KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, ARCHEOLOGY & POLITICAL STUDIES

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS IN KENYA: A CASE OF THE TANA DELTA CONFLICT.

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AUGUST, 2015
DECLARATION

Declaration by the Student

This research study is my original work and has not been presented to any other examination body. No part of this research should be reproduced without my consent or that of The Kenyatta University.

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Declaration by the Supervisors

This project study has been completed with our approval as The Kenyatta University Supervisors

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, ARCHAELOGY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE
DEDICATION

This research work has been accomplished through fortitude, sacrifice, hard work and dedicated study. I dedicate this study to my family; my parents Renson and Rosemary, brother Victor and sisters Grace and Solace.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research project could not have been realized without the support of the following: The almighty God for the gift of life, guidance and wisdom to ensure the academic tenacity required to successfully complete this study. Secondly, I would wish to extend my earnest gratitude to my supervisors Dr. George Maroko and Dr. Pius Kakai for their constant encouragement, counsel, stoicism and invaluable guidance. Lastly, I would like to recognize the role played by all the teaching staff of the Kenyatta University for their splendid ideas and guidance during this program. I would like to thank Mr. Mbae, Dr. Kiruthu and Dr. Mulu for their readership of the project and guidance. In addition, much gratitude to the journalists and government officials including security agencies and data collection assistants who unwaveringly contributed towards data collection and insights without which the study could not have been accomplished. To all of you, may God bless you abundantly.
ABSTRACT
This study sought to establish the role of media in conflict situations with a special focus on the Tana delta conflict that occurred in the months of August and September 2012. The objectives were to explain the causes of the Tana Delta Conflict, to investigate the role of the Kenyan media during the Tana Delta Conflict and to assess the impact of the media reports on the Tana delta conflict. Media is a critical player in times of conflict (Berger 2011). The information being conveyed, the means used and how it is done can shape the dynamics of a conflict. It can help to end hostilities, create an understanding of the issues of the conflict and also be the bridge to fast and amicable conflict resolution. However when badly used, it can also flame the violent conflict and make it difficult for conflict resolution processes to succeed (Frere 2011). Kenya has had a fair share of conflicts and some are still being experienced today. The 2007/8 post election violence was however the most devastating in terms of deaths, displacement and destruction of property. The Tana delta conflict of August and September 2012 was the most devastating in terms of lost lives, over 100 after the 2007/8 violent conflict. It is therefore useful to find out whether media covered it sensationaly or otherwise. Conflict theory and peace journalism theory were used to guide the study. The two theories bring out the issues of resources and conflicts and how journalists should informatively report on them. The research used descriptive research as the research design. The study targeted a population of 200 individuals in Tana River who reside around the conflict area and also journalists who covered the conflict. Among these a sample size of 100 was picked through stratified sampling to obtain the research sample. The data collected was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. This included the use of charts, figures and percentages. Questionnaires were used for data collection using both structured and unstructured questions. Personal interviews were also used to get in-depth data. The researcher analyzed the data and generated findings which demonstrated that media does have a role in conflict situations. Data collected illustrated that media has a role in framing conflicts depending on how it reports on them. It also has a role in escalating conflict if it does not report on it informatively. The media has a critical role in providing balanced reporting through good investigative journalism. Peace building and the use of community and vernacular radio stations are tools that can be used during conflict situation to promote peace and tranquility. The study recommends continuous training and capacity enhancement of journalists both in institutions of higher learning and media houses especially in conflict reporting to ensure they are good agents of informative journalism.
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Criminal Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNBS</td>
<td>Kenya National Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTLM</td>
<td>Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines</td>
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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Community Radio: This is a radio station whose frequency is limited to a specific geographical area. Most of them are donor funded and do not attract much advertising albeit some do for sustainability reasons.

Conflict: Coser (1967) has defined conflict as a struggle between two or more people over values, competition for status, power or scarce resources.

Media: Collins dictionary defines media as the means of communication that reach large numbers of people, such as television, newspapers, and radio

Violence: This is any form of physical, emotional, verbal, institutional, structural or spiritual behavior, attitude, policy or condition that diminishes, dominates or destroys individuals and institutions. It could be targeted to a specific people based on class, ethnicity, color, sex, and religion.

Peace: Positive peace is the simultaneous presence of many desirable states of mind and society, such as harmony, justice and equity. Negative peace denotes the absence of war and other forms of large scale violent human conflict.

Peace building: According to the United Nations, this is the promotion of institutional and socio-economic measures, at local or national level, to address underlying causes of conflict.
**Vernacular Radio**: This is a radio station which broadcasts in a specific vernacular language. They have national and even international frequencies. They rely on advertising to make money just like mainstream media.
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Media is a critical tool for communication and development in society. In times of conflict, media has often been accused of not reporting accurately hence inciting the conflict. Selemani (2012) argues that media is accused of being a source of conflict through propaganda and bias in their reporting. This can result in more problems since information conveyed is the basis of decision making.

Felson, (1996) asserts that media roles have been observed in several ways and in different contexts. In peace and conflict, media as an institution and as individual practitioners have been condemned to play negative role for conflict escalation and hence fail to consider about peace initiatives. Media works have been correlated to the issues that result to violent behaviors such as the correlation between massive exposure to the media and the increase of violent behaviors among media audiences.

Media industry is a business and sometimes depends on conflict situations to increase circulation or coverage (Carruthers, 2000). A point of discussion is on how far and what ways media can shape the society by the way media report conflict events. Lynch (2006) adds that politics also influences the content media covers and this politicians can use to their advantage. In Kenya, many politicians own majority of the media houses hence they sometimes influence content. Furthermore, politics take a center stage of media content published or aired.
Jeong (2009) asserts that the bias on political coverage is global. He records a study that was done in the US in which respondents were asked whether they felt that political coverage took center stage and also whether that news was bias. The result was that over 69 percent felt the coverage was fairly biased.

During violent or non-violent conflict situations, the relationship between the media and audience grows. Kuusik (2010) adds that, lack of information can, at any stage of a conflict, makes people desperate, restless and easy to manipulate. Kuusik further argues that media can support peace initiatives because media has the power to influence beliefs, opinions and attitudes of people.

The African continent has experienced violent conflict for decades and the coverage of these conflicts has perhaps not aided in reducing them. Puddephatt, A. (2006) argues that the African media has failed to give due coverage the success stories on conflicts from the continent and as a result, international media thrives in reporting negatively about the conflicts.

