered in package format were more detailed and lengthier, followed by natsup format, nats and lastly straight cuts. Findings were that 78.3 percent of the stories were covered in package format. This also translated to 78.3 percent of the shakahola cult stories running for more than 3 minutes.

Table 7: Format of the shakahola story covered by citizen TV.

Format of the story	Frequency	Percentage
Package	72	78.3%
Natsup/underlay up	10	10.9%
Nats/underlay	2	2.2%
Straight cut	1	1.1%
Other	7	7.6%
Total	92	100.0%

Figure 2: Length of shakahola cult stories.



4.3 Findings from survey with reporters and editors.

The researcher sought to find out how the framing of shakahola cult stories came about in citizen TV's newsroom. Survey with the journalists and editors sought to investigate the following: - a) their perception and understanding of cultism. b) Their description of the citizen TV's coverage of the shakahola cult story. c) Their description of the relationship between media and the cult members. d) What attracts the TV station to cult stories. e) Factors to consider when working on a cult story. f) Challenges faced during the coverage of shakahola story.

4.3.1 Perception of cultism.

From the questionnaires, it appeared that all the participants had a negative connotation towards cultism. By definition, some defined a cult as a group with extreme beliefs led by a charismatic leader. One of the participants described a cult as 'a set of beliefs that are considered deviant, for

a chosen few individuals and is mostly secretive of its leaders and practices. This has been cited in the shakahola story where the whole incident came to light only after atrocities were committed and a whistleblower exposed the leader after the murder of two children.

Previous studies observed that the media was biased against cult groups because they had not encountered them to get to understand what they stand for. Therefore, to understand the extent of exposure the participants had with cult, the study sought to find out if they had been in contact with a cult group. Out of the 16 participants, 8 confirmed to have been in contact with a cult group in their line of duty, while the other 8 indicated no contact with cults. This question was vital in knowing what really shaped the perception of the journalist/editor towards cults. Out of the 16 participants, 9 confirmed to perceive cults as controversial, 6 considered cults evil while only 1 was indifferent. The issue of dispute lies by the fact that those who watch the cult from outside see it for the negative traits shown by the cult while interestingly the members are oblivious to the fact. In the shakahola case, the points mentioned are the manipulation of some of the verses of the bible to fit into the narrative of the leader, in order to misinterpret his followers. A section of the bible that Paul Mackenzie is said to have used frequently reads “ at the time many who sought righteousness and justice went into the wilderness ...they and their children, their wives and animals because misfortune pressed so hard on them. The pursuers said to them ‘enough of this! Come out and obey the king's command, and you will live. But they replied, we will not come out nor will we obey the king’s command’then the enemy attacked at once but they did not retaliate...they said ‘let us all die in innocence...’ all participants have however collectively agreed that cults through their teachings can cause harm either financially, socially or physically.

4.3.2 Citizen TV's coverage of the shakahola cult.

In an effort to find out the extent of coverage of the shakahola cult story, the researcher asked the participants to describe the TV station's coverage of the story. Out of the 16 participants, 14 described the coverage as extensive, 1 described it as sufficient while 1 said that more could be done. One said, 'the station broke the story when bodies were discovered, camped there during the exhumation but also went the extra mile to do stories of testimonials by former members, relatives, neighbors, follow up stories on the stories on the same as well as court proceedings.' This was evident when during Jeff Koinange's talk show on religion and cult, the whistle blower of the cult Francis Mwate, Rosalyn Asenga who was a relative to 6 missing children and Brenda a former member of the shakahola cult were invited to give their accounts. Also in the exclusive story on the shakahola camp, accounts of the cult unknown to the public were revealed. For instance, the bible verses and the owner's names written on them. It would confirm the whereabouts of the individual to the public. However one participant stated that citizen TV covered the breaking story very well for more than a month but then eased off. 'I believe more stories can be told about the cult, the aftermath of the exhumation and the fate of the survivors and their families.'

