



**EVALUATING NEGATIVE, POSITIVE AND NEUTRAL REPORTING IN NEWSPAPERS IN KENYA:  
A CASE STUDY OF DAILY NATION AND THE STANDARD NEWSPAPERS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*In a recent study investigating the nature of reporting in Kenya, the study explored factors that affect reporting of Parliament and parliamentarians in two most popular Kenyan newspapers, namely the Daily Nation and The Standard. However, the study did not evaluate the negative, positive and neutral reporting in newspapers in Kenya, for which this study was conducted.*

**Purpose:** *This study evaluated the negative, positive and neutral reporting in newspapers in Kenya: A case study of daily nation and the standard newspapers.*

**Theoretical Foundation** *The study was guided by the Herman and Chomsky's 'Manufacturing Consent – A Propaganda Model' theory*

**Methodology** *Constructivism philosophical paradigm with mixed method approach through triangulation using structured questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and observations.*

**Results** *The results showed most of the newspaper reporting on MPs during the period under study took a negative angle.*

**Conclusion** *The symbiotic relationship between Parliament, the Media, and the Public is expected to endure despite occasional "clashes" between Parliament and the Media, which inevitably affect the Public. These conflicts arise when parliamentary officials perceive negative portrayal by the Media.*

**Recommendations** *A similar study needs to be carried out to investigate the foregoing phenomena in both radio and television stations*

**Key Words:** *Newspaper Reporting, Positive News, Negative News, Neutral News, Members of Parliament, Kenya*

## INTRODUCTION

Parliamentary reporting, an essential pillar of democratic societies worldwide, serves as the conduit through which citizens gain invaluable insights into legislative proceedings, governmental decisions, and policy discussions. The media's role in elucidating the complexities of parliamentary activities is universally acknowledged as indispensable, fostering transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement in the democratic process. However, to fully appreciate the significance of parliamentary reporting, it is imperative to examine its interplay within the global, regional, and national contexts, recognizing the nuanced dynamics that shape this practice across diverse democratic landscapes.

Within the national context of Kenya, a nation renowned for its vibrant media ecosystem and robust civil society, parliamentary reporting assumes particular importance. As one of East Africa's leading democratic entities, Kenya has made significant progress in advancing transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in recent years (Cheeseman & Griffiths, 2016). However, challenges persist, including concerns about media freedom, political polarization, and the influence of vested interests on public discourse. Against this backdrop, the quality, comprehensiveness, and impartiality of parliamentary reporting by leading newspapers such as the Daily Nation and The Standard are crucial in shaping public perceptions of governmental bodies and fostering civic engagement among Kenyan citizens (Cheruiyot, 2019).

Throughout the timeframe under this study, the Kenyan Parliament comprised 349 positions, comprising 290 MPs representing constituencies, 47 women serving as county representatives, and 12 MPs nominated to their positions. The Kenyan media landscape can be delineated into three distinct phases: the colonial period press, the post-independence era press (spanning from 1963 to 1990), and the multi-party era press from 1991 to the present. This research delves into the Press's function in reporting parliamentary affairs during the multi-party era, specifically focusing on two prominent newspapers in Kenya – the Daily Nation and the Standard.

Parliaments depend on media channels to communicate their roles and activities to the public. Nevertheless, a sense of distrust characterizes the relationship between the media and parliament (Puttnam, 2005). Journalists often express frustration due to limitations on their access to parliamentary proceedings or restrictive legislation that may impede their reporting. On the other hand, legislators often argue that the media's portrayal of parliaments, lawmakers, and other parliamentary figures has diminished their public esteem. Given the disparities in the functioning, approaches, and objectives of both entities, friction between parliamentarians and the media is unavoidable. However, neither entity can operate effectively in isolation; thus, collaboration and trust-building are necessary for the mutual benefit of both, with public interest as the primary objective. The public has the right to be adequately informed about the actions of their elected representatives in Parliament.

In Kenya, there exists a complex and fluctuating relationship between Parliament and the media. An article titled "Tension between Kenya media and MPs surfaces" (Daily Nation, 17th February 2011) highlighted a standoff regarding the legality of President Kibaki's government nominees, during which some MPs accused the media of being influenced by agendas aimed at undermining the Constitution. In retaliation, a journalist asserted that the contentious relationship between politicians and the media is likely to persist.