Mchaughlin (2002) ascertains that, media can play a good role in peace building in places that are surrounded by structural conflict. He gives an example of the violent conflict in Mali in 2008 in which Radio Douentza which broadcasts around Timbuktu reminded the residents of the coexistence between communities and how they need each other. The communities were nomads and farmers and shared grazing lands but increasing population reduced this resource leading to conflicts. The station developed a series of public service announcements reminding the farmers and herders about their traditional collaboration and advising restraint, informed security officers
of the affected areas promptly and encouraged farmers to post messages on the radio as to when they would be ready for harvesting. The herders were listening to Radio Douentza, and they knew when they could safely move across these particular fields. The conflict ended faster.

Mironko (2004) adds that during the Rwanda genocide of 1994, different media were recognized for their role in mobilizing and inciting Hutu ethnicity to kill Tutsi ethnicity. One of the series of examples is on how Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines-RTLM spread propaganda against Tutsi by means of hate messages. RTLM being supported by the Hutu majority who were incited to ‘go to work’; to mean joining the Tutsi ethnic cleansing in Rwanda.

The Kenyan 2007/8 post election violence showed instances in which the media played an active role in fanning the conflict. Ogola (2011) asserts that the mushrooming of vernacular stations that were owned by politicians made is easier for them to use corded language to inflame communities. He adds that lack of training on how to report on conflicts led to increased hostilities. This has seen journalist Joshua Sang’ face crimes against humanity charges at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The Tana River conflict that occurred in the months of August and September 2012 had devastating impact on the local population. Over 100 people were killed in what was reported in the media as politically motivated, land and resource driven conflict. The Daily Nation on the 25th of August, 2012, reported that the conflict was primarily linked to politicians who inflame communities to turn against each other and the fight for the control of the three-mile strip on the east bank of River Tana on the side of Garissa and Ijara districts.
The Daily Nation article further stated that conflicts in Tana River seem to heighten in the run-up to elections. It gave credence to statistics showing that there were clashes in Salama in Garsen in 1996; in Zubaki, Duwayo, Kinakomba and Mnazini in Galole, and Idzowe and Chara in 2001; and in 2012 in Kipini. This is an indication of the jostling for power between the communities in the area.

According to The Kenya National Bureau of Statistic (KNBS) 2011, Tana River occupies a total area of 38,782 km. sq with an estimated population of 181,000. The main production system in the area is farming and pastoralism with a small portion of the population engaged in fishing. Tana River is home to two major ethnic groups: the Pokomo, who are farmers, and the Orma, who are pastoralists. The collapse of the three major irrigation schemes: Bura, Hola, and Tana which had earlier influenced residents’ lifestyles in terms of sources of income, forced the nomadic pastoralists to move during the wet season, while the farmers remained along the river. During the dry season the pastoralists move back to the river in search of water and pasture. Weiss adds that the utilization of the waters of the Tana River has been in the middle of a conflict pitting these two communities against each other. The Pokomo claim the land along the river and the Orma claim the waters of the river (Weiss 2012).

Tana River has the characteristics of a structured conflict as explained by Galtung (1981). The area experiences underdevelopment, poor infrastructure, poor communication and social amenities, and social marginalization. Communities therefore arm themselves because of the need to defend against perceived attacks. Weiss (2012) asserts that they feel that the government
security machinery has not been able to effectively respond to violence. Isolation has led to increased demand for guns. How this information is related, especially by the media is most crucial to the sustenance of it or ending of hostilities.

Hodgson (1996) argues that the media coverage is the very lifeblood of politics because it shapes the perceptions that form the reality on which people base their political actions. He says conflicts are a news value hence when covering them, balanced reporting is critical. The covering of the Tana River conflict is therefore important to society.

Naturally professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict. They seek to present accurate and impartial news coverage (Kempf 2007). But it is often through good reporting that conflict is reduced (Howard, 2003), and what is demanded is no more than responsible journalism. Without responsibility, good journalism is inconceivable.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Tana River County has experienced recurrent violent conflicts in the run up to the elections. The residents have been displaced, property destroyed and loved ones lost since the 1992 multi-party elections. Electoral violence in Kenya has been evident also in other parts of the country like the rift valley. However it is the 2007/8 violence that was catastrophic in terms of lives lost and displacement among others. The violent conflict in the Tana delta in the months of August and September 2012 was the most fatal since the 2007/8 violence. The reporting of it brought to the fore the critical journalists’ role in reporting accurately and instructively on conflicts to ensure the audience are not only well informed but also be the bridge to better reduce hostilities and
offer information necessary to ending the conflict. Many a times, media has been criticized for negative reporting on conflict and fail to consider peace initiatives. The media especially radio stations reporting in the area gave contradictory information that could have fuelled the conflict. It failed to bring out the main issues and players. They also only gave one side of the story hence affecting the accuracy and reliability of the information being reported. The media covering these conflicts is critical as it can either help bring out the issues which would then be the basis for conflict resolution or escalate the violence if reported sensationally. By reporting one side of the conflict, the media undermines the ability of the protracted parties to bridge their divide and find common good to work together and also make other parties, not directly involved in the conflict not get the best picture of the conflict, its issues and dynamics. Conflict sensitive journalism reporting is a model that when used in covering conflicts can better ensure the journalist does not escalate the conflict.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore the causes of the Tana Delta Conflict.

2. To investigate the role of the Kenyan media during the Tana Delta Conflict

3. To assess the impact of the media reports on the Tana delta conflict.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the causes of the Tana delta conflict?

2. How did the Kenyan media provide coverage of the Tana delta conflict?

3. Why is the impact of media reports on the Tana delta conflict important?
1.5 RESEARCH PREMISE

This research is premised on the knowledge that media has a core role to play in informing society about what is happening in the world. Conflict is a news value, meaning media will always report on conflicts, especially when it is violent conflict. The Tana Delta conflict was certainly violent conflict in which over 100 people lost their lives. However, what matter most is how media exercise this critical role it has. When it undertakes it informatively, then society learns more and it can also help to bridge the divide between the protracted parties. However when exercised partially, it is dangerous and can cause more harm, damage to property and loss of lives. How media covered the Tana Delta conflict of August and September 2012 is crucial to understanding whether media has learnt something since 2007/8 post election violence in which it was indicted for contributing to fanning violence.

