

COVERAGE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST

WOMEN BY

THE STANDARD AND THE

DAILY NATION:

A CONTENT ANALYSIS

BY

CLAIRE WAMBUI MWANGI

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DECLARATION

I, Claire Wambui Mwangi, declare that this dissertation is my own work and it has not been submitted to any other university for award of degree or for any other activity.

Name CLAI RE WAMBUI MWANGI

Signature 

Date 17TH AUGUST, 2006

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this work has been submitted for examination with my approval as the Supervisor.

Name S.P. ONGODU

Signature 

Date 17 AUGUST 2006

DEDICATION

To the three most important people in my life,

My son Theo Asante, my dearest mother Jane Nyambura Gakunyi and my boyfriend Patrick Oyulu have who encouraged me financially and encouraged me through out this course. God bless you all.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COVAW – The Coalition on Violence Against Women

FIDA – Federation Of Women Lawyers

UN – United Nations

WRAP - The Women’s Right Awareness Programme

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Internationally, women face gender based violence, which has no parallel for men. It manifests in various forms: physical abuse through battering, sexual assault and abuse molestation, rape, and female genital mutilation among others.

This problem goes far back during the traditional days when domestic violence was a way natural way of disciplining women. It was acceptable as normal. In Kenya, despite current socio-cultural changes, wife battering is still a wide spread practise.

Behind every mother battered by her partner, we at least see at least one or more children who even if they are not directly victims of aggression, never the less suffer in different degrees from the generally violent atmosphere which prevails in their daily life. Moreover, from the recent experiences, we see children are being socialised in violence and were now going on the roads to protested violently and even stoned and burned cars.

The fact that domestic violence was confined to the intimacy and privacy of the home can largely be explained by the power cultural beliefs have. Thus many cases went unreported.

Mary Ang'awa suggested the creation of family courts with criminal jurisdiction. In her paper "Women And The Judicial Process" she proposed that the family court should operate in camera.

These same courts would issue appropriate orders for the protection of the battered wife. This type of court would also solve the problem where the police refuse to take such cases on the basis that they are domestic.

The Law under Penal Code, Cap 63 of the Laws of Kenya provides for assault causing various degrees of harm. Good examples of these are the rape cases.

In a paper entitled “Legal Perspectives on Violence against Women and Girls” presented on the U.N day, October 24th 1998, Ms Anne Nyabera raised concern over the general attitude to the treatment of rape and defilement cases. The rape of a minor is a lesser offence than the rape of an adult. The rape of a girl under the age of 14 is called defilement and carries a maximum sentence of 14 years imprisonment, whereas rape of a woman carries a maximum life sentence.

It was thus clear that the Law could not wholly bring about improvement in the situation in certain cases, and only a part of the solution to this complex problem. In some cases it was not a solution at all and other strategies or policies had to be used to bring some relief to the victim.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Violence against women had become very sensitive issue in Kenya today. There were many popular myths and stereotypes about domestic violence. Typically the myths sought to blame, excuse the man and minimise the violence.

Similarly, in the traditional African society, men were supposed to discipline their wives for any minute reason. This was considered an exercise of power and total discipline not only to their wives but also to their daughters.

This practise had gone out of control in the contemporary world. Cases have been reported not only of women being beaten but battered to death. There are several reasons why gender violence is rampant in society, the reasons being a mixture of social, cultural, economic and political factors.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study aimed at assessing how the print media in Kenya portrays the issues of violence against women in our society. The print media being diverse, the study was to cover two dailies, the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*.

The study was to look at how much information on women is provided by the print media.

The Federation of Women Lawyers in the recent past came out strongly against this issue. It went as far as providing free legal services to women caught up in this problem.

Due to FIDA's contribution, women now came up and started talking publicly when violence is leashed on them.

The role of the media was therefore important in helping eliminate this vice in our society.

It also sensitised women on the importance of speaking out in public.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

An ancient Indian scripture says, “where women are respected, there dwell the gods.”

Instead of this scripture gaining worldwide momentum, it lost value all over the world.

In Kenya, most cases of violence against women went unreported and those that were reported were just a tip of the iceberg.

The 1995 U.N Human Development report stated that, “In no society are women secure or treated as equal to Men...they are abused because of their gender. Many suffer in silence.

However, statistics on this problem may not have been clear especially those that pertained to domestic violence. This violence was taken and dismissed as ‘domestic’ and hence went unreported. Victims were often hesitant to report incidents either because they feared reprisals or because they were ashamed to have been attacked by their husbands or the fear of having to relieve their traumatic experiences when recounting the event to strangers.

Surveys carried out by FIDA also revealed that getting statistics is hard due to the fact that the police sometimes do not record cases in the daily occurrence book.

Despite the differences in accessing the scale of the phenomenon, it is obvious that domestic violence was a serious problem.

Therefore, it was important to carry out a study on how the mainstream media reported the issues related to violence against women. From the study, the media also had a role to play in eliminating or elevating the vice depending on its style of coverage.