The Fondation Hironnelle Newsletter (2020), established a genuine sense of trust between citizens and their representatives is essential not only for crisis prevention but also for fostering connections between legislators and journalists, who play a crucial role in bridging the gap between the public and their elected officials. In the realm of democracy, significant tensions can arise among politicians, the media, and citizens, potentially leading to divisive reactions that undermine public discourse. Therefore, the media should fulfill its rightful duty by creating platforms for education, dissemination of information, dialogue, critical analysis, and peaceful engagement, while

also facilitating citizen participation and direct involvement in parliamentary affairs through the development of innovative participatory technologies. This research aims to shed light on the dynamics between these two institutions and the public's perception of Parliament.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the crucial role played by parliamentary reporting in educating citizens and fostering democratic involvement, there exists a significant gap in comprehensive research assessing the caliber and thoroughness of such reporting within Kenya. While the Daily Nation and The Standard hold esteemed positions as the nation's primary newspapers, scant attention has been paid to their approaches in covering parliamentary affairs and the potential ramifications of their reporting on public attitudes and engagement in the legislative process. Moreover, there is a lack of insight into any biases or divergences in coverage between these prominent newspapers. Hence, this study endeavors to tackle the ensuing issue: the assessment of the quality, depth, and potential biases in parliamentary reporting by the Daily Nation and The Standard, the leading newspapers in Kenya, remains insufficient, impeding a thorough understanding of how parliamentary matters are presented to the Kenyan populace and the influence of media reporting on democratic discussions and civic involvement. Through scrutinizing the substance, tone, frequency, and inclusiveness of parliamentary coverage in these newspapers, this research aims to bridge this research gap and offer perspectives into the media's role in molding public perceptions of parliamentary undertakings in Kenya.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study was to evaluate the negative, positive and neutral reporting in newspapers in Kenya: A case study of daily nation and the standard newspapers.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The IPU (as cited) underscores the significance of the public receiving pertinent information (via the media) to effectively influence parliaments and lawmakers. Only then can citizens hold legislators accountable. In fulfilling this role, journalists, editors, and media presenters become crucial conduits of information utilized by parliaments to communicate their work to the public.

By consuming news about Parliament, audiences/readers become better acquainted with their representatives, the government, and the policies and issues pertinent to them. A knowledgeable populace is an empowered one, capable of holding their representatives accountable for any shortcomings in enacting laws and policies that could benefit the public.

Newspapers play a pivotal role in disseminating and thereby informing citizens about the activities of their representatives in Parliament. Through impartial reporting of parliamentary proceedings, newspapers assign shared responsibilities to both MPs and voters. MPs are subjected to heightened scrutiny from their constituents regarding their performance. For instance, a report highlighting the best and worst performing MPs, prominently featured in publications like the Daily Nation or The Standard, is likely to capture nationwide attention and provoke diverse reactions. While high-performing MPs may receive accolades, those depicted negatively are likely to face criticism and ridicule.

This study examines the advantages that newspaper audiences/readers gain from engaging with news about Parliamentary activities.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **The Herman and Chomsky's 'Manufacturing Consent – A Propaganda Model'**

Herman & Chomsky (1988) assert that in countries where state bureaucracy holds power, the tight control over the media, often enforced by official censorship, clearly indicates that the Press serves the interests of the dominant ruling political and business elites. Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model asserts that media outlets, particularly in countries with state bureaucracy, serve the interests of dominant political and business elites. This model identifies key factors influencing media coverage, including ownership concentration, advertising revenue, and government influence.

The scholars argue that in a world marked by significant wealth disparities and class conflicts, fulfilling this role necessitates well-coordinated propaganda efforts. However, in settings where the media are privately owned and formal censorship is absent, it becomes more challenging to observe such a propaganda system in action. This is particularly evident when media outlets engage in active competition, frequently exposing commercial and governmental wrongdoing while positioning themselves as advocates for free speech and the community's interests at large.

The Herman and Chomsky theory is pertinent to this research as it elucidates the factors influencing the publication or suppression of news items, specifically in the context of reporting or not reporting news from the Kenyan Parliament. The scholars identify what they term as "essential ingredients" of their propaganda model, or a series of news "filters," categorized as follows: (1) the dominance, concentrated ownership, wealth of owners, and profit motive of major mass media corporations; (2) advertising as the primary revenue source for the mass media; (3) the reliance of media outlets on information provided by government, business entities, and "experts" sponsored and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) "flak" as a method of media control; and (5) "anticommunism as a national ideology and control mechanism" (the latter specifically pertains to the media environment in the United States and other pro-Western nations during the Cold War era).