4.3.3 Cult members' reaction to shakahola story

Through the survey conducted, all the participants unanimously agreed that the cult members were negative towards media attention. Some participants termed the group as defiant and secretive while others said the group was angry, aggressive and hostile towards the media. Seeking to find out how this reaction affected the coverage of the story, some of the opinion that the hatred towards media resulted in the members retaining all information useful to the public in regards to the cult. They were mean with information which resulted in the reporters not getting

adequate information about the cult.in the break of the story in April. Citizen TV had multiple stories and news talk shows on the shakahola story, trying to unearth the mystery. In these stories, the journalists had more questions than answers. Some of the questions that were raised in the conversations were: was this leader acting alone? Where were the authorities when the atrocities were being committed? Who owned the chakama ranch where this cult leader inhabited with his followers? How did he acquire the land? Why were missing persons not reported early enough? During one of the conversations with panelists on the day break show, Gilgil MP Martha Wangari noted that the reason structure of families was questionable in our society is because family members and relatives went missing for months and even years, yet no report was made to the authorities for their search.

On hostility, one of the participants expressed the following: "The hostility and suspicion of the media meant that there was not as much investigative reporting as was necessary. This could be attributed to the fact that Citizen TV crew needed protection to access the shakahola fields.' Some of the leader's hand men were captured armed with clubs and machetes.

4.3.4What makes the shakahola cult story newsworthy.

Findings in this section were that all participants categorized the story as public interest. One participant said the following 'it is mind boggling to have a group of people so submissive to the teachings of a radical cult leader who commands members to absurd activities, yet they follow without question. That pricks the curiosity of the newsroom and public.' This question was raised in the newsrooms, in social media platforms and even social gatherings. What baffled the public was how ordinary looking the leader was, then how, they thought, could this below average man have swayed hundreds of people to their graves. The incident of his arrest captured on TV led to the birth of the phrase 'kitawaramba' which is now used across the country to

loosely translate to ‘ you will regret it’. Even more interesting to the public was the fact that some of the followers were educated with handsomely paying jobs. Another participant added, ‘people in cults are mostly from the middle to very poor class of citizenry in the country. In Kenya most people are in this economic group and hence statistically in a group of ten people, one might be in a cult or likely to join one. Religion is also very important as politicians also tend to use religion to advance their agenda,’ Kenya is considered conservative country hence anything that goes against the teachings of established religions will spark emotions among the public. Other participants noted that such stories assist in creating public awareness on instances where they may be exposed to harm in the guise of religion.

The shakahola cult story gained a lot of public interest. one of the participants noted that shakahola story by citizen TV raised a lot of questions about the cult and the heinous crimes that were committed right under everyone's nose. Another participant mentioned that the coverage of the shakahola story led to accountability from the government. Interior cabinet secretary Kithure Kindiki was seen visiting the shakahola fields 2 weeks after the cult was discovered. Some of the mentioned interventions were ‘the church was closed, DNA tests were done to identify the bodies, regulation of churches was proposed and a senate ad-hoc committee was formed to probe the matter.’

4.3.5 Factors to consider when working on a shakahola cult story.

From the survey, the study found that there were factors to consider when working on shakahola cult stories. Some are as follows: - a) objectivity b) religious sensitivities c) factuality of story d) protection of source of story e) security of journalists. f) Legal and ethical considerations. g) Research. The participants noted that considering these factors will result in the delivery of a well-balanced story that is informative and impactful.

Shakahola forest is located in a remote area in Kilifi County. In an effort to find out other challenges that might have affected the coverage of the shakahola story, 11 participants out of 16 indicated challenges. Some of the mentioned are as follows a) lack of information on the cult, resentment from members, psychological trauma from being exposed to the sight of dead bodies and people frail from starvation, extreme weather conditions in the forest. one had to work under the scorching heat for a long period of time, inaccessible roads to the forest which forced the team to cover long distance on foot and fear for their lives as the forest had fasting supervisors armed with crude weapons.

4.4 Discussions of findings.

This section discusses the implications of the findings of the study. The discussion is based on the research objectives that this study sought to answer. The objectives are as follows: -i) analyze the messaging and content of the shakahola story. ii) Evaluate depth and the prominence given to shakahola cult stories. iii) To find out the perception and knowledge of journalists/editors on cults. The theoretical framework of this story was based on the first and second level agenda setting theory. The study focused on agenda setting in shakahola stories through using particular frames in shaping the story in order to influence public opinion.