1.6 JUSTIFICATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The media is an important tool in a society. It has a lot of influence on the public and situations taking place in the society. The study is significant as it will expose the insensitive reporting by media on the Tana Delta Conflict of August-September 2012 and other conflicts and encourage responsible and reconciliatory media reporting.

The study is also significant in making the media to be self regulating and enables the Media Council to adopt self regulating methods and the reporters to be sensitive when reporting on matters which can influence conflicts taking place in the country. The study will also advance new approaches to the academics to come up with research on the role of the media and the need for the media to be sensitive to development and conflict matters.
The Tana Delta Conflict of August-September 2012 was chosen for the study because it had the most fatalities since the 2007/8 post election violence. That conflict led to over 100 people dead yet various institutional and constitutional reforms were being implemented since 2008. The media had been accused of fanning the 2007/8 post election violence hence studying how this conflict was covered by media was critical to learning whether media is progressing in informative journalists especially reporting on conflicts.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study will be restricted to Tana delta conflict in terms of the geographical scope. It will assess the role of media coverage in conflict situations using the Tana Delta. The study is restricted to the period between August and September 2012.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In undertaking the study, the volatile conflict situation hindered the process of gathering research information in the Tana Delta, however, the researcher used the local research assistants to overcome this problem. In addition, the terrain in the area was not easy to navigate since means of transport were also scarce. The researcher planned more days for the study and also diversified on the research assistants utilizing those within specific areas of the study. In addition, there was some suspicions from the respondents on what exactly the research was meant for. This was bridged by the letter from school and also trusts they had with the research assistants who were people they know.
CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the various literature related to empirical literature on the role of the media in conflict reporting. It also covers the theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding the study and identify the knowledge gap to be researched.

2.1.1: Conflicts in society

One of the defining conflicts in the 20th century was the cold war, a conflict of ideas and systems as much as nations, regions. McLaughlin (2002) argues that perhaps it was the engagement of hearts through journalism during the conflict that was so central to its sustenance. In Kenya, journalism and media in general are used during conflicts to not just report on them but also provide an audience for the protracted parties to be heard.

Conflicts may be protracted social conflicts as defined by Edward Azar as those in which communities are deprived of satisfaction of their basic needs on the basis of the communal identity. The deprivation is complex from factors such as the state and other linkages including colonial legacies, multi-communal nature and historical domestic settings (Azar 1990). The Tana Delta conflict is both a historical setting and communal differences.

The genesis of these kinds of conflicts could be issues like communal content as could be exacerbated by divide and rule during the colonial days and cemented by independent governments, human needs which Azar asserts “the most obvious ontological need is individual
and communal physical survival and well-being” and the government’s role in ensuring that all communities within its jurisdiction are able to meet their basic human needs (Azar 1990). The communal element in this conflict was joint researches of water and grazing lands whose scarcity fuels the violent conflicts.

2.1.2: Media and Conflicts

Journalists can play important roles in conflicts. They can be the channel of communication between the parties to the conflict, provide information about the parties to the conflict and issues at hand and offer education on the different ways to peaceful resolution of the conflict. They can also help in building trust among parties to the conflict and the public, counteract misinformation, analyze the conflict, help identify the underlying interests of issues, allow parties to express their emotions, empower the parties like marginalized groups and help in consensus building (Villanueva, 2009). Mainstream media and also radio stations based in Mombasa covered the conflict.

Waal (2002) says that conflicts are indeterminate in that all actors including both mediators and belligerent parties have imperfect information and their actions have unanticipated outcomes. Protracted parties in the Tana Delta conflict would use media especially radio stations to provide information on causes and genesis of the conflict. Posner (2005) asserts that journalists and scholars write about politics of ethnic divide on societies and competition but fail to question reasons there under.
The public has a certain expectation of the media. Whitaker & Ramsey (2009) say the public expect media to be truthful, to prove that their first loyalty is to citizens, maintain independence from those they cover, monitor power and give voice to the voiceless, provide a forum for public criticism and problem solving. Kenyans expect media to be truthful guided by the role media played, especially vernacular media in the 2007/8 post election violence.

Journalists have to engage with various constraints as they report. Hodgson (1996) says the constraints of space mean that the language used must be with care to get the maximum effect. It must be clear, unambiguous and to the point. This is to avoid misinterpretation of the information passed across. He adds that newspaper stories send people to television and radio to see the latest development. Radio newsflashes sends people to newspapers to get more details. Radio stations were most relied by the locals including vernacular stations and Swahili based in Mombasa. However, the country relied on television and newspapers to know of the conflict.

2.1.3: Conflict Reporting

Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) advice on how journalists can carefully use appropriate language. There is need to avoid adjectives like ‘brutal’, ‘cruel’ and ‘barbaric’. This is because the emotion of the journalist takes center stage and is viewed to be taking sides in the conflict. Avoidance of descriptions like ‘terrorist’ and ‘extremist’ shows bias. Also to be avoided are victimizing language like ‘devastated’, ‘defenseless’ and ‘pathetic’. Such words can be disempowering.

Harris & Spark (1998) assert that newspaper reports need to be understood by people from a wide variety of educations and cultural backgrounds. This statement underlines the critical nature
a story is published especially the language used in reporting. When it is reporting on conflicts, the threshold is higher because conflicts are emotional and destructive. Newspapers front pages during the period were of the conflict, highlighting the importance they gave it as news value.

The manner in which journalists cover conflict is affected by different imperatives. Wolfsfeld (1997) in Cottle (2006) argues that the role media plays in conflicts varies according to political context of the conflict, resources, skills and political power of the players involved. It is also determined by the relationship between the press and each antagonist, the state of public opinion and the ability of the journalist to gain access to the conflicts areas. Also, this role varies from conflicts to conflicts and can also change in the course of a particular conflict. The Tana Delta conflict was quite volatile and journalists were restricted on where they can reach, largely behind police officers who were calming the situation.

Regardless of any such outcome in, media consultant Cornelius Pratt in Kasoma (1994) says journalism as a duty calls for the dissemination of salient facts in such a way that decision making is left to the reader with whom all facts are shared. Maggie O’Kane, writes in Mchaughlin (2002) that the highest thing journalists should achieve in the truth. Truth during conflicts like the Tana delta conflict of August-September 2012 was determined by who you speak to and without getting all sides to the conflict, the position provided may not be truthful.