However, the main drawback of this Model, according to the researcher, is that while it explains the factors influencing the reporting of parliamentary news by the media, it does not address the impact of such news on the public. The Model does not provide insight into how the public is affected by the information disseminated by the Press from Parliament. In other words, it does not offer a means to assess public feedback regarding parliamentary news coverage by the media. This research seeks to investigate whether the Propaganda Model has any effect on parliamentary reporting by the Kenyan print media.

Regarding advertising as the primary source of income for mass media, it is widely acknowledged that advertisers wield significant influence over media content. Ogola (2017) observes that national governments are the largest advertisers in African news media. Withholding official advertising from private media outlets can be seen as an attempt to suppress freedom of expression, Ogola notes, adding that depriving private media companies of revenue serves as a subtle form of state control.

The researcher believes that the Habermas theory and the Propaganda Model are the most suitable frameworks for this study as they encompass all three aspects of the research: Media, Parliament, and the Public. These theories help achieve the stated objectives of the study: to investigate the factors influencing parliamentary news coverage in the Kenyan print media, to establish the role of media organizations in parliamentary reporting, and to analyze the benefits that newspaper audiences derive from consuming news about Parliament's activities. However, the "Manufacturing Consent" model has limitations in its failure to consider the feedback loop between media coverage and public perception. While it elucidates the factors influencing news reporting, it does not adequately

address how the public is impacted by parliamentary news or how their responses may influence subsequent media coverage.

In the Kenyan context, the Propaganda Model helps elucidate the factors shaping parliamentary reporting by the media, particularly concerning advertising revenue and government influence. Advertisers, including national governments, wield significant sway over media outlets, potentially influencing their editorial decisions and coverage of parliamentary affairs. However, a limitation of this model is its failure to consider the feedback loop between media coverage and public perception, which may impact subsequent media coverage.

In conclusion, both Habermas' theory of the public sphere and Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model offer valuable insights into the dynamics of parliamentary reporting in Kenya. While Habermas' framework underscores Parliament's role as a public sphere for debate, the Propaganda Model highlights factors shaping media coverage, including advertising revenue and government influence. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing the interplay between media, Parliament, and the public in the context of parliamentary reporting in Kenya.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a mixed methods approach and utilized triangulation within the constructivist philosophical framework. According to the official website of the Parliament of Kenya the Kenya Parliament, which consisted of the National Assembly and the Senate during the time of this study, comprised a total of 418 Members, inclusive of the Speakers of both chambers which made up of the target population. The sample size was 110 respondents. Mixed research methodology involved integrating qualitative and quantitative data, methods, methodologies, or paradigms within a research investigation. The primary tools utilized in the mixed research methodology included both closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and observations.

To determine the perception of parliamentary reporting as "positive" or "negative," quantitative data obtained from secondary sources were analyzed using content analysis techniques. This involved categorizing news articles or other media coverage related to parliamentary affairs based on the tone or sentiment expressed. Articles highlighting achievements, constructive debates, and positive developments were categorized as "positive," while those focusing on controversies, scandals, or negative aspects were categorized as "negative." The frequency and prominence of each category were then analyzed to gauge the overall perception of parliamentary reporting within the specified timeframe.

This study utilized purposive sampling as its participant selection method. In the case of this study, qualitative research involved the collection of primary data, which was qualitative in nature, through interviews with Key Informants, who were influential policymakers and holders of significant information pertaining to parliamentary and media affairs. The secondary data collection process involved sourcing information from various reliable sources, including academic journals, governmental reports, news articles, and relevant online databases. Furthermore, statistical tests were conducted to assess the reliability of the data, such as calculating internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha for survey items. In applying thematic analysis, the qualitative data collected from interviews, questionnaires, and other sources were carefully reviewed and coded to identify recurring themes or patterns related to the impacts of parliamentary reporting in Kenya.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Negative Reporting**

Critical coverage of parliamentary proceedings frequently brings to light matters such as corruption, ineffectiveness, and internal political conflicts. This type of reporting may center on scandals, disputes, and situations where legislative processes stall, with the intention of unveiling misconduct and ensuring elected representatives are held responsible. Pessimistic viewpoints have the potential to foster skepticism and lack of faith in the political framework, which could potentially erode democratic principles and establishments. Nonetheless, scrutinizing reporting plays a vital role as a watchdog, keeping the public informed about instances of abuse of authority and promoting openness and answerability.

