

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

**AN ASSESSMENT OF COVERAGE OF TRIBAL
CLASHES IN KENYA BY THE DAILY NATION: A
CASE STUDY OF MOUNT ELGON LAND
CLASHES; APRIL 2006-APRIL 2007.**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to my grandmother, Beldinah Okoth, whose unfathomable charisma continues to inspire many. Even in death, her open and big heart gives me reason I should struggle to inspire others and meet the ideals of life.

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Abstract

Conflict management and peace building in Kenya faces major challenges in both national and regional fronts. Consequently, the National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management (NSCPBCM) recently developed a draft policy framework on conflict management.

The need for a policy arose from the fact that strategic co-ordination among key actors has been lacking in conflict management and peace building. In such initiatives, the role of the media in conflict situation has often come under sharp focus. Media institutions have been singled out as critical players in the entire equation. The media is regarded by itself and those who consume it as a powerful tool for effecting and speeding up processes of social change.

This research sought to critically examine some of the factors behind Kenya's print media's way of handling conflict stories, with respect to the Mt Elgon land and tribal clashes. The research specific objectives included investigating the manner in which stories on Mt Elgon tribal and land clashes were treated, the actual trends in conflict reporting, key conflict issues covered and subsequently determining how the media, as an intervention tool and an agent of change, impacts on communities' social relations. This was necessary towards determining the actual causes of the skirmishes and the role the media played through coverage.

The research found out that the pattern of coverage depended only on assigned jobs of covering formal events. The journalists and correspondents showed greater innovation in initiating their own stories and features. The stories on Mt Elgon tribal and land clashes, however, were hardly carried on the front page. This implies that the coverage was less prominent and mainly episodic.

Coverage handwork of local journalists' was constructive and informative. It was also established that the Provincial Administration and Government received by far most of the blame for either fueling or failing to control the clashes, followed by Internal Security ministry, politicians and private individual/family/groups, respectively.

The important finding of this study was that there was significant variation in the trend and pattern of conflict coverage. As data clearly shows, the Daily Nation missed some important events as it has relied more on its own staff for the Mt Elgon clashes stories who did not routinely cover the conflict as news, and did not have regular columns on the conflict. It is of prime importance that the mass media concentrates on efforts to create awareness about effects of such internal conflicts and their potentially multi faceted impacts on the society. The quality of conflict coverage as established in this study points to the need for enhanced technical training among Kenyan journalists. The training should empower them to not only specialise in fields such as conflict and conflict resolution, but also to handle complex stories more competently. That is, efforts to improve the skills amid professional status of Kenyan journalists need intensification as this society becomes more complex and diversified.

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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

CONFLICT	A struggle over values and/or resources in which the aim of the opponent is to neutralise, injure or eliminate the rival. It is normally a result of conflicting views, beliefs, interests and perceptions.
MEDIA	The various channels of communications. In this case, a combination of mass communication channels, mostly mechanical, such as newspapers, radio, television, film among others.
WAR	A conflict involving organised use of weapons and physical force by states or other large-scale groups.
TERRORISM	A strategy of using violence, or threat of violence targeted at non-combatants to generate fear, cause disruption, and ultimately, to bring about compliance with specific political, religious, ideological, and personal demands.
EDITORIAL POLICY	Professional guidelines usually written or unwritten, unique to media houses. They define products and inform content, style, perspective of coverage and language use.
SYMBIOTIC	Of a linkage characterised by interdependence in a social or scientific sense.

ACRONYMS

- NSCPBCM - National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management**
- GOK - Government of Kenya**
- CBOs - Community-Based Organisations**
- ASAL - Arid and Semi Arid Lands**
- NEPAD - New Partnership for Africa Development**
- PRSP - Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper**
- ADC - Agricultural Development Corporation**
- SLDF - Sabaot Land Defence Force**
- APFO - Africa Peace Forum**
- MAI - The Media Adversity Institute**
- MCK - Media Council of Kenya**
- IDPs - The Internally Displaced People**
- EMCA - Environmental Management and Coordination Act**

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background information

Tribal and land clashes are not new occurrences in Kenya. Although considered more peaceful than her neighbors, Kenya's history, however, reveals unprecedented internal conflicts, pitting communities. These conflicts - mainly political, economic, land and tribal clashes and lately terrorism - have sent signals that all is not rosy for East Africa's strongest economy. Consequently, stakeholders have mooted various interventions to address conflicts at community, national, regional and international levels. These initiatives include the formation of district peace committees, traditional peace processes and participation in regional peace and security initiatives.

More recently, the National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management (NSCPBCM) developed a draft framework for a policy on conflict management. This was after it emerged that strategic coordination amongst key actors was lacking in conflict management and peace building. It is hoped that the policy and its recommendations will speed up action against all types of conflicts.

Pastoralists in Northern Kenya have borne the brunt of internal conflicts and considerable efforts, which has taken the interventions of a number of stakeholders including the Government of Kenya (GOK), religious organisations and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) (NSCPBCM, 2008).

The resource-based conflicts prevalent in Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASALs) have completely distorted development programmes and eroded civil administration of this vast and rugged countryside.

The dawn of multi-party politics in Kenya in 1991 brought new dimensions to conflict. Communities were divided along political and ideological lines, which gave rise to protracted and institutionalised tribal and land clashes.

In the global front, developments associated with terrorist groups like the simultaneous August 7, 1998 bomb blast in Nairobi and Dar-Es-Salaam and the September 11, 2002 terrorist attack on the Twin Towers of World Trade Centre in New York have behooved scholars and states to think more beyond inter, intra state conflicts and civil strife.

The political climate in Kenya has, however, not been quite responsive to policy demands associated with the fight against terrorism and other forms of conflicts. Apart from the draft Terrorism Bill, there are no existing functional frameworks for conflict management (Cohen, 1972).

What exists is fragmented and uncoordinated policy statements embedded in various thematic policy issues like the ASAL draft policy, Environmental Management and Coordination Act (EMCA), Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSP), the New Partnership for Africa Development strategies, and the Police Act among other documents.

In addition to the fact that there exists no formal policy, other traditional peace initiatives have been implemented with no regard for communities' indigenous systems of governance and natural resource management. More often than not, policy makers are operating under conditions of market failure caused by factors such as droughts, flooding and civil strife.

There is need to look beyond the immediate triggers of conflicts by formulating policies and economic blue prints that seek to improve household incomes, access to education and social services especially in marginalised areas.

The search for appropriate or correct models and policies for socioeconomic development is gaining momentum all over the world as conventional knowledge fails to meet the challenge of satisfying the needs of people living under different political and social systems and levels of organisation. Independent organisations such as policy research institutions and advocacy groups will increasingly play a leading role in shaping the final product of policy formulation and its relevance in the grassroots context.

Conflict management and peace building in Kenya continues to face major challenges in the current national and regional environment. Instability in neighboring states has resulted in increased cross border conflicts, proliferation of small arms and humanitarian crisis resulting in the loss of life and property. Institutional challenges such as the capacity of security forces and other Government agencies to prevent, mitigate and manage conflict remain despite the growing recognition by the Government of the need to

proactively address conflict as a development issue in collaboration with other partners such as civil society, private sector and development partners.

There remains operational challenges manifested in the continuing need to improve effectiveness and impact of ongoing peace building programs particularly the traditional justice systems. The Government needs to realign its priorities and resources to ensure that adequate resources are generated for conflict management and peace building. The structural problems that fuel conflicts must be addressed through the realignment of priorities that recognizes the importance of peace and security in national development.

This research aims to increase understanding on how the media can play a critical role in conflict management. The goal is to prioritise the identification of the gaps in reporting by the media through a rigorous analysis of the trends embraced by Kenya's print media in handling conflict stories. It is hoped that this research will generate debate and form the basis for the development of a concrete professional guideline that will support the development of a rationale on conflict reporting, peace building and conflict management that is viable and sustainable.