When these conflicts occur, the reporting of them must also be done devoid of emotions and other prejudices by a journalist. Lindsey Hilsum who covered the Rwandan genocide for the channel four news, asserts in Mchaughlin (2002) that the job of a journalist is to try and
understand not emotionally but historically the conflict at hand. The Tana River conflict has occurred previously twice and it remains a potent area due to land problems. It is therefore incumbent upon journalists to historically contextualize the conflict and solutions.

Cottle (2006) writes that conflicts provide the raw material for strong human interest stories where journalists can seek to find pathos and tragedy, heroism and camaraderie’s, acts of selfishness and personalized experiences of suffering. Galtung (1993) says that not only do media have a perverse fascination with war and violence, they also neglect the peace forces at work. As the media work, they amplify the sound of guns rather than muting them. Galtung adds the reason is because those who cover them are badly trained, looking only to make negative news faster and not patience with the long-term, critical work of thousands, millions of people.

Brown (2001) in Yanacopulos & Hanlon (2006) argues that many ethnic and internal conflicts are triggered by selfish leaders who will do anything to get to power. They often incite ethnic violence. Here, the media can play a critical role in bringing out the issues, in trying to decipher the real issues in the conflicts, accessed from authorities and verified. In the Tana conflict, it would bring out the leaders behind the conflicts and their interests.

Most of the conflicts, like the Tana River conflict, have a history. Esman (1994) in Yanacopulos & Hanlon (2006) says ethnicity cannot be politicized unless an underlying core of memories, experiences or meaning moves people to collective action. Unfortunately also, historical myths can be shaped from imagined pasts to legitimate current goals.
Investigative journalism can help unearth both perceived issues and real concerns of a people leading to the conflicts. Hodgon (1996) is emphatic that the essence of investigative reporting is the close attention to details and the systematic interviewing of people involved and combining necessary documents. This paradigm of reporting can help the parties to a conflict realize the truth of why they could be in a conflict, especially an ethnic conflict like the Tana.

Jeong (2009) is emphatic that in understanding conflict, it is critical to examine the sources of discontent and animosity to identify the phases of evolving relationship between adversaries and the escalation of their struggles and the eventual recession of hostilities to resolution of the differences. This is even more critical to the media when it is ethnic conflicts like the Tana River which is recurrent and devastates peoples’ lives. The media needs to devote more attention on the regulation and management of the conflict even if it may take long.

Wolfseld (1997) in Cottle (2006) in the book, mediatized conflict gives the different ways in which media, conflict and politics work together. He says that political antagonists will use the media to fulfill their objectives. This means that journalists should be careful on the source of information they use to report. Journalists should also be keen on what exactly they highlight as it can be the reason for ending a conflict or exacerbating it. The Tana Delta conflict having being historically around electioneering period attests to the argument by Wolfseld that media should be careful on their source of information in times of conflict.

An understanding of conflict should also include the institutional roles of various organizations involved. This is beyond the psychological and behavioral elements that instigate the aggression
Jeong (2009). In the Tana conflict, the roles of the provincial administration, local politicians and the security forces before, during and after the conflict can be best highlighted by the media. Other players can easily be biased to satisfy own interests.

Jeong (2009) retorts that most conflicts involve value differences and power disparities. Misperceptions and miscommunication play an important role in the evolution of adversarial relationships. Here, the media could help the conflicting parties realize where the truths lay and where there are lies. He adds that even though a conflict may originate from an economic or other material source, it can easily expand to identity differences with escalation. In an ethnic conflict this can even affect families who are in cross-ethnic marriages. In the Tana Delta conflict, sieving truth from lies would involve providing both sides with the same air time by media so that the public gets a balanced perspective.

The media can help in bringing out the issues that led to the hostilities. Each issue can be regarded as a point of disagreement to be resolved, thus reveling what the conflict is about. Jeong (2009) says issues may revolve around specific concerns that are associated with interests and values or around the general relationships founded on long-standing grievances. Fundamentally is that issues need to be examined beyond the surface phenomena, since the contention is likely to be attributed to more than one source. A historical reporting of this conflict in Tana would help or provide a rich coverage that is not restricted to the current conflict.

Carter, Irani & Volkan (2007) assert that humanity’s failure to prevent, mitigate and resolve ethno-political conflicts suggest that those seeking to end them may be missing certain insights
or new, alternative perspectives and dynamics involved in the conflict. Burton (2011) says the media is one such institution that can be relied upon to bring out the missing links. The conflict in Tana was between the Orma and Pokomo ethnicities. There could however be political issues which the study hopes to unearth.

Cortright (2009) on his book, Gandhi and beyond; nonviolence for a new political age, argues that no aspect of political reality in contemporary society is more important than media. Media is powerful in shaping politics, society and culture. He says effective media is critical for winning non violent agendas to conflicts. The media is crucial in gaining sympathy and support. The framing of the message is most vital since by putting issues on the public agenda, by defining meaning of actions and policies, media can shape the debate towards human progress. In Kenya, various opinion polls have put media among the most trusted institution, providing it with a critical platform that should be exercised responsibly like when reporting on violent conflicts.

One critical concern to covering news and conflicts especially is to what extent a journalist should be involved within the conflict. Journalist Michael Nicholson in Mchaughlin (2002) says a journalist should get as close to a story as they can and sometimes that means becoming a casualty either physically or emotionally. The journalist should however ensure they still show commitment to professional and conflict sensitive reporting. Journalists covering the Tana Delta conflict were not very close to the conflict hence this shielded them from some biases.

This brings the critical question of objectivity when reporting a story, conflicts for that matter. Hodgson (1996) contends with the complexity of achieving objectivity. He says it is unlikely that
the human mind can be rid totally of subconscious bias. Nevertheless, where the reporting of conflicts is concerned, the public has the right to expect objectivity as far as humanly possible and a journalist has a duty to exercise it as far as he or she is able to. For Alex Thomson, in McLaughlin (2002) truth is more important than objectivity. He dismisses objectivity especially where it invalidates difficult or inconvenient truth or where it lends spurious legitimacy to torture, rape or ethnic cleansing.

