A STUDY OF KENYAN PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE OF CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MONTHS OF DECEMBER 2007 TO FEBRUARY 2008

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Abstract

Conflict reporting has become a part of the media context in Kenya in recent years. This prompts the question of what constitutes conflict sensitive reporting in the Kenyan context. The media has the potential to incite conflict and enhance peace. The Kenyan media context is unique owing to historical, political and cultural elements of societal existence. The power inherent in the media points towards its capability to influence individuals to act negatively and positively within conflict contexts. Consequently, it is essential to learn about reporting practices in Kenya that are helpful and harmful in conflict scenarios. This study aims to analyze how Kenyan newspapers covered the 2007-2008 post election conflict and highlight the trends of conflict reporting during this period by presenting the themes and effects of Kenyan media reporting. The media can only influence the public if there is a coordinated management of meaning within the society resulting in the construction of social realities. Using content analysis, this study found that the conflict theme did indeed dominate newspaper coverage between the months of December 2007 to February 2008. The introduction of peace themes in February corresponded with reduced conflict and eventually an end to the post election violence of 2007-2008. Achieving a peaceful balance when reporting in a conflict situation is a great challenge that can only be conquered if journalists are skilled enough to consider facts and contextual issues as they report.