1.1.1 Defining Tribal clashes

Tribal clashes, as other forms of terrorism are a type of unconventional warfare designed to weaken or supplant existing political landscapes through capitulation as opposed to direct military action, has its broader influence in the mass media.

The term tribal warfare when generally used denotes a high level meting of orgies of violence, predominantly targeted at causing massive destruction. It is not employed as a synonym for politically motivated violence in general. According to scholars, tribal warfare has five distinguishing characteristics. These salient characteristics include:

- To weaken hated political authority and is premeditated and designed to create a climate of extreme fear;
- Directed at a wider target than the immediate victims;
- Inherently involves attacks on random targets;
- Considered by the society in which it occurs as 'extra-normal', i.e. it violates the norms regulating disputes, protest and dissent; and
- Used primarily, though not exclusively, to influence the political behaviour of Governments, communities or specific social groups (Mafeje, 1971).

1.1.2 Background to Mt Elgon tribal land clashes

The infamous Mount Elgon saga stems from a previous violent eviction of over 3,000 squatters at the Phase 3 of Chepyuk settlement scheme in which hundreds of houses and food granaries were reportedly torched by security forces during eviction, and for reasons that remain unclear. After the evictions, the Government re-settled its perceived supporters on the land as a reward reportedly for having voted in favour of the controversial Wako constitutional draft during the November 2005 constitutional referendum.

According to sources on the ground, after they were ordered to leave, the evictees had nowhere to go. This caused them to engage in acts of lawlessness to survive and ensure

that no one settled in their former land. In fact, they vowed to kill anyone who either cultivated or lived there. “As long as we are landless, anyone allocated our former land would never have the chance to live there,” such were the words of the aggrieved.

According to available documents, the current land dispute started way back in 1965 when the Government moved Elgon Dorobos out of Chepkitale peak of the mountain and settled them at Chepyuk. They, however, sold the same land to the Soy Sabaot and went back to the peak. In 1989, the Government, under orders of the then Western Provincial Commissioner Francis Lekolol carried out a second eviction exercise of the Dorobos out of the Chepkitale peak and converted it into a forest reserve.

To create room for the settlement of the Dorobos, the Soy Sabaots who had allegedly bought land from the Dorobos, previously in the late 60’s and 70’s, were violently evicted to create room for the settlement of their vendors (Dorobos) in a new scheme of Chepyuk Phase 1 and 2. Chepyuk phase 3, Lekolol, had decided, would be left as a forest reserve. However, a group of Sabaot elders led by the then Kanu branch chairman Fred Kapondi Chesebe (now Mt Elgon MP), led a goodwill delegation to the then President Moi’s Kabarak home in 1995 and presented their case of landlessness among the Sabaot community and begged for action (NEMU, 1993).

The former president agreed that the remaining phase 3 in Emai sub-location be a settlement area for the Sabaots and ordered the Director of Settlement to document the squatters and settle them as per their numbers and identity. The settlement exercise referred to by the Sabaots as ‘Moi farm’ delayed for 7 years until 2003. Some newly elected leaders demanded that the acreage be reduced to 2.5 acres each to enable more

people get land, a move elders claimed was a ploy to reward their supporters. People from Terem, Kopsiro, Kapsokwony were brought in and settled, displacing genuine ones at Chepkurkur, Chewongoi, Kubura, Panatega, Kaboryet, Kipsikon, and Huruma numbering over 3,000 people (Nairobi ICJ, 2000).

According to the Government, some 140 people were killed in the bloody skirmishes, among them a civic leader, believed to be among the 'aliens' who were settled as non Chepyuk squatters. The stand-off was protracted. According to Dr Joshua Kwonyike, a senior lecturer at the Moi University's School of Human Resource Development, the deployment of thousands of security personnel in Mt Elgon, by the Government has fuelled more tension in the area.

1.2 Problem statement of the study

That the media is a powerful tool for effecting social change can never be overemphasised. However, recent trend of reporting by sections of the mainstream print media in Kenya has cast a pale shadow on their objectivity in reporting conflicts.

“Alarmist” reporting, as witnessed in some cases, provokes pertinent questions. For instance, whether the media has been doing enough to provide full and objective coverage through which the audience can make informed choices, remains debatable? What this entails is that as a watchdog, the media should give credit where it is due and criticism where appropriate. Lack of informed media coverage on conflict situations has denied the audience chance to meaningfully take part in constructive conflict resolution.

For the purpose of the study, a notion was advanced that the media in Kenya has abdicated its responsibility of objectively informing Kenyans in the event of tribal conflicts. As such, conflict stories are glaringly lopsided. The media is seemingly yet to realise the importance of balanced reporting in such a manner that it can help resolve disagreements. Though it does not set out to reduce conflict, the news media is often the most important channel of communication available to mediators and parties to a conflict. It has the potential to seek to present accurate and impartial news, thereby managing the conflict.

Analysts contend that it is often through good reporting that conflicts are reduced. This, ideally, is the entry point of the media into conflict studies. There is therefore, need to examine the actual trends defining coverage of conflict situations in Kenya by Nation

Media Group's Daily Nation on a case study of its coverage of the Mount Elgon land clashes between April 2006 and April 2007.

1.3 Research questions

The above developments therefore raised four fundamental research questions that formed the subject matter of this study.

1. To what extent has media coverage of tribal and land clashes and particularly the Mount Elgon land clashes been objective?
2. To what extent is the animosity between the affected clans and communities been fuelled by media reports?
3. To what extent do the media have a role in the management of any conflict situation?
4. To what extent is the media in Kenya (in its reportage) an obstacle to peace mediation and resolution of tribal and land clashes?

1.4 General objective of the study

The general objective of the study was to critically examine some of the factors behind this state in Kenya's print media landscape.

1.5 Specific objective of the study

- i) Investigate the manner in which stories on Mt Elgon tribal and land clashes were treated
- ii) Investigate the actual trends in conflict reporting in Kenya.

- iii) Explore key conflict issues covered by Kenya's print media
- iv) Determine how the media, as an intervention tool and an agent of change, impacts on communities' social relations.
- v) Conclusively determine the actual causes of the skirmishes.

1.6 Hypotheses

1. The animosity between affected clans and communities was fueled by media reports.
2. Coverage of the Mt Elgon tribal and land clashes was not objective due to political interference.
3. Stories on the Mt Elgon conflict were sensational due to limited expertise on conflict-sensitive journalism skill

1.7 Theoretical framework

1.7.1 Gatekeepers and Decision-making

The gatekeepers at a newspaper may define news differently than someone else. Though some stories are available always, they may never be considered for publication. In addition, the decision to include a news story depends partly on which section it fits most and its effect on the people working on it or reading that section. Previous definitions of what news is can also contribute to the decision as to what is put into the paper, whether directly or indirectly.

Berkowitz (1990, 1991) studied gate-keeping at television news stations. His 1990 study examined how stories were selected from a pool of other available stories. He focused on three types of stories: planned, event-related stories; non-event stories concerning local issues and trends; and breaking. He also considered the standard news values of conflict, timeliness, proximity, significance and familiarity. Through coding, he found out that non-event or unplanned events were aired most often. Timeliness and significance also factored into the airing of stories. Through qualitative interviews, Berkowitz found that decision-making was done as a group. The group considered the ease of reporting, which deals with expense, time and expertise. The group also said national trends factored into their decisions. Berkowitz concluded that stories were aired for many reasons, and that each was decided on individual merit. Berowitz's 1991 study had similar findings that resource constraints often had as much of an impact on the decision-making process as news judgment did. The same study in a newsroom may have turned out differently. According to Abbott and Brassfield (1989), gatekeepers working in television have more autonomy than gatekeepers at newspapers.