A recent article in *The Standard Newspaper* exemplifies negative reporting within parliamentary coverage in Kenya. The article highlights instances of corruption and ineffectiveness within parliamentary oversight committees, shedding light on financial improprieties and misconduct among senior officials. Utilizing critical language and citing whistleblowers and leaked documents as sources, the article exposes systemic deficiencies eroding the credibility of parliamentary governance. It emphasizes failures in oversight and accountability, fostering skepticism and calls for reform among the public (Smith, 2023)

Negative reporting within the sphere of parliamentary coverage in Kenya pertains to conveying news and information in a manner that underscores deficiencies, controversies, and inadequacies within the legislative framework. This approach involves shedding light on instances of malpractice, mismanagement, inefficiency, and partisan deadlock, as well as uncovering legislative decisions or actions that may compromise the public interest or erode democratic principles. Negative reporting also entails investigating episodes of legislative inertia, wherein the parliament fails to enact vital legislation or adequately confront societal dilemmas. It may spotlight instances of political polarization, obstructionist tactics, and partisan maneuvers that obstruct the parliament's functionality and impede progress on significant matters.

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A recent investigative report from *The Standard*, a prominent Kenyan newspaper, has uncovered significant accusations of corruption and ineffectiveness within parliamentary oversight committees. The investigation exposes a recurring pattern of wrongdoing, favoritism, and financial improprieties plaguing these essential entities entrusted with holding the government accountable. The investigative report highlights numerous claims of corruption within parliamentary oversight committees, including instances of fund misappropriation, kickbacks, and bribery scandals involving senior officials. Testimonies from whistleblowers and leaked documents offer compelling evidence of systemic corruption eroding the credibility of parliamentary oversight. The report also reveals widespread inefficiencies and neglect within oversight committees, with lawmakers failing to conduct thorough inquiries, follow up on audit findings, or enforce accountability for financial wrongdoing by government officials. Critics argue that inadequate oversight has fostered unchecked corruption, undermining public faith in the parliamentary process. Transparency International Kenya, a prominent anti-corruption organization, condemns the lack of transparency and accountability within parliamentary oversight committees, pointing to opaque

decision-making processes, closed-door meetings, and restricted public access to information. The absence of robust accountability mechanisms exacerbates concerns about the integrity of parliamentary governance. The investigative report triggered public outcry and calls for immediate reforms to strengthen parliamentary oversight and combat corruption. Civil society groups, opposition leaders, and concerned citizens demanded heightened transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct in parliamentary affairs, urging decisive measures to eradicate corruption and rebuild public trust in Kenya's democratic institutions.

The revelations uncovered by The Standard shed light on the significant challenges confronting parliamentary oversight in Kenya, with allegations of corruption and inefficiency posing serious threats to the legitimacy and efficacy of these fundamental democratic bodies. As demands for reform intensify, addressing systemic deficiencies and restoring public confidence in parliamentary oversight must be prioritized to uphold principles of transparency, accountability, and effective governance in Kenya.

### **Positive Reporting**

Positive reporting underscores accomplishments, cooperation, and triumphs in legislative matters. It showcases occasions where legislators work together irrespective of party affiliations to enact significant laws, tackle societal issues, and advance the welfare of the populace. Favorable viewpoints have the potential to instill trust in the democratic system among the public, encouraging active involvement in civic matters and fostering solidarity on a national scale. By highlighting the achievements of elected officials, favorable reporting underscores the significance of participatory democracy and commitment to public duty.

Positive reporting within parliamentary coverage in Kenya is exemplified by a recent piece in the Daily Nation. The article showcases bipartisan efforts to reform the education sector through the Education Reform Bill. Using upbeat language and featuring interviews with lawmakers advocating for change, the article highlights the collaborative spirit and transformative potential of legislative endeavors. It underscores achievements and advancements in addressing challenges within the education system, instilling confidence and support for legislative initiatives among readers (Jones & Patel, 2022).

Positive reporting within the realm of parliamentary coverage in Kenya pertains to conveying news and information in a manner that accentuates accomplishments, constructive discussions, and efficacious governance procedures within the legislative body. It entails spotlighting the achievements, advancements, and favorable outcomes stemming from legislative endeavors, while also showcasing instances of bipartisan collaboration, consensus formation, and policy triumphs. Positive reporting also involves highlighting the array of voices and viewpoints within the parliament, encompassing endeavors by legislators to advocate for the underprivileged, champion social equity, and advance inclusive decision-making processes. Furthermore, it entails illuminating endeavors aimed at augmenting parliamentary openness, effectiveness, and public involvement, such as public hearings, citizen consultations, and mechanisms for legislative oversight.