The Tana delta conflict exemplifies issues of communal content as Azar argues (Azar 1990). This is because it revolves around two communities, Orama and Pokomo, and which the government stands accused of not being able to ensure they all is able to meet their basic needs. Bujra (2002) explains that this conflicts being in rural settings are about grazing land, over cattle, over water points and over cultivable land. Indeed the ability of the two communities being pastoralists and farmers to use the available land and water adequately has been reported as a determinant to the recurrent conflict.

Adedeji (1990) explains that competition for resources typically lies at the heart of conflict. This accounts for the intensity of the struggle for political power. Adedeji further asserts that universally, conflicts are the result of lack of security – a psychological fear of political uncertainty. Security lies at the ability of the Tana River communities to coexist peacefully with the limited resources they each have to contend with.

Conflicts in the coastal areas were well captured in the Akiwumi report in which it underlined that district security and intelligence committees did not submit proper security briefings to the
relevant officers even when they had the intelligence. They used diversionary tactics to conceal the available evidence so as to avoid the possible arrest of key leaders in the area especially in the run-up to elections. The people being concealed were largely from their ethnic communities (Akiwumi 1999). The media did not bring out this linkage in the covering of the Tana Delta conflict but this does not mean it did not exist. It could be that since they lacked concrete evidence, it was better not to bring it out as it would be unprofessional to report what they are unsure and possibly lead to defamation charges.

The report acknowledges that Tana River is one of the areas where violent conflicts occur due to the instability of northern neighbors and the influx of illicit arms. It added that politics in the run up to elections leads to violent conflict. This is because issues of ethnicity, clanism and land ownership are campaign tools. Furthermore, marginalization from means of production is employed in certain areas like the coast. Incitement is a key issue where influential people use their offices and human feelings to incite communities against others (Akiwumi 1999).

A media that is independent and free to exercise its functions is a key pillar in any democracy (Makokha 2010). The ability of journalists and editors to do their work without coercion or undue influence to alter, not to report and report inaccurately falls short of rights and freedoms enjoyed by the media. This however comes with it responsibilities of accuracy, factual reporting, balance and general professionalism.

Kenya’s media has not enjoyed these rights and freedoms until after 2003. Media is ideally at the center of information flow between the public and leadership. Media captures the public’s mood
and shape perceptions people have on issues surrounding them and society. This function can however be exercised better when the media is robust and also supported solid by institutional frameworks (Makokha 2010).

The liberalization of the media gave rise to many outlets including commercial, vernacular and community. The commercial media can be referred to as mass media because of its wider coverage. Chomsky (1997) argues that mass media is popular in nature and focuses on sports and entertainment to distract people. However there is also agenda setting media which weighs in on serious issues to the nation. This distinction is however not applicable to Kenya since mass media does both roles.

The role of the media in bringing to an end the repressive regime before 2002 cannot be refuted. Writing and showing the struggles of the democratization process made the public be better informed and support the process. This was largely done by private stations, albeit few. It is this role in a difficult time that has over the years given the public the confidence and trust to believe what the media reports on (Makokha 2010).

Legal obligations on freedom of information and expression are not concrete. Article 34 of the constitution needs legislations to make it effective. Prior to the new constitution of 2010, legislations around the media were found in various pieces of laws (Makokha 2010). They include the Public Order Act, the Defamation Act, the Preservation of Public Security Act, the Books and Newspapers Act, the Media Act and the Kenya Communications (Amendment) Act among others.
Under these laws that are deficient, conflict sensitive reporting is one such model to equip journalists with the tools and technique to enable them report informatively on conflicts. Journalism and conflict have change as a common factor. Howard (2003) writes that journalism is about change and the impact the change will have on the society. Conflict is also about change as people try to meet unfulfilled needs and defend their identities. Journalists should therefore better understand conflict for them to report ably on it. The unfulfilled needs for the Orama and Pokomo communities in the Tana Delta are scarce water and grazing lands.

Randall (1998) says that as the process of democratization gathers pace, the national media can play a vital role in the shaping of the new. The Tana River conflict is the deadliest, based on fatalities, under the current constitution which has a fresh political and constitutional dispensation. Therefore looking at how the print media covered the conflict is critical in the right direction towards creating new knowledge on conflict, democracy and media.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Conflicts are replete with situations in which parties to the conflict have their own rights and intentions. The opponents’ actions interfere with these rights and intentions and make them feel vulnerable and threatened. When the opponents counter, the other party also feels the same threatened and may decide to retaliate. There could however be common grounds, intentions, positions, rights and platforms to provide for reasons for mutual trust. Therefore, conflicts are capable of both win-lose and win-win situations (Kempf 2003).
Conflict theory by Karl Marx argues that inequality exists because those in control of a disproportionate share of society’s resources actively defend their advantages. The masses are not bound to society by their shared values, but by coercion at the hands of those in power. This perspective emphasizes social control, not consensus and conformity. Groups and individuals advance their own interests, struggling over control of societal resources. Those with the most resources exercise power over others with inequality and power struggles resulting in conflict (Shakur 2000).

Some concepts of conflict bring into context theories on conflict sensitive journalism. Lynch (2007) gives some of these propositions. First is that violence has a structure, culture and process. These give explanations of the violence. Secondly, non-violent methods are always possible in resolving conflicts. There is hardly only one way in which conflicts can be resolved. Thirdly is that there are more than two sides to a conflict. While some may be dominant others are subtle but which need to be made clear. Fourthly is that parties to a conflict are stakeholders. They therefore each have a stake in making it work better.

Peace journalism theory is important in understanding and explaining conflict sensitive journalism. Johan Galtung and Jake Lynch are pioneer proponents of peace journalism and define it as conscience decisions by editors and reporters to decide on what stories and how to report them to create opportunities for the society to consider the value of non-violence to a conflict. It is therefore a critical realist theory on how to report on conflicts (Lynch 2006).
Peace journalism is inclined towards an analytical approach to conflicts bringing out the issues, interests and goals, find room for perspectives from beyond the official sources and seek peace initiatives to report on them (Lynch 2007). It is therefore incumbent upon journalists to be more critical and seek new angles to a story before reporting. This gives a story new details and angles not visualized before.

Lynch (2001) further discusses that by illuminating shared problems in a conflict, a peace journalist can expand the space to consider shared solutions and outcomes to the conflict which leads to a win-win aftermath. Moreover, it makes more room to think of therapy than revenge or punishment or even blaming other parties to the conflict.