Whitney and Becker (1982) hypothesized that wire editors for news services influenced or set the agenda for news editors at newspapers by the proportions at which they sent stories over the wire (Whitney and Becker, 1982, p. 61). Basically, the categories of stories in each day's wire influenced their decisions. They hypothesized that wire service editors and news editors shared similar news values, but their findings did not demonstrate this. Instead, their findings supported their other hypothesis that news editors chose their news mix in proportion to the ratio of items that appear on the wire. Editors,

the only gatekeepers studied, followed the reference institution and the source's definition of news. This goes back to Shoemaker's levels, because there are a large number of local editors being influenced by a small number of national editors. Gieber had earlier found similar results in his study. He noted that the wording of the news budget, the wire service the editor chose and what the individual favored all factored into the decision-making process. The editors studied all seemed to value providing readers with the top news stories of the day as their primary priority (Gieber, 1960).

Decisions can be affected by news values, constraints and society, among other variables. Are they also affected by gender? Whitlow (1977) studied the difference between male and female gatekeepers' decision about whether to include a news story about a woman. She found that standard news values become less important to male gatekeepers when the subject of the article is female. This also applied to stories dealing with women in general. Some female gatekeepers had the same reaction. Stories related to conflict often were chosen. The conflict stories that were rejected featured women in low conflict situations. The city editor, news editor, sports editor and the women's or family section editor were analyzed for this study (Whitlow, 1977, p. 575). Personal opinion ranked high on the motivation scale in Donohew's (1965) study. Donohew found that the attitude of a newspaper's publisher was correlated with the story's passage through the channel and inclusion into the newspaper. The publishers' attitudes affected the atmosphere of the newspaper. Donohew studied the publisher's attitude on Medicare and the effect it had on Medicare-related news items. He said gate-keeping functions as a form of knowledge

control. In addition, the study did not find a link between the gatekeepers' decisions and community opinion.

Though the previous studies did not find a strong system of shared values among gatekeepers, Epstein (1973) did. Epstein found that newsmen did share similar news values, but that these values sometimes differ from those embraced by their organisations. An organization's values, which tend to be supported by publishers and high-level editors, often take precedence. This relates to Breed (1955), who introduced the concept of newsroom group influence in gatekeepers' decision-making. In his 1985 study, Stempel found that gatekeepers have similar news values depending on the medium within which they work.

In their 1974 study, Davison and Yu found the reporter chooses the subject, but the editor decides if, when and how the story will be used. Both the reporter and editor contemplate the Organisation's standards during the decision-making process. This is similar to what Shoemaker found in her 2001 study. However, in the Davison and Yu study, reporters were influenced by political preferences, especially more so when compared to editors (Davison and Yu, 1974).

In his 1975 study, Janowitz said that journalists perceive themselves as the ones who make the decisions about what their readers, or people in general, need to know. In this study, he formed a different gatekeeping model. His model leans more toward objectivity than subjectivity and deals more with reporters than editors. Janowitz's model paints

journalists as advocates, which requires that they be motivated by different factors when deciding whether to write an article. He said that the advocate personality differs from the personality of a gatekeeper. Unlike Janowitz's study, most studies have relied on editors as the participants. Studies by White (1950), Snider (1967), Bleske (1991), Gieber (1956) and Smith, Tumlin and Henning (1988) all have studied editors. This happens though Chibnall (1977) found that most decisions have been made by the time the editors see a story.

1.8 Justification of the study

Just like any other conflict in the Horn of Africa region, tribal and land clashes in Kenya could turn into protracted ones. The Mt Elgon conflict has so far had, and continues to have, negative consequences on Kenyans as well as the stability and development of the Eastern and Horn of Africa sub-region. It has a lot to do with the country's political structures and ethnic diversity, which is seen as part of a structural conflict process, which has turned violent.

In view of this, the need for a detailed study of peace initiatives in Kenya cannot be over-emphasised. Thus, this study aimed at analysing the roles and contributions of the media in the management of the conflict by examining the manner of reportage on it.

Apart from studying reporting strategies used and their efficacy and the major obstacles encountered, the study will also sensitize policy makers, both local and international, towards coming up with a solution from within the Eastern of Africa sub-region.

Understanding the role of the media in conflict resolution process, will therefore, justify the calls to support the needs expressed by journalists for specialized training on issues such as conflict analysis and reporting among other related areas. This will enable both local and international media practitioners understand and respond better to conflict issues and enhance their role and contribution towards conflict resolutions and peace building.

At the more partisan political level, the ethnic clashes, wherever they have taken place in Kenya, have been instigated by the fear of loss of political power and the consequences that might accompany such as eventuality such as loss of privilege and the patronage that goes with it (Nairobi: KHRC, 1997). In this regard, it has been noted elsewhere that the only distinct pattern that emerges from the ethnic and land clashes is that they appear to be connected to political tension in the body politic (W.R.F February 6,98:8). This is informed by the fact that the Mount Elgon clashes took place when the political atmosphere in the country was highly charged due to external and internal pressure for political pluralism. The findings of this study will give insight into the origin of land clashes and the conflict cycle , therefore the Government and those in authority, will keep alert and take the right measures through relevant policies.

Mediators will not be effective if they lack a comprehensive understanding of the peculiarities, intricacies and evolving dynamics of a conflict. They must have a fine grasp of historical, cultural and political factors and be deeply familiar with the parties, factions

and leaders in conflict. The finding of this study give an insight to such intricate question of the possible causes, who to blame, and suggested solution.

Peacemaking seldom comprises a single activity pursued by a solitary agent. Given the complexity of the enterprise and the variety of tasks that have to be performed, peacemaking should be viewed as a process to which different actors can contribute simultaneously or consecutively. By the fact that media communicate the problem, then the rest of possible actors may follow suit.

1. 9 Scope and limitation of the study

The study was limited to analysis of editorial content that related to Mt. Elgon tribal land clashes in the *Daily Nation* newspapers in the period April 2006 to April 2007. Limitation experienced during the study was mainly financial constraints. There was time limitation on data that is relevant and up to date, and therefore it was necessary to spend more time to investigate what materials exist and are available in this subject area.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Media influence on conflict: An overview

That societies have contended with conflict situations of different magnitudes can never be gainsaid. In response, the societies have similarly mooted ways of resolving them. However, one important aspect that has stood out is the need for effective communication in conflict management. Coverage of conflict issues, observes South Africa's Cape Department of Education coordinator, John Bartlett, has been mystified by the media in its reportage. He points out that the average person in the streets is still in a sense of ignorance regarding the wide array of peace building mechanisms that can be employed to stem deaths and destruction arising from conflicts (Bartlett, 1997).

The grave ramifications of conflict can, however be contained. They can best be corrected by ensuring that the media has the ability to handle conflict stories with civility and objectivity. The media should be educative and informative so that everyone can be involved in conflict resolution. It is on the basis of this fact that the broader influence of terrorism in the modern world is often attributed to the dramatic focus of the mass media when it comes to amplifying feelings of intense fear and anger.

The media may need to go beyond being fact-deliverers to news analysts by providing enough and candid information to create empathy for all sides involved in a conflict. Journalists should avoid simplistic representations of issues by probing further and

verifying their sources in order to uphold the dignity of the media houses they work for and also to take to a higher level, the role of media in peace building (Hovard, 2003).

2.1 Role of the media in conflict resolution

The media, both print and electronic, play and continue to play an important role in conflicts. It can do so by being deeply aware of the fragility of a country's social fabric, of the efforts being expended at unifying a country's polarised and ethnicised politics and more importantly, by objectively reporting conflict incidences candidly as they unfold.

Biased and untrue reporting can breed cynicism and disenchantment about the objectivity of media in matters of conflicts, especially in a polarised society where a section of citizens feel disadvantaged in coverage and publicity. If objective reporting is not taken into account, then the public would interpret this as dereliction of duty by journalists, news editors and media houses.