In Kenya, education stands as a cornerstone of national advancement. Yet, challenges such as resource inadequacy, access disparities, and outdated curricula have impeded progress within the sector. Against this backdrop, a bipartisan initiative emerged within the Kenyan parliament to tackle these issues through comprehensive education reform. The Daily Nation, a prominent Kenyan newspaper, adopted a positive reporting stance on the legislative process surrounding the Education Reform Bill. The newspaper's coverage aimed to spotlight the cooperative endeavors of legislators from diverse political factions in driving substantial change within the education sector.

The Daily Nation underscored the collaborative spirit among lawmakers from various political affiliations in crafting and refining the Education Reform Bill. Interviews with key legislators illuminated their joint dedication

to enhancing educational outcomes for all Kenyan children, transcending partisan boundaries for the nation's collective advancement. Reporting delved into the substantive aspects of the Education Reform Bill, elucidating its objectives in addressing critical issues like classroom overcrowding, outdated pedagogical approaches, and unequal educational access. Thorough analysis provided readers with a comprehensive understanding of the proposed reforms and their potential impact on the education landscape. The newspaper actively involved citizens by seeking their perspectives on the proposed education reforms through opinion pieces, editorials, and digital platforms. By integrating public feedback into its reporting, the Daily Nation fostered inclusivity and encouraged civic engagement in the legislative process.

Throughout its coverage, the Daily Nation maintained an optimistic tone, highlighting the transformative potential of the Education Reform Bill in uplifting communities, empowering future generations, and propelling Kenya towards a brighter future. Human-interest narratives featuring success stories from schools and communities further reinforced the favorable narrative surrounding the reform endeavors. The positive reporting by the Daily Nation bolstered public awareness and backing for the Education Reform Bill. Its balanced and constructive coverage galvanized support for the legislation, prompting stakeholders to unite behind the proposed reforms. Ultimately, the bipartisan Education Reform Bill received parliamentary approval, marking a significant stride in Kenya's quest to enhance its education system.

Positive reporting in the context of parliamentary affairs in Kenya aims to instill public trust in democratic establishments, foster civic engagement, and contribute to a more knowledgeable and hopeful public discourse concerning the nation's governance processes and future prospects. Nonetheless, it is crucial for positive reporting to uphold journalistic integrity, impartiality, and precision, ensuring that it does not overlook critical issues, controversies, or deficiencies within the parliamentary framework.

### **Neutral Reporting**

To qualify as anything other than neutral, a narrative must demonstrate a ratio where either positive or negative remarks surpass the other by at least two-to-one. For instance, in an evaluation of a candidate's debate performance, there would need to be eight adverse comments for every four favorable ones for the narrative to be categorized as negative.

Neutral reporting within the realm of parliamentary coverage in Kenya entails presenting news and information in an objective and impartial manner, devoid of any preference for specific viewpoints or agendas. It involves offering a fair and balanced depiction of parliamentary proceedings, debates, and decisions, allowing readers to formulate their own opinions based on the facts presented. Neutral reporting is guided by journalistic principles of accuracy, equity, and autonomy, ensuring that the coverage remains untainted by editorial bias or ideological persuasion.

In terms of neutral reporting, both newspapers strive to present news and information in an objective and impartial manner. For example, a recent session within the Kenyan parliament regarding healthcare reform received equitable coverage in both publications. They provided comprehensive depictions of diverse viewpoints expressed by lawmakers, offering balanced analyses and expert opinions to facilitate reader understanding. By maintaining objectivity and impartiality in language and presentation, both newspapers ensure a fair portrayal of parliamentary proceedings and debates (Brown & Johnson, 2021).

Neutral reporting involves conveying parliamentary events, legislative actions, and political discussions without imposing the reporter's personal opinions or prejudices. It requires delivering comprehensive coverage of diverse viewpoints, perspectives, and arguments expressed within the parliament, enabling readers to develop a nuanced



comprehension of the issues under scrutiny. Neutral reporting endeavors to accord equal significance to various voices and stances, fostering enlightened public discourse and bolstering democratic engagement.