Underlying peace journalism are ideas of Johan Galtung who argues that conflict should be looked into from structural and cultural positions and not direct and physical violence. This prohibits a person from realizing his or her potential. Journalists should therefore contextualize the conflict and bring out the cultural and structural roots of the conflicts. A story is therefore seen with many sides to it and the audience get a more truthful, complete and complex account of the situation at hand. Violence is therefore seen as one way of resolving the conflict among many other ways (Biazoto 2011).

Cottle (2006) says peace journalism recognizes the endemic and structural nature of many conflicts in the world but nonetheless seeks to identify and promote constructive responses: conflict and creativity and not conflict and violence. This calls upon closer analysis and
examination of the conflict due to its complexity. It also calls upon closer attention to the peace processes and how the media should also cover them over the period.

BBC reporter David Loyn is however critical of peace journalism. For him, journalists should be guided by truthfulness and objectivity. This basis therefore imposes on journalists more than needed obligations when doing a story (Lyon 2007). As a journalist, he argues that peace journalism can make it harder to reduce mass murder. An example he gives is during the Northern Ireland negotiations. He argues that transparency principle of peace journalism would have made secret negotiations impossible hence negatively affect the outcome.

Hanitzch Thomas, a media researcher argues that peace journalism does not encompass the complexities of a news room. Things like limited resources and tough deadlines push journalists to great lengths which peace journalism does not in-cooperate. For him promoting peace by media is not nobler than doing public relations campaigns. Good journalism is therefore more precise on explaining things like telling cover-ups and culprits or victims of both sides to a conflict (Hanitsch 2007:7).

Lynch counters these arguments by underscoring the ability of some governments to influence the media. Such propaganda by the government can be in form of ‘humanitarian intervention’ to legitimize a conflict and impede facts from being unearthed. The Yugoslavia crisis in 1999 and Iraq in 2003 are examples Lynch gives on how such an agenda governments impede the truth. The effects of propaganda should therefore be contextualized and efforts made towards the goal
of a peace journalist which is to create opportunities for the society to consider non-violent methods of solving conflicts (Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2010:3).

Journalists distaste peace journalism because it is too critical as it places on them more obligations when reporting (Loyn 2003 & 2007 and Phillips 2006). However, Hanitzch feels that peace journalism is not critical enough as it is based on normative judgment about the representation of conflicts (Lynch 2007). That notwithstanding the overriding goal of peace journalism approach is to offer path of connecting journalists, their sources and the consequences of their reporting. This aptly fits Lynch definition of peace journalism as considering the value of non-violent methods of resolving conflicts.

More theories can be discussed when dealing with conflict sensitive journalism. Hanitsch (2007) explains that various theories have been presented to explain reasons for conflicts. However there is no conclusive theory that can explain all conflicts. Some of these theories include community relations theory, human needs theory and conflict transformation theory. However while these theories try to explain why conflict occur, they do not explain how journalists should cover the conflicts. Hence peace journalism or conflict sensitive journalism theory will be used for this study.

2.3 Knowledge Gap

Reporting on conflicts as has been illustrated in the literature review is very critical to the dynamics of the conflicts. Media being the primary mode of providing information to the protracted parties and the country at large has a daunting responsibility of ensuring issues come
out clearly and this may help in ending the hostilities. It is clear that the Tana Delta conflict of 2012 was between two ethnic communities the Orma and the Pokomo. However, as noted in the literature review, such conflicts could be ethno-political, something the study will unearth. By looking at the coverage of the Tana delta conflict, the issues raised by the media and whether the media was balanced in its reporting, this will become the subject of field research. Studies about media and conflict in Kenya have largely been based on the 2007/8 post election violence. None has ever studied how media has covered conflicts that have occurred post 2007/8. This would be critical as it will show whether media has learnt something. In addition, a study on the Tana Delta conflict, which is historical, has yet to be undertaken.
CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this section, the researcher describes the methodology used to collect and analyze the data. It entails the sample size, sample selection, data collection method and analysis to achieve the objectives of the study.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design in order to investigate the impact of sensational reporting on the escalation of conflict with a focus on the Tana River conflict. Best and Kahn (1992) assert that descriptive research seeks to establish factors with certain occurrences outcome, continuous or type of behavior. This method was used because it allows for in-depth study of the case. The researcher used open ended and structured questionnaires to gather information. Furthermore, content analysis was also used to analyze stories.

3.3 Study Location

The study site was a location of Tana River County that neighbors the Tana River and is inhabited by majorly the Orma and Pokomo communities. The nearby Lower Ormo Valley was the site of a similar encounter in 2006, when 40 people died in clashes between pastoralists and farmers.

The 1,000-km-long Tana is Kenya's longest river and famous for its unique biodiversity. The Tana Delta is a place of singular ecological significance, with globally renowned mangrove
forests, grasslands, marshes, oxbow lakes, and woodlands. It is a refuge for water birds, large mammals, primates, crocodiles, and other valuable wildlife. Situated in a mostly arid part of the Kenyan coast, the Delta is a resource-rich home to humans of diverse livelihoods, humans who have occupied the Delta for generations. The same sedentary farmers and traveling herders in today's headlines share a long history of trade, coexistence, and, yes, conflict. In the context of national politics the people of the remote Delta also share a history of political marginalization and resource insecurity.

Tana Delta was chosen for the study because of the perennial conflicts over water and grazing lands. The conflict was also had the most fatalities since the 2007/8 post election violence. It therefore provides a rich case study of how media covers conflicts. In addition, availability of local support to collect data from journalists and civil society groups who were willing and available to facilitate entry into the communities.

3.4 Target Population

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) describe target population as the complete set of individual cases or objects with some common characteristics to which the researcher used to generalize the results of the study. The research targeted a population of 240, 075 individuals in Tana River County who reside around the conflict area and also journalists who covered the conflict. The respondents consisted of the residents, national government representatives who included county commissioner, deputy county commissioner, chief and assistant chief and journalists.
Table 1: Target Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>240,075</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National government Representatives</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>240,075</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source (Researcher 2014)

3.5 Sampling Technique

The researcher employed stratified random sampling method. Kothari (2001) argues that this technique ensures each unit of the group has an equal selection chance in the target population. The findings of these data can therefore be used to generalize that of the entire population. The population is divided into three sub-population which are; the national government representatives, journalists and residents. Respondents were from the 240, 075 target population. Among these a sample size of 100 was picked through stratified sampling to obtain the research sample.