It is also necessary to note that violence and conflict-related reports have inundated the media. Reports bordering on violence and genocide have caught world attention at the expense of development-based news and commentaries. Unfortunately, the media has tended to embrace such way of thinking. The danger of this is that a nation that readily and avidly subscribes to this type of violence laced media will in the long run sponsor conflict or invent one where none exists.

In Rwanda, it is in record that radio was used to lay the groundwork for genocide in 1994. In Serbia, television was manipulated to stir ethnic tensions prior to civil war. In the

former Soviet republic of Georgia, territorial disputes were exacerbated by the propagation of nationalist mythology in the media. In such situations of misreporting, the ultimate losers are the ordinary people - a whole generation under the influence of canned information, who live in the shadows of the truth. In absence of truth, persistent propaganda reigns supreme and in the end becomes the “truth” because the alternative is missing or deliberately withheld.

On the other hand, the media can play a pivotal role in managing or resolving conflict. First, by acting as a watchdog, the media should blow the whistle on an imminent conflict as an early warning measure. When a suspicious movement of a given community is noticed, the media should alert the security personnel on the same.

Secondly, by heeding the early warnings and sounding the alarm, the media could act as a powerful tool in conflict management and prevention. All conflicts start as misunderstanding or tension between and among a group. If not quickly recognised for what it is or its potential, it can in time explode to engulf a larger section of the community or nation (SID, 2006).

Thirdly, the media should educate the public on the intricacy of a given conflict by highlighting the interests of each of the party to a conflict. For instance, the media should have informed the public that the Garre - Murrule conflict that claimed lives in Mandera district was a question of political supremacy perpetuated by political elites. The scramble for water and grazing resources is secondary to the conflict and an easy scapegoat.

The influence the media has on society can never be over-emphasised. With an increasingly wired society, the media can easily reach over 90 per cent of any national population. Thus any attempts to foster harmony in Kenya and elsewhere will only have a greater impact if it is communicated comprehensively, widely and consistently by the media. It is believed that most attempts to reconstruct societies that continue to make both positive and negative impact on the socio-economic well being of citizens rarely make it to the media (Hovard, 2003).

Reportage of conflict related-subjects falls in the realm of specialised writing. Thus media houses are bound to ensure that there are enough specialist writers in this field to help “demystify” tribal skirmishes, where they have to do with land, livestock or other resources, to the general public. Looking at the kind of reportage that the Daily Nation has engaged in, with regards to tribal and land clashes in Western Kenya will thus be prudent to appreciate the extent to which the local media has either succeeded or failed in objectively reporting conflict with the sensitivity it deserves.

2.3 Media effort in conflict resolution

There have been various efforts aimed at improving the range of conflicts and related issues in the Kenyan media. Both individual media houses-through various distinctive editorial policies and the Ministry of Information and communication have been leading some of these efforts, with a series of consultations being held with the Media Council of Kenya (MCK), especially since the establishment of the self-regulation⁴ policy.

Such efforts notwithstanding, little has been achieved. I intend to review some of the outcomes of deliberations on conflicts reporting at various levels besides the findings of other key researches and publications in regard to clashes in Kenya and the media's involvement. According to statistics of the Kenya Red Cross Society, some 61,762 people have since been displaced following land clashes in Mount Elgon since 2006.

The Internally Displaced People (IDPs) have camped in market areas, villages and with relatives. The clashes have also resulted in the deaths of at least 140 people, while others still nursing injuries in hospital. Some of the IDPs have moved to neighbouring districts of Bungoma, Trans-Nzoia and Busia. Mount Elgon has four divisions, with Cheptais and Kopsiro as the worst affected by the clashes. Hard hit communities are still moving to neighbouring divisions of Kapsokwony and Kaptama.

According to the Red Cross, the area's residents have been left extremely vulnerable as their houses and food stocks burned and their livestock and livelihood threatened. The clashes have caused food shortages in the local markets. The normal livelihood of these people has also been drastically interfered with. Schools have hardly been able to survive owing to massive destruction caused on infrastructure.

Researchers and scholars opine that to effectively manage conflicts, the media's role can never be gainsaid. A roundtable hosted by International Media Support in October 2003 assessed how reporting impacts on war conflict and how it could be improved. Journalists and media trainers from around the globe participated in the roundtable, offering a variety of perspectives and ideas. Among the comments by the participants were: Lena

Slachmuis, director of Studio Ijambo in Burundi said: "One question often raised is 'What do we do with extremist language and views, whether it comes from the Government or from rebel leaders?' The way we deal with it is to report it, with a bit of self-censorship if the language is very provocative. But we make sure to put in a context when this message is married to other voices. We try to find someone with another, more peace-building standpoint. We are not trying to black the strong message out, as it probably will come out some other way, but show other voices too" (Mitchell, 1994),

Siddharth Varadarajan, deputy chief of the national bureau of *The Times* of India spoke about the local media during the outbreak of violence in the Indian province Gujarat in 2002. Many of them played a dubious role, circulating false information and rumours, inciting violence. "This was a violation against Indian law. If a journalist is crossing the line of law, the law has to be applied on that person. It is a little different in a war between two countries when one part is deciding which medium is propaganda."

The Media Adversity Institute (MAI) has published a number of reports on the role of the media in conflict reporting. Journalists intervene in conflict - and in a sense mediate conflict - whether they intend to or not and must therefore be aware of the impact of their reportage. MAI offers insights into difficulties that journalists encounter when interacting with parties to a conflict whether at the local or regional level. In its Conflict reporting project paper for journalists, the institute asserts the need to ensure that journalists embrace fairness in representation of parties to a conflict.

It has developed a new approach to journalism which in many ways strengthens what journalists already do, and raises their awareness about the impact of their reportage.

The institute's trainings borrow from mediation/conflict resolution skills to promote more constructive reportage; it does not aim to transform journalists into mediators. Much of our time is spent on deepening journalists' understanding of conflict, as well as of their own biases and 'frameworks' for reporting.

MAI further contends that journalists have unparalleled access to parties in conflict. It suggests that many 'golden opportunities' are missed for deepening understanding of a conflict and for helping with its management/resolution because journalists don't ask the right questions. It says the right questions are open questions, not closed - i.e. they don't predetermine the answer or they don't elicit a 'yes' or 'no' response. For instance, instead of asking: "Will you go back to the negotiating table on this issue?", ask: "What do you see as the remaining issues to be negotiated?" The institute suggests that journalists-through good interviewing - can help parties to a conflict and themselves and their audiences to:

- Improve understanding of the conflict (its causes, dynamics and definition)
- Better understand operative 'facts', assumptions and perceptions
- Dispel rumour and misconception
- Build relationships and open lines of communication
- Move beyond positions and into interests
- Engage in joint problem solving

Engaging in joint problem solving doesn't mean that the journalists themselves offer solutions although there is no reason that they should not offer proposals on occasions.

According to issue guides published by Media Channel International on reporting conflict, war is journalism's most challenging and stressful environment. War makes and breaks numerous journalistic careers; for every star launched, hundreds of other journalists sweat through post-traumatic stress never to return to the profession.

With minimal access to battlefields and combatants, journalists flock to Government press conferences seeking official information that is hard to distinguish from propaganda.

Pambazuka news, a weekly forum for social justice in Africa indicates that efforts to end the clashes in Mount Elgon may not suffice unless the Government refrains from its "casual" way of handling land as a resource. The issue of land, *Pambazuka* says is a contentious one right across the continent. In Zimbabwe, the Government's land redistribution programme has triggered violence and adversely affected food production. In post-apartheid South Africa land redistribution has been ongoing.

Although some land-claims have been settled, there is still a significant lobby by those who remain landless. In other instances, land clashes have been a result of population growth, environmental degradation and an increased need to rationalize land tenure regimes. Pastoralist and agricultural land-use practices vie for increasingly scarce land.