A recent session within the Kenyan parliament observed an exhaustive discourse concerning healthcare reform, wherein legislators from all political persuasions introduced multifaceted viewpoints and policy propositions. The exchange illuminated contrasting standpoints on enhancing healthcare accessibility and quality for all Kenyan inhabitants. The parliamentary dialogue garnered inclusive coverage, with journalists furnishing an impartial depiction of the manifold arguments articulated by lawmakers. Each standpoint was presented equitably and objectively, affording readers insight into the nuances of the healthcare reform discourse. Lawmakers articulated a spectrum of views on healthcare reform, encompassing suggestions for augmented governmental financing, expansion of healthcare infrastructure, and overhauls to the national health insurance system. Neutral reporting ensured equitable treatment of all perspectives, devoid of preference for any particular proposal. Beyond reporting the parliamentary dialogue, journalists sought professional evaluations from healthcare practitioners and policy experts to furnish context and understanding concerning the proposed reforms. Objective presentation of expert opinions facilitated enhanced comprehension among readers regarding the potential ramifications of divergent healthcare reform approaches. The report encompassed feedback from diverse segments of the populace, inclusive of healthcare professionals, patients, and advocacy organizations. By integrating varied external perspectives, neutral reporting offered a comprehensive depiction of public sentiment regarding endeavors to reform healthcare.

The neutral reporting on the parliamentary deliberation pertaining to healthcare reform exemplifies the media's role in fostering informed public discourse. Through equitable presentation of diverse perspectives, journalists empower citizens to engage with intricate policy matters and contribute to democratic processes. Such reporting fosters transparency, accountability, and civic involvement within Kenya's parliamentary framework.

In essence, neutral reporting in parliamentary coverage serves as a dependable fountain of information, empowering citizens to stay abreast of legislative endeavors and political advancements without succumbing to partisan biases or editorial inclinations. It assumes a pivotal role in upholding public trust in the media and advancing an enlightened citizenry within Kenya's democratic structure.

**Table 1: Comparison of Reporting Approaches in Parliamentary Coverage of Healthcare Reform in Kenya**

<b>REPORTING APPROACH</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTICS</b>
<b>Positive Reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Highlights achievements and successful initiatives within the parliament, such as the passing of healthcare reform bills aimed at improving access to quality healthcare for all citizens.</li> <li>▪ Emphasizes constructive debates and bipartisan cooperation among lawmakers in addressing healthcare challenges.</li> <li>▪ Focuses on effective governance processes within the parliament, showcasing instances of transparent decision-making and accountability.</li> <li>▪ Showcases legislative accomplishments that benefit citizens, promote socio-economic development, and uphold democratic principles.</li> <li>▪ Inspires public confidence in democratic institutions and fosters optimism about the country's governance processes.</li> </ul>
<b>Negative Reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emphasizes shortcomings and failures within the parliamentary system, such as instances of corruption, mismanagement, and inefficiency that hinder progress on healthcare reform.</li> <li>▪ Highlights controversies and scandals surrounding healthcare legislation, including allegations of bribery, embezzlement of funds, and unethical conduct among lawmakers.</li> <li>▪ Critiques partisan gridlock and political maneuvering that obstructs meaningful healthcare reform and undermines public trust in the parliamentary process.</li> <li>▪ Raises public awareness about deficiencies in transparency, accountability, and responsiveness within the parliament, sparking calls for reform and increased oversight.</li> <li>▪ Aims to hold lawmakers accountable for their actions and promote transparency in governance processes.</li> </ul>
<b>Neutral Reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Presents news and information in an impartial, unbiased manner, without favoring any particular viewpoint or agenda.</li> <li>▪ Provides a balanced portrayal of parliamentary proceedings, debates, and decisions related to healthcare reform, allowing readers to form their own opinions based on presented facts.</li> <li>▪ Offers comprehensive coverage of diverse viewpoints from lawmakers, experts, and stakeholders involved in the healthcare reform debate.</li> <li>▪ Presents arguments and counterarguments without editorial bias, enabling readers to understand the complexity of healthcare policy issues and legislative processes.</li> <li>▪ Facilitates informed public discourse and encourages civic engagement by providing accurate and objective information about parliamentary activities related to healthcare reform.</li> </ul>

Feedback from Media Owners, Standard Media Group senior editor and manager, on the importance of public interest as a key determinant; for instance, whether the matter being discussed in the house affected a significant part of the population. Prominence is also a major factor, adds the respondents. “Prominence concerns who is involved and how important are they in the hierarchy of our republic. A matter affecting the pension of a sitting President receives greater attention than a matter involving bureaucrats in a small parastatal.” Other factors

include currency and relevance; matters that are in present public attention tend to receive more attention in the newsroom. “For example, right now the focus is on the election, if Parliament is amending the election laws it would definitely play prominently in news consideration.” Absurdity/oddity also counts a lot in the selection of parliamentary news. “If the matter debated or that which comes up in Parliament is absurd or out of the ordinary, like a fight between MPs, a broadside by the Speaker or a Clerk dressing down MPs, it would warrant serious news consideration.”