The recent rise in media reports on violence against women or girls was an indication that more cases were being reported, indicating a tacit acceptance of gender based violence as a crime.

The findings of the study helped the media lay down policies that helped in the sensitisation and elimination process of the violence. How the media was used, how it was applied, what it represented, reported, reiterated or deemed newsworthy, all depended on what it was fed with.

The findings of the study were also expected to improve on the media reporting and assist in fighting the problem of violence against women in Kenya.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was a content analysis on how the media covers violence against women by the mainstream media over a period of two (2) months. Sixty one (61) issues of the *Daily Nation* and sixty one (61) of *The Standard* newspapers.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The researcher hoped to achieve the objectives by answering the following questions:

1. On what pages were the articles placed? Front page, back page, centre spread or inside pages?
2. What prominence was given to the story?
3. What was the marital status of the victim?
4. By lines, were they male or female or not mentioned?

5. What was the location of the incident? Rural or Urban?
6. Which were the sources of information for the reporter. Public, court, police or family?
7. Which newspapers carried out comparatively more articles on the subject?

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Kenyan public was beginning to express the sentiment that the increasingly frequent and grisly incidents of violence against women must cease.

A study done by FIDA in their publication *Sauti Ya Dada*, noted that women seemed to be having a feeling of resigned helplessness. The question paused at this juncture was how we as society can combat this scourge.

One role of the media was agenda setting. The media was supposed to get information and disseminate it to the public. This referred to the ability of the media to influence the Publics' perception of important issues of the day.

However, one would wonder how many cases of domestic violence were reported. Most women, though assaulted do not report the matter due to past practises by the police.

These incidences of domestic violence were euphemistically referred to by police as "domestic" and dismissed as something that happens within the home and was to be dealt with at home.

In cases of rape, victims often felt embarrassed or ashamed. They did not want it made public that they had been raped, for that is what reporting would do.

Can a husband rape his wife? Armstrong (1998) says, 'The Law says that the husband cannot rape his wife. However, if a man forces his wife to have sex, then he may be convicted of indecent assault and be punished'.

This Law is subject to debate and although under Kenyan Law, husbands cannot rape their wives; it is rape if a man impersonates a husband and has sex with his wife.

FIDA's report (1996) discussed that advocates of positive theory of domestic violence are reluctant to criminalise domestic violence. This school of thought further argued that domestic violence was rare, its perpetrator is ill and all we need to do is institutionalise the perpetrator and provide him with counselling.

In this case, it was ironical to note that the focus here was on the culprit rather than the victim. It failed to recognise the criminal element in neither domestic violence nor protection due to the victim.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 SOURCES OF DATA.

Contents of the two dailies and Sunday editions over a period of two months.

1. The *Daily Nation* and *Sunday Nation*
2. *The Standard* and *The Sunday Standard*.

3.2 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Contents of the two dailies were analysed and the period of study March and April 2006.

Only those articles relevant to the topic were considered.

3.3 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis were individual stories of violence against women as presented in the two dailies.

3.4 LIMITATIONS

The two months and two dailies taken for the study did not provide a true picture of the coverage of violence against women. The study would have been more accurate if all the four (4) dailies, the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, *Kenya Times* and *The People* would have been studied.

The study would have taken a longer period of time probably one year. This would have provided a better basis and grounds for comparative study.

Availability of the *KenyaTimes* and *The People* newspapers were also not easily available in Uganda where I as a Kenyan was carrying out the research.

Due to this limitation, it was difficult to actually determine the trend, the intensity of the violence that was taking, i.e. whether it was increasing or decreasing.

3.5 DEFINATIONS OF TERMS.

The term print media referred to the dailies and Sunday editions of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, which are the highest in circulation as compared to other dailies in Kenya.

The story was considered with or without a picture or a picture story with a caption that was not accompanied by a story.

The term women referred to any female irrespective of age.

The term violence encompassed physical, sexual, psychological violence in the family.

By line was the reporter either male or female.

Placement was the position where the article will be placed.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data Presentation And Analysis

Introduction

The results of the findings are summarised in tables 1-6 below. As indicated in table 1

Below, there were a total number of 80 articles in the two months on domestic violence reported by the two dailies. *The Standard* carried a total of 54 articles while the *Daily Nation* carried 26 articles, which were half the number the *Nation* reported.

The month of March was a special month in Kenya because a female Member of Parliament Ms Njoki Ndung'u presented a bill in parliament that severe action should be taken to offenders like rapists and women batterers.

The Standard newspaper carried out a total number of 25 while the *Daily Nation* carried only 10 articles on the issue that month. It was my expectations that the papers, and in this case the *Daily Nation*, would have contained more articles to create awareness.

TABLE 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF STORIES CARRIED IN THE TWO DAILIES IN THE MONTHS OF MARCH AND APRIL 2006.