In Kenya, the Government's centralised control of land distribution and registration has been highly politicized, leading to frequent conflagrations, such as the current one. At independence, the Government assumed control of large tracts of arable land.

Some of these were distributed through settlement schemes which sought to distribute parcels from subsistence farming to those without land. Others were retained by the Government through the parastatal Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) whose purpose was to support the country's agricultural production and through large-scale farming.

2.4 Government, politics and tribal land clashes

The economic declines of the recent years and the subsequent state divestment gave way to selling off of lands previously controlled by Government. In the process, land became an instrument of political patronage, much like the case of Zimbabwe. The common thread linking land conflicts in Kenya is that they tend to flare up at times of intense political activity such as elections. Given the strong influence of ethnicity and clannism in Kenyan politics, it has been convenient for politicians to use land distribution as a bargaining tool or a rallying point.

The self-styled Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) purports to fight for the land rights of the Sabaot community who inhabit the Mount Elgon region in western Kenya. Their campaign of violence has left hundreds dead and thousands more evicted from land that had been allocated by the Government for settlement. This is no departure from the form-book of previous clashes that have been witnessed in Kenya in the last 30 years.

The Government of Kenya is complicit in the violence and terror against its own citizens. There have been accusations of direct or indirect Government involvement in the violence that has plagued the area. This is not the first time that aspersions of this nature

have been cast, especially given the well-orchestrated way in which the present and past attacks have been carried out.

At a more significant level, until such time as Government reviews land policy, the system will remain open to manipulation and exploitation for political gain. A clearly defined land policy will go a long way in poverty eradication by ensuring a means of subsistence. Furthermore, land ownership provides access to credit for the poor.

As long as the current inequalities exist and the economic vulnerability of populations provide a means of control, not only in Kenya, but across the continent, Governments' commitment to human development will be schizophrenic at best. Against the background of all these, the power of the media, is diminished if the knowledge environment in which it finds itself with regards to the clashes does not make allowance for measuring and evaluating the truth or relevance of statements. While it has been noted that the media have relatively greater access to information from various sources, this access is limited by economic factors which impact on resources, and the utility of these resources.

The capacity of the media to communicate information is limited by their own sense of powerlessness with regards to war issues, including them with those who passively have to wait for information to be presented. This diminishes the power of the media to influence policy, and their power to make informed choices about the course of their life (as well as the lives of those they claim social responsibility for) based on knowledge and understanding.

In May 2005, the Africa Peace Forum (APFO) organised a media seminar in Nakuru to train journalists on conflict-sensitive reporting. APF's officials led by Ambassador Bethwel Kiplagat regretted that in as much as the media needed to be empowered to objectively handle conflict stories, certain forces including limited professional capacity was standing in the way.

These are just some of the available literature on the subject we intend to study. More resources will be accessed from relevant sites on the internet.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

Methodology refers to the system of explicit rules and procedures upon which research is based and against which claims of knowledge are evaluated. The rules in turn enables constructive criticism and scientific progress. Through its explicit (public and accessible) methodology provides a framework for replication in this study research. Thus by using logic as the foundation of scientific reasoning methodology, enhances the internal consistency of the findings, hence knowledge. It is not worthy, that a major function of methodology in this study is to help the blind man 'see' the shared common experience (Nachmias and Nachmias (1996).

3.1 Research design

The term research design as imply here refers to the total plan of the study content. The study design that was adopted was content analysis study design with both explanatory and descriptive approaches. The design selected was in the view of the researcher, most appropriate for the case study, given that it is not possible to carry out a true experimental study. Once the sample was selected, and the interviews concluded, the researcher never met the respondents again.

3.2 Content analysis

Content analysis is broadly defined as any technique for making inferences by “objectively” and “systematically” identified characteristics of Articles in the newspaper. Objectivity implies that all sessions must be guided by an explicit set of rules that minimize subjectivity. In other words, content analysis is “information processing” technique in which article information (in this case as regards possible causes and nature of conflict) is “transformed” through objective and “categorization” rules into data that can be summarized and compared.

This means, as a methodological tool in this study research use of content analysis involved making decisions on what categories to be used; what criteria used to decide the content with (word sentences, theme, topic, reference, story etc) hence determining nature reportage.

3.2.1 Sampling procedure for content Analysis

Random selection, which is a precise scientific procedure with nothing haphazard about it, is the key to the sampling process. Given the “scientific goal of generalization”, and the inherent variability of units of analysis”, it is unavoidable in research to use this sampling theory which is a foundation of everyday practices. This Random selection process eliminates the bias in selecting cases in a study research and permits the application of mathematical probability for estimating sample accuracy, thus providing a basis for a representative sample (Babbie, 1989).

A sample of size “n” from an infinite population is random. It consists of independent random variables having the same distribution. In random selection, each element has an equal chance of selection independent of any other event in the selection process. Probability sampling enhances the likelihood of accomplishing this selection process and also provides methods for estimating degree of probable success. Ultimately, the purpose of sampling was to select a set of elements from a “population” in such away that “the description of those elements” (statistics) accurately portray the “parameters” of the total population from which the elements was selected. Prior to sampling one must select the limits of analysis (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1994).

Sampling then begins with the description of the target population – “the collection of units about which one wishes to generalize”. This ensures a complete and correct sampling frame according to Regardless of the direction it takes the statement of a problem boils down to deciding what relationships among what variables, of what units are to be studied. For sampling to be feasible, the target population was defined by objective criteria that clearly indicated its limits of inclusion (Singleton and Bruce, 1999).

Population in this case refers to the total number of Daily Nation Newspapers publications and issues studied between years April 2006 and April 2007. The population size in this study refers to a subject of the whole population (36) that were actually studied and whose characteristics were generalized to the entire population. Samples of 36 issues from the Daily Nation were picked through interval / systematic sampling, for the study period.

Since there are 4 weeks in a month then, April 2006 to April 2007 =12 months

Therefore, if one issue is studied every Monday, then, $1 \times 12 \times 3 = 36$ articles of The Daily Nation each were studied.

3.2.1.1 Interval / systematic sampling

Interval or systematic sampling provided a reason to enable approximation to simple random sampling and was consist of selecting cases from available newspaper issues at a fixed interval, after a random start. Since it was based on equal interval starting with a randomly selected element in the population of the newspaper issues, it was started with a determination of the length of the intervals thus:-

$$\text{Length of interval (K)} = \frac{N}{n}$$

Where: N = population size

n = sample size

In this case $\frac{36}{3} = 12$ Articles studied. per week

3.2.1.2 Content analysis thematic topic and focus

The study intended to examine structural factors of coverage of tribal land clashes in Mt.

Elgon region which included main actor, Main subject or topics covered, Source of article, Origin of article, Prominence, Type of article and Placement

3.3 Data Collection

The researcher collected both qualitative and quantitative data using a coding sheet that depicted the thematic subjects which formed the main research variables.

The qualitative data was collected from secondary data sources, including News reports, particularly from the Daily Nation. The print media was selected for content analysis because of its high level geographical coverage, audience and distribution. Other source of secondary data included journals, publications from conferences/ meetings and reports from institutions involved in conflict and peace building issues. The secondary sources also comprised of reviews of other people's research in this area.

The study also examined other sources of data that are not necessarily related to Mt Elgon conflict, but which would make a useful contribution to the research. The related stories were useful in providing a wider and more comprehensive view of the dimension of the coverage by the media.

Overall, the review of literature highlighted the relevance and importance of previous existing studies related to the conflict causes, nature, cycle and possible mitigation measures.

3.4 Data Analysis

The content of newspaper reports about the conflict identify were analysed in regard to the thematic topics readily mention above.

3.5 Potential Threats to validity

The content analysis, as a study design, controlled the effects of the most common threats to the internal validity to which experimental studies are often susceptible..