Feedback from Parliamentary Reporters, a veteran parliamentary reporter Nation Media Group, listed issues affecting the public (mainly from statements sought by Members covering an array of issues), as well proposed legislations that could either have positive or negative impact on the public, and proposed laws that are punitive or seek to claw back gains in the Constitution, as among factors that determine coverage of parliamentary news coverage in Kenya. Other factors, according to Key Informant PR1, include proposed policies and regulations to give effect to passed laws, as well as the budget making process. “The budget-making process is a role of Parliament and therefore, the print media puts more emphasis especially on the proposed taxes, public debt, as well as recurrent and development expenditure. Additionally, MPs’ character and behavior in transacting parliamentary business, sideshows that usually cloud the business of the day, as well as sibling rivalry between the two Houses (Senate and National Assembly), also play a key role in determining what gets covered, and what does not.

Feedback from Parliamentary Leadership, the Office of the Speaker of the National Assembly emphasized that the level of public interest generated by news, whether positive or negative, significantly influences what is published in print media.

The Office of the Clerk of the National Assembly highlighted that news trends, public interests, conflicts, and timeliness play pivotal roles in shaping news coverage originating from Parliament.

The Office of the Majority Leader of the National Assembly identified political and socio-economic factors as primary determinants of newspaper coverage concerning Parliament. It was stated that "major political events in the country are newsworthy, as are parliamentary decisions that impact public interests or society's economic welfare."

As per the Office of the Minority Leader of the National Assembly (Key Informant PL6), media coverage of parliamentary affairs in print media is largely dictated by the frequency of appearance of political figures in the news (media prominence). They explained, "The media's coverage of elected and nominated representatives aligns with their level of parliamentary involvement... High-profile parliamentarians often receive more attention from reporters, leveraging their influence to shape news coverage."

According to the Office of the Minority Whip of the National Assembly (Key Informant PL7), key determinants of parliamentary new coverage in newspapers are Bills and Motions being debated, as well as conduct of debates. For instance, chaotic sessions get prominent coverage.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study evaluated the negative, positive and neutral reporting in newspapers in Kenya: A case study of daily nation and the standard newspapers. Editorial agendas, political pressures, financial constraints, and technological advancements collectively shape the selection and presentation of parliamentary events by media outlets. Understanding these factors is essential for fostering media transparency and accountability within Kenya's democratic system. Media organizations act as vigilant educators, informing citizens about legislative processes and enabling them to engage meaningfully in civic affairs. However, the effectiveness of media establishments in

parliamentary reporting can be hampered by editorial biases, political influences, and resource limitations. To enhance their contribution, media organizations must prioritize accuracy, impartiality, and inclusivity in their coverage, ensuring that citizens possess the requisite knowledge to participate effectively in the democratic process. Additionally, initiatives aimed at improving media literacy and civic education can further enrich the benefits for newspaper audiences, empowering them to navigate intricate political landscapes and advance democratic values.

This study revealed the multifaceted nature of factors influencing the reporting of Parliament by the Media, underscoring their complexity. These factors encompassed the pivotal roles played by gatekeepers and agenda setters within the media landscape, alongside overarching public interests. Furthermore, the study highlighted the significant impact of consumers of parliamentary news, who wield considerable influence over the content published for their consumption. Contrary to the Habermasian concept of the Public Sphere, which portrays the public as passive recipients of news, Kenyans actively engage with and react to news that holds implications for their lives. For example, reports exposing corruption within Parliament are not overlooked, as Kenyans understand the profound ramifications of corruption on their well-being. MPs facing negative publicity often face repercussions from the electorate and are at risk of electoral rejection in subsequent elections.

The symbiotic relationship between Parliament, the Media, and the Public is expected to endure despite occasional "clashes" between Parliament and the Media, which inevitably affect the Public. These conflicts arise when parliamentary officials perceive negative portrayal by the Media. In such instances, the Media becomes the target of criticism. While incidents of reporters or media outlets being banned from parliamentary reporting have diminished in recent years, there is no assurance against future occurrences. A media outlet may still face exclusion from parliamentary proceedings due to allegations of unfair or biased coverage. Regardless of such challenges, Parliament remains a crucial source of news for public consumption, and its role as a forum for public discourse is unlikely to diminish in the foreseeable future.

This study proposes several recommendations, many of which stem from the feedback obtained from informants in the field.