4.4.1 Discussions of findings on messaging and content of the shakahola story by citizen TV.

The first objective of this study was to analyze the messaging and content of the shakahola story covered by citizen TV. The tables presented above show that although a significant number of stories had a negative tone, 49 stories either had a mixed tone or played it safe by giving a neutral coverage of the story. To put this to perspective, the shakahola cult story was the first of

its kind to happen in the history of Kenya. What sets it apart from other cults is the magnitude of the atrocities committed by the cult leader and his supervisors. More than 500 followers were starved to death, some even strangled when they seemed not to die. Such a story ought to entirely have a negative tone of the coverage. However, the findings in the study imply that even though the intention of the TV station was genuine, the neutral coverage gave the impression that journalists first priority was to protect the interest of the media station.

4.4.1.1 Descriptors for the story, cult leader and victims.

This study is partly shaped by the second level agenda setting theory. Weaver (2007 pg. 142) citing (McCombs 2005, Ghanem 1997) posits that whereas first level agenda setting is focused on the perceived importance of issues, second level examines the salience of attributes of the issues. He further states that the perspectives and frames journalists employ draw attention to certain attributes of the objects of news coverage. Translating this explanation to the coverage of shakahola cult story by citizen TV, the story being perceived as public interest, it is important for the journalists to draw attention to certain attributes within the story to emphasize on its importance. Also, using negative attributes to cover the cult story will highlight the negative aspect of the story to the public, ultimately influencing public opinion towards the shakahola story. As seen in the above table, the study found out that stories in citizen TV used more neutral attributes in the shakahola stories. For instance, in the table with attributes of the story, the descriptors death, survivor and rescue were mostly used to convey straight news of the state activities from the shakahola forest. More negative attributes to describe the cult such as crime,

horror, massacre, genocide, crisis, tragedy and mass murder were used in less than 12% of the articles each. Similarly, the table above gives evidence that neutral attributes such as cult leader, controversial leader and his name were mostly used to address the cult leader. In fact, the name of the leader was used in approximately half of the total number of stories (48.9%). Additionally, negative descriptors such as extremist, rogue and errant were used in less than 5% of the total number of stories. This then implies that citizen TV's coverage did not amplify the negative traits of the cult leader as much as they should. Consequently this could result in the public developing tolerance towards the cult leader. The result of such can be seen in the adoption of the 'kitawaramba' phrase during the uncovering of the shakahola story.

The findings on traits used for the members were that neutral terms such as follower was mostly used in the stories, with 26 percent the total number of articles using the word. This could translate to the perception of the journalist that the members are those who choose their own fate. Words that could arouse sympathy for the members such as vulnerable, abused, manipulated and brainwashed were used in less than 2 percent of the total stories covered.

4.4.2 Discussions of the prominence and depth given to the shakahola story.

From the findings on the TV content analysis, prominence and depth of the shakahola story could be described as sufficient. By use of the cult name or the name leader of the cult in the title of the story, it gained more prominence. This is because the viewer would automatically be drawn to the story because they knew what the story was about before actually viewing it. The study found that 67.4 % of the 92 stories on shakahola mentioned either the cult or the cult leader in their title. For instance, titles such as 'inside the shakahola camp' or 'Mackenzie: Profile of Darkness' were more prominent than a title that read 'A family in Agony.'

In terms of the placement of shakahola cult stories, the study found that the stories were not adequately placed in the running order to highlight their prominence. 21 of the 92 stories appeared as the first stories of the day while 20 stories appeared in positions two and three. A combination of the 3 top positions do not even make up half of the total number of stories. This shows that for a story with that magnitude, citizen TV did not cover the story with the prominence it deserves.

On the format and the length of the stories, these two frames were found to go hand in hand in that, the format used to cover the story determined the length of the story. In this section, the study found out that out of the 92 stories on shakahola, 72(78.3%) were in a package format. Consequently, 78.3 percent of the stories were run for more than three minutes. This implies that the TV station put its focus into covering more elaborative stories for the viewers. The findings therefore indicate that the prominence given to the shakahola story was insufficient.

4.4.3 Discussion of findings on a survey with reporters/editors.

The study found out that all the participants had a negative connotation towards cultism by how they described it. Aside from professionalism, it is innate for any individual brought up in an established set of beliefs, to develop intolerance towards a group following unconventional teachings. However, citizen TV managed to employ objectivity in the coverage of shakahola story, which was the aim as was disclosed by one of the senior editors at the station. Additionally, all the participants mentioned the public interest element of the cult story. It implied that they had a duty to inform the masses of the happenings in shakahola so as to create awareness of cults.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.