CHAPTER FOUR

Data analysis and presentation

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research finding, data and results

4.1 Patterns and trends reporting in Mt Elgon conflict coverage

The 36 newspaper editions examined carried 72 Mt Elgon conflict related articles. The 2006 Daily editions (the *Sunday Nation* included) carried comparatively more articles, 52 in all, compared to 20 in the 2007 *Daily Nation*, the *Nation* had some 1292.75 cm² of space devoted to Mt Elgon conflict.

There were very wide variations in space taken up by individual articles in relation the category where the article was placed. The *National news category* had the widest variation in terms of article length over the 12-month period covered by this study. Relatively, the newspaper carried some lengthy features or commentaries.

This fact, is supported by Figures 1-4 which show trends in the coverage of Mt Elgon conflict throughout the 12-month period. Figure 1 shows the trend of mean monthly coverage of Mt Elgon conflict during the period under study. It is apparent that the intensity to coverage was highest during and dropped sharply in February, and in Mt Elgon conflict coverage reached its lowest point though it began to rise gradually and reached another (though relatively lower) peak in July-August 2006 before declining again in September-October. Thereafter coverage began to rise again and peaked in

November of the same year. The most notable feature of coverage during 2007 is that there were hardly any articles on Mt Elgon conflict during February, although by March coverage averaged around 80 cm² for the month up until April 2007.

The high coverage reflected in Figure 1 in July 2006 is cloned in Figures 2 and 3, which depict the patterns of Mt Elgon conflict coverage. The *newspaper*, sustained a high tempo of coverage of Mt Elgon conflict for almost two months, from November 2006 to December 2006 of nearly 148 cm², coverage which was relatively higher in November 2006 but declined to an average of only around 30 cm² during December 2006 to January 2007. Inclusive. For the rest of the 2007 period, coverage in the *Nation* showed a decreasing trend. Overall however, coverage of Mt Elgon conflict in the *Nation* reflects a surprisingly similar pattern, the slight variations notwithstanding. This may speak, not necessarily to commitment by individual journalists to an important national issue *but*, perhaps, to routine attention to assigned duties, regular heats or events.

The pattern of coverage also could mean that rather than depend only on assigned jobs of covering formal events, its journalists and correspondents showed greater innovation in initiating their own stories and features. Sudden decline in some months could imply that the *Daily Nation* editors have not clued in to the Mt Elgon conflict heat as an important newsroom activity, something that they might have not paid more attention to.

Our speculation about the treatment of Mt Elgon conflict stories by the *Daily Nation* appeared to be borne out by the distribution of articles by type as shown in Table 2. Most

of the space devoted to the Mt Elgon conflict went mainly to National news. It is only a small portion that went to regular column. Bulk of the space in the *newspaper* was given to news, features and photographs (24.66%). Rarely did regular columnists cover Mt Elgon conflict contributing only less than 10 per cent of such articles.

The newspapers had no editorials, photographs, book reviews or historical features on the Mt Elgon conflict, and neither did it carry any cartoon of the same. On the other hand, had just over 15 per cent of the total space devoted to Mt Elgon conflict by readers' letters. Meanwhile, the fact that news was the second most important genre Mt Elgon conflict coverage speaks to the key role of the assignments editor as a gatekeeper. Whether or not a Mt Elgon conflict story was carried depended 35 per cent of the time on the decision of the assignments editor he/she influenced the likelihood of the coverage of such a story 25 per cent of the time. It is worth noting that an editorial, something we not surprising in view of the fact that the Government, particularly the Provincial administration was the most blamed agency for insecurity.

4.2 Placement of Mt. Elgon tribal land clashes articles

Coverage of a story is one thing, but its placement within the newspaper is yet another, and the decision in this regard lies, not with the editor who assigns the story but, for the majority of the stories, with the chief sub-editor. In this regard, this is the next most important gatekeeper. Most of the tribal land clashes articles on Mt Elgon region as shown in Table 2 and consistent with news, features and readers' letters as the most

dominant genres, nearly 65 per cent of such stories appeared mainly in “other inside pages”

Placement of an article on page one and on the back page of these newspapers often indicates the importance it is accorded. However, during the period under study, the Daily Nation newspapers hardly carried stories on Mt Elgon tribal and land clashes on the front page. In fact, the newspaper placed stories nearly 4 percent, respectively, on their back pages. On the whole, however, the conflict stories were treated as pretty routine fare for readers and were mostly consigned to “other inside pages” by the newspaper.

4.3 Prominence of articles

Closely related to placement of articles is the issue of their prominence. In this study, prominence was measured by whether or not a Mt Elgon conflict article was an edition lead, page lead, or whether it was the subject of the main editorial or special commentary in a newspaper edition. Table 2 also shows the percentage distribution of Mt Elgon conflict articles by their prominence. Over 62 per cent of the articles were special commentaries, presumably by regular correspondents. Most appeared as page leads in the inside pages. Noteworthy is the finding that 12.5 per cent stories were edition leads indicating how prominently the *Nation* gatekeepers regarded Mt Elgon conflict stories. Few, if at all any of the articles on Mt Elgon conflict articles appeared either as edition or page leads. This implies that the coverage was majorly episodic, at least in the opinion of print editors a “big issue for the national security” in Kenya.

4.4 Sources of Mt Elgon conflict articles

We also examined whether or not the articles carried by these newspapers were the handiwork of local journalists' or (foreign wire services and international news or features syndicates. Table 2 shows that the stories were overwhelmingly local. Nearly 96 per cent of the stories were locally sourced.

Table 4.5: Article placement

Variable	Nation (%)
<i>Type of article</i>	
News	35.71
Feature	11.90
News analysis	4.76
Editorial	0
Photograph	0
Book review	0
Letter to editor	7.14
Regular column	40.48
Cartoon	0
<i>Placement</i>	
Frontpage2	2.38
Page 3	2.38
Otherinside page	35.71
Feature/magazine section	54.76
Back page	4.76
<i>Prominence</i>	
Edition lead	12.50
Page Lead	25.00

Main editorial	0
Special commentary	62.50
<i>Origin of article</i>	
Local	88.10
Foreign	7.14
International syndicate! agency	4.76
<i>Source of article</i>	
Ministry of Internal security	1.11
Other Government official	2.43
Politician	0
Religious body	0
Provincial administration	12.20
Civil body report	9.76
NGO/UN	12.20
Journalist's initiative	14.63
Reader/letter to editor	36.59
Residents	7.31

Consistent with local origin of most of the stories, our results also show that most of them were the outcome of individual journalists' initiatives, maybe at the behest of their editors. Journalists contributed nearly 37 per cent of Mt Elgon conflicts stories during the period under study. Other important sources of such stories was the provincial administration system, Investigative journalism 12.20% , readers letters (7.31%) and the Ministry of internal security 1.11 respectively.

4.5 Main actors in Mt Elgon conflicts articles

Given the sources of the articles, we thought it would be interesting to find out as well who the main actors in them were, that is, who was talking or working on the conflict. Table 3 gives the percentage distribution of the Mt Elgon clash articles by main actor and subject. The main actors were Investigative journalism and Journalist's initiative (61.11% and 52.63%, respectively) focused in a major way on the plight of individuals, families and social groups in the wake of the clashes devoting nearly 17 per cent and 13 per cent of their stories, respectively, to this category. Other important actors were the Politician Religious body NGOs whose activities and/statements comprised over 15 per cent of Clash articles in newspapers.

4.6 Subjects of Mt. Elgon conflicts articles

We also investigated what it was that constituted the main topic or subject in the articles and the results are reported in Table 3. There were considerable differences in what the newspaper reported as the main subjects of the clashes stories: 35 per cent of them had Clash prevention as their main topic, while nearly 19 per cent of them focused on "economic effects of the land clashes. The newspaper also paid significant attention to the politics of land clashes (13.5%) and its economic effects (12.16%).