The first recommendation is for the establishment of a Specialized Parliamentary Newspaper. A dedicated daily newspaper that is exclusively focused on parliamentary reporting would ensure thorough coverage of parliamentary proceedings without competing for attention with other news topics, providing readers with comprehensive insights into legislative activities.

The second recommendation is for the allocation of More Pages for Parliamentary News so as to accommodate a wider range of stories and issues related to Parliament. This expansion will allow for more extensive coverage of parliamentary affairs and prevent important legislative activities from being overlooked due to space limitations.

The third recommendation is the launch of Vernacular Newspapers for Parliamentary Reporting. These newspapers should be specifically tailored to report on parliamentary activities, aiming to reach a broader audience, particularly those not fluent in English or Kiswahili. By delivering news in local languages, these publications can improve accessibility and understanding of parliamentary proceedings among diverse linguistic communities.

Fourthly, there should be increased use of Social Media for Parliamentary Reporting. Priority should be given to the transition from traditional print newspapers to online platforms and social media for parliamentary reporting. There should be a recognition of the trend towards digital news consumption among consumers and investment in online channels to broaden the reach and adapt to evolving media consumption habits.

Fifthly, there should be provision of Ongoing Training for Parliamentary Journalists. Comprehensive training programs should be offered for journalists covering parliamentary affairs to enhance their understanding of legislative processes, procedures, and reporting standards. In addition, there should be adequate collaboration with media organizations and parliamentary institutions to conduct training sessions and workshops, ensuring that journalists are adequately equipped to report on parliamentary activities accurately and effectively.

Sixth, study tours and exchange programs for parliamentary reporters should be organized regularly so as to give International Exposure and enable them to learn from best practices in parliamentary reporting worldwide. Collaboration between media entities and parliamentary institutions can facilitate opportunities for journalists to visit other parliaments globally, broaden their perspectives, and improve their reporting skills.

Further Research on Electronic Media Coverage should be conducted to explore the dynamics of parliamentary reporting in electronic media, such as radio and television stations, through additional research studies. An investigation into the unique challenges and opportunities associated with electronic media coverage of parliamentary affairs to develop strategies for enhancing transparency and accountability in this realm, should be done.

Media entities must uphold and bolster editorial independence to ensure impartial reporting of parliamentary proceedings. This involves implementing robust editorial policies that shield against undue influence from political or commercial interests, thereby safeguarding the integrity of journalistic coverage.

Media outlets should allocate resources to training programs designed to enhance the skills and knowledge of journalists reporting on parliamentary affairs. These initiatives should focus on cultivating investigative abilities, promoting critical analysis, and reinforcing adherence to ethical standards, thereby elevating the overall quality of reporting.

Media organizations should prioritize transparency in their coverage of parliamentary activities by furnishing comprehensive information and holding elected officials accountable for their conduct. This includes conducting thorough investigations into allegations of corruption or misconduct within the parliament to ensure accountability.

To ensure well-rounded and inclusive reporting, media establishments should diversify their sources of information and incorporate a broad spectrum of perspectives in their coverage of parliamentary affairs. This entails soliciting input from civil society organizations, experts, and ordinary citizens to present a comprehensive view of legislative issues.

Media entities should capitalize on digital platforms and social media channels to broaden the accessibility and impact of parliamentary news coverage. This involves utilizing interactive features, live streaming, and multimedia content to engage audiences and facilitate informed public discourse on parliamentary matters.

To empower citizens to critically engage with parliamentary reporting, media literacy initiatives should be expanded and integrated into educational curricula. These programs should focus on fostering critical thinking skills, fact-checking abilities, and media literacy competencies among the public.

Media organizations should establish platforms for public dialogue and engagement on parliamentary issues, enabling citizens to voice their opinions, pose questions, and interact with elected officials. This fosters greater transparency, accountability, and public trust in the parliamentary process.

Media outlets should forge partnerships with civil society organizations and advocacy groups to amplify their impact and advocate for reforms aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability in parliamentary reporting.

This collaboration can facilitate joint initiatives, research endeavors, and advocacy campaigns focused on improving media coverage of parliamentary affairs.

Media organizations should establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impact of their parliamentary reporting on public awareness, engagement, and trust in democratic institutions. This includes conducting audience surveys, analyzing feedback, and tracking key performance indicators to assess the effectiveness of their reporting efforts.

Media entities should actively champion press freedom and defend journalist's rights to report on parliamentary affairs without fear of censorship or reprisal. This entails engaging with policymakers, civil society actors and international bodies to uphold press freedom laws and shield journalists from harassment or intimidation.

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