5.1 Summary

The study found that enough coverage was not given to the shakahola story. In the span of 3 months (93 days) focused on by the researcher, the shakahola cult story was covered for 50 days. Also, the tone of the stories were mostly neutral. The stories that had negative traits of the leader like 'evil' 'culprit' 'terrorist' among others were used by the upsounds included in the story and not the reporters. Same case in the news talk shows. The negative words were used by the guests of the show. During the News Gang news analysis segment, the presenters refrained from using negative attributes to refer to the story or the leader. Straight facts from the developments of the shakahola story were stated.

For the level of prominence, the study found out that prominence given to the shakahola story was not enough from the use of the name of the cult in the title to the placement of the stories in

the running order. The study however found out that prominence was given to the format and the lengths of the stories.

Findings from the survey suggest that journalists/ editors have a negative connotation towards the shakahola cult. Reason given for this perception is the atrocities committed by the group that goes opposite of the teachings of established religions. Even with that, journalists/ editors from citizen TV strived to cover the shakahola stories with objectivity.

5.2 Conclusions

One of the challenges faced by journalists and media houses in general is the level of attention ought to be given in public interest stories such as the one in this study. Because of the sensitivity of the topic, there arises the question of balancing sensationalism and responsible storytelling. In some cases, there have been instances where media coverage on issues like cultism accelerated the practice instead of contributing to the fight against it. A study by Michael Jetter (April 2017) confirms this observation on extreme religious cults. In his study, he concludes that coverage of Al Qaeda by international news accelerated their violent activities. Similarly, (Appah et al. (Oct, 2021) expressed the same sentiments in their article. In this retrospect, the study can conclude that due to the sensitivity around the topic of religion and cultism, the shakahola story did not receive as much coverage as was attainable.

The study also concludes that the shakahola stories were not covered with much prominence for such a heavy story. Although the titles were capturing a lot of stories did not make it to the top three positions on the news.

The study also concludes that ownership of the media may have influenced how the shakahola story was covered. In order not to fall into legal pitfalls with the government, the media house decided to take the interest of the company as priority.

5.3 Recommendations.

The researcher acknowledges that media is only one part of the pie chart vis a vis contribution to the fight against cultism in Kenya. Other stakeholders that can benefit from the recommendations include the government, educational institutions and religious associations.

5.3.1 To the government of Kenya.

It is without any doubt that no reforms will be made on the issue of cultism if there is no structure that criminalizes it to begin with. Article 32 (2) of the Kenyan constitution states that ‘every person has the right, either individually or in community with others, publicly or privately, to manifest any religion or belief through worship, practice, teachings or observance of a day of worship.’ The government should make amendments on this article of the constitution. By criminalizing the act, other stakeholders like the media would know how to deal with the issue and call it as is rather than tiptoeing around it.

The government should set up a national helpline for cultic related issues. Just like child abuse, human trafficking helplines seen around the world, this will nab any cultic activity before its full manifestation.

Also, the government should come up with social awareness campaigns in liaison with media channels like citizen TV, to spread awareness on the dangers of cultism to the public whilst targeting the children. Just like the ‘osha mikono’ Covid -19 campaign that targeted school going

children. The information was child friendly and consequently packed them with information that assisted in the prevention of covid-19. Some of the topics to be covered in the campaign can be what a cult is, signs that show one is involved in a cult, when to call the helpline.

5.3.2 To educational institutions.

Schools should employ counselors from primary school level to tertiary institutions. The counselors and the schools should prioritize the safety of the children and work hand in hand with local authorities.

5.3.3 To Citizen TV.

The study has observed inadequate coverage and prominence given to the shakahola cult story. Where coverage and prominence were given, the study found that new developments on the shakahola story were given either through government, court proceedings and relatives of victims. Therefore the researcher recommends citizen television do more investigative stories on the shakahola cult story. Some of the sources sought for could be more ex-members of the cult, the cult from a child's perspective while putting all ethical issues into consideration.

The researcher also recommends the creation of kids cartoons filled with information on cultism as a way to create awareness among children. The cartoon could be in a story, an educational piece or a song.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

AFP (April 2023) ‘Abusing the Scripture’: The Rise of Kenya’s Christian cults.

Paul j. Olson (March, 2006) The Public Perception of “Cults” and “New Religions”.

Onete U. Onete (July, 2020) Cultism- Associated Insecurity and the Academic Achievement of the Nigerian Student cross river state experience.

Eileen Barker (2010) The Cult as a Social Problem.