Table 2: Sample Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>TARGET POPULATION</th>
<th>SAMPLE DESIGN</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>240,075</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6 Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaires were the primary data collection method. Questionnaires are very cost effective when compared to face-to-face interviews and they are easy to analyze. They are also familiar to most people, reduce bias since the researcher's own opinions will not influence the respondent to answer questions in a certain manner. However, face-to-face interviews were also used where applicable and archival information in print media. The categories issued are residents, national government representatives and journalists to respond. This was done through hand delivery to them for the safety and confirmation of receipt. Primary and secondary data provided a comprehensive picture of the problem in question.

3.6.1 Reliability

The questionnaires were subjected to thorough scrutiny by my supervisors and the Lecturer’s defense panel to check its reliability. Reliability is the consistency of the information given and whether the questions measure what was they are supposed to be measure will show their reliability. The questions were pre-tested among five respondents to ascertain the need for any changes. This indicated the questionnaires ability of getting the required data.
3.6.2 Validity

Validity is the extent to which a concept is well founded and corresponds accurately to the issues at hand. The individuals being interviewed both physically and the use of questions being diverse and what they said determined the validity of conflict reporting and how the media covered the Tana delta conflict. They offered the different players that directly and indirectly took part in the Tana delta conflict.

3.7 Data Analysis Methods

Data collected was edited and coded for analysis quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data was analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics. Tables, figures and Percentages were used for data presentation through the help of Microsoft Excel package. Qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis. It was theme triangulated according to the objectives of the study.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The researcher grappled with concerns over interviews of families who were directly affected by the violence, some of whom were still traumatized. It is an ethical issue because it would likely compromise on honesty from the respondents. However the researcher interviewed diverse people and only used corroborative information in concluding this research.

The researcher also grappled with confidentiality issues. Some respondents were unwilling to provide information for fear that it can be used against them. They also did not want to be known as the source of certain information. This was bridged by some journalists who knew the locals and assisted in data collection.
Honesty from the respondents was the other ethical consideration. They had not been interviewed by anyone conducting such a study so they felt the information being sought may not be for academic purposes. Some of them were aggrieved by how some media houses had reported the conflict. This was however bridged by the support of the assistant chief who assured them of the purpose of the study. The school identification card also played a big role in giving them confidence to speak freely.
CHAPTER 4:

4.0 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Causes of the Tana Delta conflict

4.1.1 Politics

The Daily Nation on the 25th of August, 2012, reported that the conflict was primarily linked to politics and politicians. The results of the study agree with the reporting of The Daily Nation. Majority of the respondents strongly agree that the conflict was politically-motivated (46%). This is as shown in Figure 1 below:

![Pie chart showing the percentage of respondents' views on the political nature of the conflict.](image)

**Figure 1: The Tana conflict was politically-motivated**

According to the respondents, famous politicians from these communities incited locals to fight along the three-mile strip on the east bank of River Tana on the side of Garissa and Ijara districts. Furthermore, a study of a violence pattern reveals that previous conflicts within the Tana Delta are heightened during electioneering period. This is a proof that politics is a key cause of the conflicts at the Tana Delta. Examples of such previous clashes include the Salama clash in
Garsen in 1996; in Zubaki, Duwayo, Kinakomba and Mnazini in Galole, and Idzowe and Chara in 2001; and in 2012 in Kipini.

According to the results of the questionnaire, politics influences the content media covers. The study agreed with a previous study that was done by Peterson (2008). Furthermore, according to the questionnaire, politics also influences the content media. In Kenya, this situation is complicated by the fact that, many politicians own majority of the media houses hence they sometimes influence content. Furthermore, politics take a center stage of media content published or aired. This is not an isolated case because a previous study done by Lynch (2006) pointed out that politics influence the content media covers because politicians own some of the media houses.

A similar study was done by Jeong (2009). The author asserted that the bias on political coverage is global. He records a study that was done in the US in which respondents were asked whether they felt that political coverage took center stage and also whether that news were bias. The result was that over 69 percent felt the coverage was fairly biased.

### 4.1.2 The collapse of the three major irrigation schemes

According to the study, another cause that can be attributed to the Tana Conflict is the collapse of the three major irrigation schemes: Bura, Hola, and Tana.
Figure 2: The violence was a result of the collapse of the three irrigation schemes

Majority of the respondents agreed that the collapse of the three major irrigation schemes played a role in escalation of the conflicts (33%). Therefore, the study supports the previous work done by Weiss (2012), who investigated about the causes of the conflict of the Tana Delta. The author argued that the utilization of the waters of the Tana River has been in the middle of a conflict pitting the neighboring communities against each other. The Pokomo claim the land along the river and the Orma claim the waters of the river (Weiss 2012).

4.1.3 Failure of the government in providing critical services

Azar (1990) argued that the government’s role in ensuring that all communities within its jurisdiction are able to meet their basic human needs can lead to a conflict. The Tana Delta’s conflict is such a conflict that can be partly attributed to the role of the Kenyan government in providing critical services.
It is worth noting that the cause of the violence can also be attributed to the failure of the government to provide certain critical services to people. Majority of the respondents (45%) agree that the Tana Delta conflict was escalated by the fact that the government in power favored one side of the coin. This is as shown in figure 3:

![Pie chart showing percentages of respondents' agreement on the cause of the violence.](image)

**Figure 3: failure of the government to provide certain critical services to people**

According to Mungai (2010), the government plays a major role in influencing the occurrence of conflicts and violence in the Kenyan geo-political setup. Therefore, according to this study, the Kenyan government failed in its role in ensuring that all communities within the Tana Delta zone are able to meet their basic human needs.

This conflict can also be related to the failure of the district security not to provide proper security briefings. This was well captured in the Akiwumi report in which it underlined that district security and intelligence committees did not submit proper security briefings to the relevant officers even when they had the intelligence. Diversionary tactics were used to conceal
the available evidence so as to avoid the possible arrest of key leaders in the area (Akiwumi 1999). According to the Akiwumi report, the other sources of the conflict in the Tana Delta include ethnicity, clanism and land ownership. Finally, the Akiwumi report acknowledges that incitement is a key issue where influential people use their offices and human feelings to incite communities against others (Akiwumi 1999).