In fact, the *newspaper* devoted most of the coverage to social costs of Mt Elgon land clashes (21.42% and 23.68%, respectively) and on stories that dealt with claims of political involvement and for political good will and management (19.04% and 21.05%, respectively). On the whole, the newspaper seemed to consider the social-economic costs of the land clashes in Mt Elgon region to be the most important topic and hence, their

relative focus on stories claiming insecurity attributable to Government luxury, as well as ignoring historical causes, creating awareness, and prevention.

4.7 Blame attribution in Mt. Elgon land clashes articles

To what extent was the Causes blamed on somebody, institution or behaviour? Who or what was it that was blamed?

Table 4.8 : Percentage distribution Blames by main actor and subject.

Table 3. Percentage distribution Blames by main actor and subject.

Variable	Nation (%)
Main actor	
Ministry of Internal security	16.67
Provincial administration	61.11
Politicians	16.67
Politics of the region	2.77
Tribalism	2.77
Religious body officials	0
Private individual/family/group	16.67
Main subject	
Land clashes causes	16.67
Land clashes prevention	9.52
Land clashes awareness	16.67
Economic effect Land clashes	0
Social effects of Land clashes	4.76
Politics of Land clashes	9.52
Victims of Land clashes	21.42
Intervention groups	2.38
Insecurity	19.04

These questions were investigated by scrutinizing for the Clashes reportage, though this was whether or not any of the articles carried by the newspaper was overshadowed by the

recognition that during the period of study problem was blame was atleast put on somebody or something for the incidence of land clashes in Mt Elgon region.

Table 4 also shows that the Provincial administration and Government received by far most of the blame for land clashes followed by Ministry of Internal security, Politicians and Private individual/family/group respectively. It is also significant to recognize that poor regional politics and tribalism (2.77% and 2.77%) respectively were blame.

4.8 Quality of coverage Mt Elgon land clashes

The quality of coverage of Mt Elgon land clashes was investigated in terms of the constructiveness, balance and technical competency of the articles we examined. These subjective evaluation criteria are the more important given the finding above that most of the articles were written by local journalists for a local audience. The results of the investigation are reported in Table 5.

In terms of constructiveness, the results show that most of the stories were constructive and informative, but a significant proportion of them could only be characterized as being of average quality, the most "very constructive" and "constructive" articles by the Nation were 11.9 per cent and 54.33 per cent, respectively. Most article were mostly balanced with over 76 per cent of them being "very balanced" or "balanced" . Only 50 per cent of the articles were only of average quality or biased and, as the index of balance of 2.227 ($p < .001$) .

Finally, investigation of the technical competency of the articles shows that most of them were either simply “competent” or of “average quality”. Taken together; 95 per cent of the articles fell under these two categories. None of the articles were technically “very incompetent”. a factor which has no doubt contributed again to its low score (index of competency = 2.217, $p < .0(01)$) in this measure of quality of coverage.

4.9 Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the study. It also draws some lessons for story coverage aimed at using the mass media to combat land clashes in Kenya. As is evident from the results, land clashes is a phenomenal social economical, demographic and political catastrophe far Kenya and the print media have given it varied attention in recent times. The discussion that follows is aimed at clarifying what we have observed in the data with background information and knowledge we bring into the study that the data per se could not tell us. Such information and knowledge, read together with the results of this study, subsequently form the backdrop for the recommendations that follow.

Table 4.10a : Variable

Variable	Nation (%)
Is there blame for land clashes in MtElgon region?	
Yes	52.38
No	47.62
Who is to blame?	
Provincial administration	9.09
Politicians	4.54
Government,	31.82
Other ethnic group	0
Nobody in particular	0
Religious organizations	0
Private individual/family/group	22.73
Lack of resources	13.64
Politics of the region	4.55
Tribalism	13.64

The finding that there were 76 related stories in the sample of 36 newspaper editions constituting this study may be interpreted in various ways. It may be argued that this is a reasonably adequate attention for a regional problem that was hardly well understood by Kenyans at the time of the study. On the other hand, the seriousness of the conflict this country would suggest that its coverage should have been more intense, even sensational. Yet this was strictly not the case over the 12-month period under study. In fact, it may be argued that Mt Elgon tribal and land clashes coverage was rather low key and lackadaisical, if not outright apathetic during long stretches of time in the study period.

Three scenarios suggest themselves as explanations for the level of coverage that the conflict received during the period April 2006 to April 2007. The first scenario has to do with the fact that 2006-2007 was the year toward the fourth of the multi-party elections in Kenya and electoral politics received more attention than any other events/issues in the media. In fact, such attention to politics remained high well with formation of several political parties thus pushing tribal land clashes to the background of editorial attention. This interpretation is lent credence by the finding that from December 2006 to through April 2007 the average space allocated to trouble in Mt Elgon region by the newspapers was less than 50 cm², as compared to early April 2006 whereby attention to such stories averaged over 120 cm² and was rising.

Table 4.10 b: *Percentage distribution o articles in Daily Nation newspaper*

constructiveness, balance, and technical competence.

Variable	Nation (%)
<i>Constructiveness</i>	
Very constructive	11.90
Constructive and informative	54.33
Average	33.33
Neither constructive nor informative	0
Biased and confusing	2.38
Index of constructiveness	3.139
<i>Balance</i>	
Very balanced	11.90
Balanced	64.29
Average	16.66 V
Biased	4.76
Very biased	2.38
Index of balance.	3.116
<i>Technical competency</i>	
Very competent	15.00
Competent	55.00
Average quality	22.55
Incompetent	5.00
Very incompetent	2.50
Index of technical competency	3.005

The second explanation for the level of coverage that Clashes received during the period under study may have to do with the inability of editors and reporters to properly appropriate Clashes and its impacts on society as newsworthy or of human interest. To clearly recognize the news value of Clashes, journalists and their editors need to have

more than passing familiarity with the subject as well as with the conflict beat. Moreover, newsrooms must clue in to the idea of conflict being an important social, not just demographic, issue that spans politics, economics and the structure of society, as well as possess some idea of the sociology of conflict.

Conclusively, there are various chilling examples of damage the wrong kind of media climate can breed. For instance, as stated in an evaluation report on Rwanda, "The starting point for every public official in Rwanda is the role of the newspaper *Kangura* (*pro-Hutu*) responsible for the 1994 Rwanda genocide that killed over 800,000 people mostly Tutsis. Until the formation of Studio Ijambo in 1995, the Burundian press not only reflected the deep ethnic division but also actively promoted it (and its members tried to) rival each other over calls to kill, or in packing and advancing their mutually macabre ideologies (generating) mutual terror and distrust based on historical fears.

Partisan reporting in Sri Lanka is inextricably linked to political violence, which in turn exacerbated ethnic conflict since issues like ethnicity; nationalism and communalism are often used for political mileage. Partisan reporting by the three language newspapers i.e. Sinhala, Tamil and English newspapers is often symptomatic of other inherent biases and a lack of professionalism, which often serves to heighten ethnic tension and conflict.

In instances of ethno-political conflict, the role of the media is inextricably entwined with the particular dynamics of that conflict. The media can be a frightful weapon of violence

when it propagates messages of intolerance or disinformation that manipulate public sentiment.

But there is another aspect to the media. It can be an instrument of conflict resolution, when the information it presents is reliable, respects human rights, and represents diverse views. It's the kind of media that upholds accountability and exposes malfeasance, one that enables a society to make well-informed choices, which is the precursor of democratic governance. It is a media that reduces conflict and fosters human security.

The media violates the professional guidelines of fair and equitable reportage of political violence by giving massive publicity to opponents or giving one side in a conflict massive publicity than all its opponents combined. They also fail to provide informative updates either on the electoral malpractices, including political violence. The media allows politicians to divert attention from crucial issues by using the media to malign their opponents. This is manifested in the media's news sourcing patterns and choice of words.