Stuart a. Wright (December 1997) media coverage of unconventional religion: any “good news” for minority faiths?

Lewis o. Odhiambo (1991) Development Journalism in Africa: Capitulation of the Fourth Estate?

Steve Biko (April 2023) The Menace of Cultism in Kenya: Understanding its Root, Effects, and Solutions through Biblical Wisdom.

Pradeep Kumar Dwivedi, Ingita Pandey (August 2013) Role of Media in Social Awareness.

Suzanne Newcombe (November 2014) Cults, History, Beliefs and Practices.

Walter Lippmann, Michael Curtis (1998) Public Opinion.

Ekeanyanwu Nnamdi Tobechunkwu, Angela Igbinoba (May 2007) The Media and Cultism in Nigerian Higher Institutions of Learning: A Study of Coverage, Treatment and Relevance.

Victor, Jeffrey S. (1998) Moral Panics and the Social construction of Deviant Behavior: A Theory and Application to the Case of Ritual Child Abuse.

Carl Ratner (January 2005) social constructionism as cultism.

Louis Hughes (1993) Cults and Cultism.

Nation Africa (October 2019) The Underworld of Cultism in Kenya and The World.

Morgane Rousselet, Olivier Duretete, Jean-Benoit Hardouin, Marie Grall-Bronnec (November 2017) cult membership: what factors contribute to joining or leaving?

John Paul Healy (2010) yearning to belong.

Saul McLeod (June 2023) Bandura's bobo doll experiment on social learning.

Kenya law reform commission: constitution of Kenya; freedom of the media.

Article 19 (October 2015) Kenya: unconstitutional attempt to gag media by parliament.

David Ohito, Wilfred Ayaga (2016) attempts to gag media in Kenya on the rise.

James Forole Jarso (2010) the media and the anti-corruption crusade in Kenya: weighing the achievements, challenges and prospects.

Constitution of Kenya (2010).

Albert Bandura (1971) social learning theory.

Mbuthia Winnie Wairimu (2013) perceived factors influencing deviant behavior among the youth in Njathaini community, Nairobi Kenya.

Geoffery Korir K, Justin Nabushawo, (2021) An Overview of Kenya's media historical developments: legacy of Persistent threats and impediments.

Margaret Cissel (2012) Media Framing: A Comparative Content Analysis on Mainstream and Alternative News Coverage of Occupy Wall Street.

Nandi O.M Jacob (1993) The Jerusalem Church of Christ: A Prophet-Healing Independent Church in Kenya.

Ahmad Kainuwa, Najeemah Bintu Mohammad Yusuf (October 2013) Influence of Socio-Economic and Educational Background of Parents on Their Children's Education in Nigeria.

Ilusanya Gboyega (2005) Cultism and Violent Behaviours in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria.

Ogola George (2017) Popular Media in Kenya history: Fiction and Newspapers as Political Actors.

Kola Babarinde, Oni A. Adesoji (2005) Effects of Students' Cults on Nigeria's Educational system.

James A. Beckford, Melanie A. Cole (1988) British and American Responses to New Religious Movements.

Peter Wanyande (1995) Mass Media- State Relations in Post- Colonial Kenya.

Mbeke Peter Oriare (2010) Mass Media in Kenya: Systems and Practice.

Fredrick Ogenga(2008) The role of the Kenyan Media in the 2007 Elections.

Wilson Ugangu (2012) Normative Media Theory and the Rethinking of the Role of the Kenyan Media in a Changing Social Economic Context.

Media council of Kenya (February 2023) State of Kenya's Media in 2022.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

James T. Richardson (1997) Journalists' Attitudes Towards New Religious Movements.

Hope Burmester (September 2020) The Representation of Cults New Religious Movements in Media.

Barend van Driel, James T. Richardson (September 1988) Print Media Coverage of New Religious Movements: A Longitudinal Study.

James T. Richardson, Massimo Introvigne (June 2007) New Religious Movements, Counter Movements, Moral Panics and the Media.

Lonnie F. Griffin (2004) An Analysis of Print Media Reporting of Established Religions and New Religious Movements.

Tina Rodia (August 29 2019) Is it a Cult or a New Religious Movement?

Eileen Barker (1986) Religious movements : Cult and Anti-cult since Jonestown.

Nancy Nielson (1996) Religion and the Global Media: Improving a Strained Relationship.