MEDIA	TOTAL NUMBER OF ARTICLES
The Standard	54
Daily Nation	26
Total	80

TABLE 2: BYLINES

MEDIA	MALE	FEMALE	NOT MENTIONED	BOTH
The Standard	36 (67%)	11 (20%)	5 (9%)	2 (4%)
Daily Nation	3 (12%)	6 (23%)	17 (65%)	-

It is ironical that in *The Standard*, the male reporters were 67%. Violence against women being a female issue; the exception would be that women would highlight this issue.

Only female reporters reported a total of 17 out of 80 articles.

The female reporters in the *Daily Nation* were 23% as compared to 65% of the unidentified reporters.

Articles written both by male and female were found only in *The Standard* newspapers.

TABLE 3: MARITAL STATUS OF THE VICTIM

MEDIA	MINOR	ADULT/SINGLE	ADULT/MARRIED	NOT INTENDED	GENERAL
The Standard	21 (39%)	6 (11%)	18 (33%)	2 (4%)	7 (13%)
Daily Nation	10 (39%)	5 (19%)	8 (30%)	-	3 (12%)

The magazine pages were features either portraying the agonies of women in their homes, during wars as well as in female mutilation. *The Standard* April 19th was the feature that offered hope to victims of violence.

Inside the stories, there were only two letters to the editor in *The Standard*. Letters to the editor is a forum for feedback, but it seems the public is quite on this issue as shown by the response in both dailies.

There was only one editorial in the *Daily Nation*.

TABLE 4: LOCATION

MEDIA	RURAL	URBAN	NOT MENTIONED	GENERAL
The Standard	32 (59%)	15 (28%)	-	7 (13%)
Daily Nation	12 (46%)	12 (46%)	-	2 (8%)

The highest percentage of violence took place in the rural areas. 59% of the stories carried out by *The Standard* and 46% by the *Daily Nation* portrays it. These were mainly causes of rape and female genital mutilation.

The urban cases were mainly domestic violence.

TABLE 5: SOURCE OF THE STORY

MEDIA	PUBLIC	COURT	POLICE	FAMILY/SELF	GOVT OFFICIAL
The Standard	7 (13%)	15 (28%)	17 (31%)	12 (22%)	3 (6%)
Daily Nation	8 (31%)	5 (23%)	3 (12%)	5 (19%)	4 (15%)

In *The Standard*, the sources of the stories were from the police who were mainly reporting on investigations into the crime.

The Government officials who were supposed to be on the forefront in the campaign against the vice did not participate in a big way. This group of people would include; politicians, chiefs of social workers only to mention a few.

TABLE 6: STORY TYPE

MEDIA	STORY ONLY	STORY WITH PICTURE	PICTURE ONLY
The Standard	47 (87%)	6 (11%)	1 (2%)
Daily Nation	22 (85%)	4 (15%)	-

A total of 69 stories carried in both papers did not have pictures.

10 stories were accompanied with pictures, of which 7 were features.

There was only one picture with a caption.

Pictures give more emphasis to stories, break the monotony of grey matter and also lure the reader into reading the article. A typical case is the story carried by *The Nation* newspaper (April 29th 2006) about the Kawangware mother who was battered to death by her husband.

Her funeral was highlighted on one page accompanied by a coloured photograph. This not only attracted the readers' attention, but also sympathy from the public.

That is the power of pictures, yet not so many were used. One argument could be the fact that it is a social obligation not to expose victims of certain crimes like rape, which incidentally had a huge coverage by both papers.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 CONCLUSION

It is clear from the study that *The Standard* newspaper provided more stories to the reader and it is more inclined to inform the public about this vice than the *Daily Nation* newspaper.

Though the stories in *The Standard* are newsworthy, at least they portray a paper that could contribute towards the eradication of violence against women in Kenya.

Readers who solely depend on the *Daily Nation* as an everyday paper, or places that only receive the *Daily Nation* newspaper, may end up not being adequately informed on the subject or on the way forward as brought out by organisations championing the fight against it. Such organisations for example, The Federation for Women Lawyers-Kenya (F.I.D.A), The Women's Rights Awareness Programme (WRAP) and The Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW).

It also reflected when we study the placement of articles. *The Standard* had five (5) articles in the magazine while the *Daily Nation* had two (2) articles.

The magazines provide a forum for the newspaper to give comprehensive cover on a topic giving life experiences and pictures. As earlier seen, pictures provide emphasis on a story and also catches the eye of the reader. Therefore, more information on the topic as well as counselling was brought out in *The Standard* features as compared to the *Daily Nation*.

An example is the highlight when the Kagundo resident Magistrate Charles Nyamweya decried the rising incidences of sexual molestation. The *Daily Nation* did not cover this important event.

We have laws governing violence against women. The media is supposed to provide information, empower women and encourage them to resist violence through its coverage of the topic.

Men should not also hang onto the myths and culture to explain their violence because culture is dynamic and accommodates change.

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Implementation of The Platform for Action and Advancement of Women in Kenya.

APPENDIX 2 FINANCIAL PLAN/BUDGET

ACTIVITY	COST
Binding	45,000
Newspaper costs	151,400
Miscelliuous	70,000
Total Expenses	266,400