To perform its noble duty of enforcing peace norms and averting probable violence in the society, the media should be independent of government control while the government and other institutions should not withhold information from the media. Strengthening of media governing bodies is crucial to reign in on errant journalists and media houses that may fuel or cause violence through their reporting. The media houses should avoid biased and sensational stories for economic reasons or political biases of the owners, editors and

reporters. Adequate professional training of journalists in conflicting reporting is crucial to avoid grievous errors emanating from professional ignorance.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

The important finding of this study is that there was significant variation in the trend and pattern of conflict coverage. As the data clearly show, the newspaper missed some important events, as it has relied more on their own staff for Mt Elgon tribal and land clashes stories, did not routinely cover the conflict as news, and did not have a regular column on the land tribal clashes.

Instead, it published more readers' letters on the conflict, which could conceivably lead to a lot of controversies on the problem. Also, the newspaper virtually ignored the topic of the tribal land clashes around the height of electoral politics in Kenya (April 2006 to April 2007), as the findings of this study on placement of articles show. Land tribal clashes is a big story in Kenyan history: they were frequently treated as important local news (page three stories), occasionally as edition leads, but more often as page leads; moreover, occasionally tribal land clashes constituted the subject of the main editorial or special commentary.

It is particularly significant that most of the stories were the product of local journalists' initiatives, that the newspapers relied overwhelmingly on local writers and commentators, and that their newsmakers were locally based organizations, researchers and events. Yet the results also show that politicians and religious leaders were hardly important sources of Tribal land clashes stories (Table 2). Given the heated controversies that politicians

and religious leaders have often generated over local constitutional boundaries and other land ownership and distribution questions, the finding that these important policy and opinion leaders have not been involved by the press in the debate over Mt Elgon tribal land could only mean that this society had yet to come to proper grips with the reality of the internal conflicts during the period of the study. In fact, if the mass media do not involve policy makers and opinion leaders in the debate on this important national agenda then we can expect that any other efforts to contain and reverse the spread of internal squabbles will only have limited impact.

It is of prime importance that the mass media concentrate on efforts to create awareness about effects of internal conflicts such as tribal land clashes and its potentially multi faceted impact on society. In this regard, it is only proper that media attention should be focused on its causes and ways of prevention. In *fact*, this is all the media can do *in* the fight against tribal clashes. The results of this study show that, taken together, the newspapers analyzed here gave gravely inadequate attention to matters to do with causes and prevention of Mt Elgon tribal land clashes. In fact, , the newspapers devoted less than 17 per cent of the space they allocated to Mt Elgon tribal and land clashes to questions of its causes and ways of prevention.

Is the moral panic perspective an appropriate theoretical framework for discussing Tribal land clashes reporting in Kenya? The fact that more attention was given to the social and economic effect of Tribal land clashes in Mt Elgon region and claims of poor management of the conflict by the Government and provincial administration, indeed, suggests that coverage of the Tribal land clashes is beginning to take on a moral panic

reportorial approach outlined earlier in this study. It will be recalled that, according to this perspective, moral panic is orchestrated when patterns of behaviour, whether private or public, come to be selected by the mass media as unusual or symbolic of a threat to the fabric of society. Our results show that "Government, Private individual/family/group, Politics of the region Provincial administration and tribalism" respectively, were identified in about 30 per cent of the articles as being responsible for tribal land clashes. Taken together with lack of resources, the press in Kenya may be beginning to create the impression that Kenyans are practically defenseless against internal conflicts such as manifested in Mt Elgon region, since it may be correctly argued that provision of resources for dealing with a problem of such complexity is indeed beyond the capability of ordinary mortals. Hence, the only realistic option open to Kenyans is restraint from "inciting rhetorics" and to get the Government to do more in the way of preventing conflicts. It is significant, however, that the press has not singled out foreigners, migrants or other social groups to blame for the cause of conflict in Mt Elgon region.

Finally, the results of this study have given us some indication of the ability of Kenyan journalists to handle such a complex subject as tribal land clashes. The overall assessment of this ability is that the conflict has been moderately well covered in terms of how informative, balanced and technically competent the articles have been. At the same time, moderate performance is not good enough for a life-and-death issue such as tribal land clashes that demands clear understanding and appropriate behavioural response. A number of policy and programming implications for media coverage of conflict are accordingly indicated by this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The quality of conflict coverage as established in this study points to the need for enhanced technical training of Kenyan journalists, not just in specialized fields such as conflict and conflict resolution, but all round training to empower them to handle complex stories more competently. That is, efforts to improve the skills amid professional status of Kenyan journalists need intensification as this society becomes more complex and diversified.

At the same time, there is need to establish internal conflict resource centers to assist journalists to access data and information faster and more efficiently. One way of doing this would be to identify a central institution, such as the ACCE/School of Journalism's Documentation Center in Nairobi where a data bank and a fixed-time project may be established to prepare fact data sheets in readily usable form for distribution to newsrooms and regional resource centers for use by journalists. The advantage of such a central institution is that it would avail Kenyan-specific data on internal conflict . The staff of the Documentation Center, with technical support of one part-time quantitative social analyst and a copy writer, would prepare news releases, features and other articles on different aspects of the conflict for distribution to newsrooms and regional resource centers.

It would also be vital for media houses to train a cadre of conflict journalists through seminars, workshops and short courses in local schools of journalism and communication

over, say, a two-year period. This will enhance their responsiveness to conflict-related news and feature stories.

Editors and media managers should establish conflict information desks and regular internal conflicts beats in their newsrooms and encourage them, through seminars and workshops, to appreciate the social significance of internal conflict and, hence, internal conflicts as having an important news value.

In light of the above points, there is need for further research to specifically carry out a training needs assessment of Kenyan media houses and rural journalists, to study the nature and pattern of internal conflicts coverage in Kenyan electronic media with a more realistic budget and time frame.

Research should also be done to assess the training capacity of Kenyan institutions in the areas of conflict, and crisis journalism, and to determine areas in which they may require support.

Similarly, institutional support may be required to empower those to be involved in the training programmes that have been suggested, to effectively carry out such training. Support may be sought from the news organizations themselves and from other development partners that are already working in conflict resolution and peacemaking areas.

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"Conflict Mediation in the Process of Decolonisation: Resolution 435 and Namibia's Transition to Independence" by Henning Melber

"Mediation in the Sudan Civil War of 1955-1972" by Hizkias Assefa

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1. The Daily Nation
2. The People Daily
3. The weekly review
4. The economic Review

APPENDIX

MEDIA MONITORING TOOL(S)

CODE SHEET FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS FOR THE MOUNT ELGON LAND CLASHES

Date of publication.....
 Name of Newspaper.....
 Headline and page of story.....
 Story size in centimeter squared.....

TYPE OF STORY	News	Feature	Commentary/Analysis	editorial			
AUTHOR OF STORY	Local reporter	Local correspondent	Agency correspondent	Specify			
AUTHOR WORKS FOR							
FAIRNESS OF STORY	Both sides of the story covered		Only one side of story covered				
BALANCE	Equal space/emphasis on opposing views		Unequal space/emphasis on opposing views				
ACCURACY/FACTUALNESS	Statements attributed to sources		Statements not largely attributed to sources				
SLANTING OF STORY	A lot of editorial comment		Few editorial comments				
ATTITUDE OF STORY	Critical		Not critical				
QUOTED SOURCES	Politician/MPs/councillors	Clergyman/Civil society	Resident	Development partners	Government	Other Kenyans	Specify
GRAPHICS USED	Picture	Cartoon	Illustration				
TOPE OF GRAPHIC	Critical of the clashes		Not critical of the clashes				
CONSISTENCY WITH THE RULE OF LAW	Consistent		Not consistent				