Roderick P. Hart, Kathleen J. Turner , Ralph E. Knupp (1980) Religion & The rhetoric of the Mass Media.

Sanjoy Datta (Sept 2018) Sampling Methods.

Hamed Taherdoost (Jan 2016) Sampling Methods in Research Methodology: How to Choose a Sampling Technique for Research.

Todd D. Jick (Dec 1979) Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Triangulation in Action.

Patricia Fusch, Gene E Fusch (Jan 2018) Denzin's Paradigm Shift: Revisiting Triangulation in Qualitative Research.

R. Burke Johnson, Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie, Lisa Turner (April 2007): Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research: Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1,112-133.

Maingi Sammy Muthoga (May 2014) the Effect of the Mungiki sect on Access to Education in Nyeri county, Kenya.

Rob Timans, Paul Wouters & Johan Heilbron (May 2019) Mixed Methods Research: What it is and What it Could Be.

Stemler Steve (June, 2006) An Introduction to Content Analysis. Eric Digestion.

Klaus Krippendorff (2004) Content Analysis: An introduction to its Methodology.

Kimberly A. Neuendorf (2002) The Content Analysis Guidebook.

John W. Creswell, J. David Creswell (2018) Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed methods Approaches.

Thomas E. Nelson, Rosalee A. Clawson, Zoe M. Oxley (Sept 1997) Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and its Effect on Tolerance.

Hope Burmeister (2020) The Representation of Cults/ New Religious Movements in the Media.

Sasha Blakeley Cult: Characteristics & Behavior.

Appah, Suoyo Kelvin, Odoudo Aniefiok j., Ochonogor Christopher I. (Oct 5, 2021) Coverage of Cult Related Killings in South-South, Nigerian Newspapers.

Queen Nneka Alikor (Aug 2023) Newspaper Reportage of Cult Related Activities in Emohua Local Government Area of River State.

Angie Osarieme (May 2007) Media and Cultism.

Otikor Samuel (2002) Residents' Perception of Media Coverage of Youth Restiveness and Cult Killings in Andoni.

The Southern Poverty Law Centre (2011) Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism and Violence.

James Brownsell (Mar 2013) Kenyan voters and the ICC Factor.

Michael Jetter (April 2017) Terrorism and the Media: The Effect of US Television Coverage on Al-Qaeda Attacks.

Whit Denton (2018) The Culture of Jim Jones: An Analysis of Reactions to Jonestown Tragedy.

Paul Harris J(Jan,17,2000) Mau Mau Returns to Kenya.

Pan African News Agency (Sept,3,2000) Kenyan Churches Alarmed Spread of ‘Mungiki’ Sect.

Mwangi Mwiruri (28, June 2021) Kenya: Mungiki Gang Forcing Central Women to Undergo FGM.

Chike Emma Onwe& Ezeali Chika Thonia(2018) The Mass Media in the Fight Against Cultism in Selected Secondary Schools in Abakaliki Urban of Ebonyi State.

Adewale Rotimi (2005) Violence in the Citadel: The Menace of Secret Cults in the Nigerian Universities.

David H. Weaver (2007) : Thoughts on Agenda Setting, Framing and Priming.

Lauren Thomas(June 22,2023) Cross Sectional Study: Definition, Uses and Examples.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: TV CONTENT ANALYSIS CODE SHEET

Serial Number... ..

SECTION A: DESCRIPTION

1. Date of the aired story (day/month/year).

.....

2. What time of the day aired.

.....
3. Name of the journalist.

.....

4. Sex of the journalist.

.....

5. Title of the story.

.....

6. Type of story.

- i. News story.....
- ii. Feature story.....
- iii. News analysis.....
- iv. Other (specify).....

SECTION B: MEASURING THE PROMINENCE OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF SHAKAHOLA STORY.

7. What number did it appear on the running order? Indicate the number.

.....

8. How was the story packaged?

i. Package.....

ii. Natsup.....

iii. Nats.....

9. For how long did the story run? Indicate the duration.....

SECTION C: MEASURING TONE OF THE COVERAGE.

10. What is the tone of the story?

i. Positive.....

ii. Mixed

iii. Neutral.....

iv. Negative.....

11. Does the story mention any of these public interest issues? Tick YES or NO.

WORD	YES	NO	No. of mentions
i. Corruption			
ii. Constitution			
iii. Poverty			
iv. Crime			
v. Human rights.			

vi. Unemployment			
vii. Terrorism			
Viii. Radicalisation			
ix. Environment			
x. Survivor.			
xi. Death			
xii. Rescue			
xiii. Other (specify).			

12. Does the story use any of these words to address the leader Mackenzie? Tick YES or NO.

WORD	YES	NO	No. of mention
I. Man of God			
ii. Trusted			
iii. Evil			
iv. Controversial			
v. Opportunist			
vii. Criminal			
viii. Other			

13. Does the story use the following words to describe the shakahola cult members? Tick YES or NO on the table.

WORD	YES	NO
i.Victim		
ii.Naïve		
iii.Abused		
iv.Brainwashed		
v.Coerced		
vi. Destructive		
vii.Other (specify).		

14. Any other observations made on the coverage of shakahola cult story.

3. How do you perceive cult groups? Tick against your answer.

Good	Okay	indifferent	Controversial	Evil

ii) Briefly explain your answer above.

4. How would you describe Citizen TV's coverage of the shakahola cult story? Tick against your answer.

Extensive	Sufficient	More could be done.	Inadequate	Poor

ii) Briefly explain your answer above.

5. How have shakahola cult members reacted to the media?

6. How has that affected how the shakahola cult story was covered?

7. What makes cult stories 'attractive' to citizen TV? Expound on your answer as much as you can.

8. From experience, has coverage on the shakahola story garnered public interest? Tick YES or NO below.

i. YES.....

ii. NO.....

8b) Briefly explain your answer above.

9. Are there factors to consider when working on a cult story? List as many as you can.

10. How does this affect how you would want to convey the story?

11. Are there challenges you faced when working on a shakahola story? Tick YES or NO.

YES.....

NO.....

b) If YES, please list as many as you can.

Appendix 3

List of shakahola stories viewed from 17th March- 18th June 2023.

CITIZEN TV

DATE AIRED	NAME OF REPORTER/PRESENTER	TITLE OF STORY
23-March	Brenda Wanga	Malindi 'cult' unearthed.
14 April	Steven Letoo	Cult in Malindi
17 April	Martin Munene	7 people rescued from controversial religious cult
19 April	1.Chemutai Goin	1.Malindi cult graves

	2.Lilian Muli	2.Tracing cult victims
20 April	Serfine Achieng	12 more graves discovered
21 April	1.Serfine Achieng 2.Ben Kirui	1.Malindi bodies exhumed 2.Malindi cult victims
22 April	1.Hassan Mugambi 2.Serfine Achieng	1. How did we get here? 2.Malindi cult mass graves
23 April	1.Chemutai Goin 2.Brenda Wang	1.Kilifi cult puzzle 2.Shakahola:It is a massacre
24 April	1.Sam Gituku 2 Mashirima Kapombe 3.Trevor Ombija 4.Brenda Wang 5.Ayub Abdikadir 6.Nimrod Taabu	1.Day break; Kilifi cult puzzle 2.Agony of families 3.Kenyans cult moment 4.Shakahola mass murder 5.Ruto: Mackenzie a terrorist 6.Shakahola: Where was state?
25 April	1.Hassan Mugambi 2.Serfine Achieng 3.Waihiga Mwaura	1. Kindiki: It is a genocide! 2. 90 bodies and counting 3. Shakahola, who was

	<p>4.Brenda Wanga</p> <p>5.Sam Gituku</p> <p>6.Waihiga Mwaura</p>	<p>home?</p> <p>4.Mackenzie: profile of darkness</p> <p>5.Day break: Shakahola horror</p> <p>6.Shakahola:Mps outrage</p>
26 April	<p>1.Mary Muoki</p> <p>2.Hassan Mugambi</p> <p>3.Victoria Rubadiri</p> <p>4.Laura Otieno</p> <p>5.Brenda Wanga</p>	<p>1.Rescued from the cult</p> <p>2.Shakahola deaths puzzle</p> <p>3. Shakahola media blackout.</p> <p>4. Shakahola cult victims.</p> <p>5. Horrors of shakahola.</p>
27 April	<p>1.Mary Muoki</p> <p>2.Trevor Ombija</p> <p>3. Yvonne Okwara, Jamila Mohamed, Sam Gituku &</p>	<p>1.Shakahola deaths at 109</p> <p>2. State of the nation: Shakahola massacre: Did security agencies sleep on the job?</p> <p>3.News gang : Shakahola death and reflections</p>

	Linus Kaikai. 4.Yvonne Okwara 5.Jeff Koinange 6.Brenda Wanga	4.Shakahola deaths probe 5.Religion, cults and death 6. Police ignored cult reports?
28 April	1.Brenda Wanga 2.Serfine Achieng	1. Shakahola: missing or dead? 2.Kindiki purges Kilifi police
29 April	1.Serfine Achieng 2.Francis Mtalaki 3.Brenda Wanga 4.Hassan Mugambi	1. 110 bodies and counting 2.Shakahola to be cleansed 3.A gravedigger's tale 4.Inside shakahola graves
30 April	Francis Mtalaki	Shakahola mass murder probe
2 may	1.Francis Mtalaki 2.Serfine Achieng	1.Shakahola burial permit 2.Mackenzie, Ezekiel

	<p>3.Brenda Wanga</p> <p>4.Victoria Rubadiri</p>	<p>detained</p> <p>3.Murder in shakahola forest</p> <p>4. 11 family members missing</p>
3 may	<p>1.Jeff Koinange</p> <p>2.Brenda Wanga</p> <p>3.Victoria Rubadiri</p>	<p>1.Shakahola: clergy slam government.</p> <p>2.Shakahola autopsy shockers</p> <p>3.Shakahola death squads</p>
4 may	<p>1.Francis Mtalaki</p> <p>2.Ben Kirui</p>	<p>1.Village that rejected Mackenzie</p> <p>2.Missing shakahola children</p>
5 may	<p>1.Serfine Achieng</p> <p>2.Francis Mtalaki</p>	<p>1.Shakahola inquiry commission</p> <p>2.Shakahola cult deaths</p>
6 may	<p>1.Hassan Mugambi</p> <p>2.Francis Mtalaki</p> <p>3.Maryanne Nyambura</p>	<p>1.Raila opposes inquiry commission</p> <p>2.Shakahola: Agony of families</p> <p>3.Catholics: Don't demonize religion</p>

7 may	1.Francis Mtalaki 2.Chemutai Goin	1.Son defends Mackenzie 2.Kindiki eyes rogue pastors
8 may	Chemutai Goin	Azimio challenges shakahola inquiry
9 may	1.Steven Letoo 2.Chemutai Goin	1.Shakahola: 21 more bodies exhumed 2.An inquiry and a taskforce
10 may	1.Gatete Njoroge 2.Francis Mtalaki	1.State admits failure 2. 12 more bodies from shakahola
11 may	Francis Mtalaki	Shakahola: 5 more bodies exhumed
12 may	1.Francis Mtalaki 2.Trevor Ombija	1,Shakahola: 29 more bodies exhumed 2.Gachagua defends churches
13 may	Francis Mtalaki	Shakahola flow of bodies
14 may	Francis Mtalaki	9 more bodies rescued in shakahola
15 may	Francis Mtalaki	Mackenzie's confession
16 may	Hassan Mugambi	Shakahola: 3 men rescued
17 may	Hassan Mugambi	Horror is shakahola
18 may	Yvonne Okwara	Malindi cult horror
20 may	Steven Letoo	The shakahola search

22 may	Trevor Ombija	Shakahola inquiry setback
25 may	Brenda Wanga	Shakahola curfew extended
26 may	1.Mary Muoki 2.Lilian Muli	1.Chilling shakahola tales 2.Shakahola 2 nd phase autopsies
	Francis Mtalaki	How Mackenzie got land
28 may	Hassan Mugambi	Inside shakahola death camps
29 may	Francis Mtalaki	Breaks on shakahola commission
30 may	Yvonne Okwara	Shakahola 2 nd phase autopsies
1 June	Francis Mtalaki	Shakahola land battle
2 June	Lilian Muli	Shakahola deaths probe
3 June	Hassan Mugambi	Shakahola deaths probe
6 June	Yvonne Okwara	Shakahola graves; 9 bodies exhumed
9 June	1.Francis Mtalaki 2.Brenda Wanga	1.Shakahola: 10 bodies exhumed 2.Shakahola death probe
10 June	Francis Mtalaki	More horror in shakahola
13 June	Francis Mtalaki	Shakahola death toll rises
14 June	Jeff Koinange	Starving shakahola cult members

16 June	Lilian Muli	Shakahola: 10 more bodies exhumed
18 June	Martin Munene	More mass graves in shakahola