4.1.4 Social marginalization

According to Galtung (1981), the Tana River has the characteristics of a structured conflict. Basing on this class of thought, the causes of the conflict are under development, poor infrastructure, poor communication and social amenities, and social marginalization. 36% of the respondents strongly agree that the violence was as a result of social marginalization. This is as shown in figure 4:

![Figure 4: Social marginalization of some communities](image)

The study revealed that fighting communities arm themselves because of the need to defend against perceived attacks. Weiss (2012) has done a similar research and the author found out that
conflicting communities feel that the government security machinery has not been able to effectively respond to violence. The author went ahead to assert that isolation by the Kenyan government has led to increased demand for guns by the fighting communities along the Tana Delta.

Being in a rural setting, the other causes of the conflict are about grazing land, over cattle, over water points and over cultivable land. This is explained by Bujra (2002). According to the study, majority of the respondents agree that the two communities being pastoralists and farmers fight over the use the available land and water adequately. Therefore, competition for resources typically lies at the heart of this conflict.

It is worth-noting that the majority of the respondents do not agree that the violence was caused by increase in population. Furthermore, majority of the respondents strongly disagree that the main cause of the violence was competition for resources. Finally, majority of the respondents strongly disagree that the government security machinery has not been able to effectively respond to violence.

4.2 Role of Kenyan media during the Tana Delta conflict

Conflicts are inherent in any given society. It is very important to seek ways in which the conflicts do not degenerate into war or massive destruction of property and loss of life, through giving timely and accurate information about them. The media can play a role in accomplishing this objective. For the case of the Tana Delta conflict, the role played by the media can be broadly categorized into two main roles: positive and negative roles.
4.2.1 Conflict escalation

Media is a critical tool for communication and development in society. Generally speaking, media coverage of conflicts is critical as it helps shape the conflict (Kempf 2007). For the case of the Tana Delta clashes, majority of the respondents (48%) agreed that the media played a role in conflict escalation. This is as shown in figure 5:

![Figure 5: The role of the media in conflict escalation](image)

Through the study, it was argued that the media is accused of being a source of conflict through propaganda and bias in their reporting. The results of the study are in line with a previous study by Suleimani (2012), who argued that the media takes part in promotion of propaganda. In addition to that, the result of the study is in agreement with a previous study done by Felson (1996). According to this study, there is a positive correlation between massive exposures to the media increase of violent behaviors among media audiences. Therefore, the results of the study are in line with those of Posner (2005), who asserts that journalists and scholars write about politics of ethnic divide on societies and competition but fail to question reasons there under.

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4.2.2 Balanced reporting

Balanced reporting of conflicts and clashes is very critical in minimizing the effects of the conflicts. This argument is supported by Graber (2001), who argued that the media coverage is the very lifeblood that shapes the perceptions that form the reality on which people base their actions. However, the majority of the respondents disagree (61%) that there was balanced media reporting during the Tana Delta conflict. This is as shown in figure 6:

![Pie chart showing the distribution of respondents' opinions on balanced reporting.]

**Figure 6: The role of the media in balanced reporting**

Majority of the respondents strongly agree that the conflict was not reported accurately because the majority of journalists lack knowledge on conflict reporting. Education and training of journalists is therefore very important in covering about the knowledge of the conflict, its root causes and history of the conflicts. Journalists must interrogate through research, the different dynamics involved in the conflict to better inform their audience.
Some journalists reported from the side of the powerful while others reported from the people’s side. In addition to that, journalists did not report from either those fighting the war, struggling for their lives in war or those that were victims of the war. According to Kempf (2005), when conflicts are involved, the reporting may be escalation oriented or de-escalation oriented.

According to the results of the questionnaire, majority of the respondents agreed that the media played a role in the escalation of the Tana conflict. The study also reveals that some journalists allowed certain information to be said without critiquing the storyline. This might have led to the escalation of the Tana conflict; in a same way as the conflict covered by Cottle (2006). Posner (2005) asserts that journalists and scholars write about politics of ethnic divide on societies and competition but fail to question reasons there under. Posner (2005) asserts that journalists and scholars write about politics of ethnic divide on societies and competition but fail to question reasons there under.

4.2.3 Framing of the conflict

Another shortcoming experienced by the Kenyan media during the Tana Delta conflict lies in the manner in which the media framed issues surrounding the conflict. Various media houses amplified the sound of guns rather than muting them. According to the results of the study, majority of the respondents agreed that the conflict was escalated by poor framing of the conflict (making violent language more animated and exciting, which in turn sparked people’s fears and aggression). This is as shown in figure 7:
Figure 7: Framing of the conflict

Majority of the respondents (43%) agreed that adjectives such as ‘brutal’, ‘cruel’ ‘heinous’ and ‘barbaric’ were used during the reporting of the Tana conflict. In addition to that, victimizing words such as ‘devastated’, ‘defenseless’ and ‘pathetic’ were used during the reporting. By use of such words, the emotion of the journalist takes center stage and is viewed to be taking sides in the conflict.

Therefore, the results of this study agree with a prior study done by Keever (2007). The author argued that making violent language more animated and exciting can lead to escalation of violence. Hodgson (1996) says that the language used must be with care to get the maximum effect. It must be clear, unambiguous and to the point. This is to avoid misinterpretation of the information passed across. Some words that were reported by the journalists were not accurately captured as stated by the leaders. Consequently, the majority of the respondents believe that this played a role in the exacerbating the conflict.
4.2.4 Lateness in reporting of the conflict

Majority of the respondents (53%) believe that the conflict was not timely and accurately reported by the media because the government ownership and censorship of critical information to the public. The results are as shown in figure 8:

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses regarding lateness in reporting.]

**Figure 8: Lateness in reporting**

By not reporting a conflict in a timely manner, the information is well known way after the incidence and the actual reasons and ramifications not accurately reported. Thus sluggish reporting might have increased the escalation of the Tana conflict.

4.2.5 The role of community and vernacular radio stations

Whitaker & Ramsey (2009) say the public expect media to be truthful, to prove that their first loyalty is to citizens, and maintain independence from those they cover, monitor power and give voice to the voiceless, provide a forum for public criticism and problem solving. However, this is not the case with the Tana conflict. However, this is not the case with the Tana conflict. Majority
of the respondents strongly agree that the Tana conflict was escalated by community and vernacular radio stations. The results are shown in the figure below.

![Pie chart showing responses to the role of vernacular radio stations](image)

**Figure 9: The role of vernacular radio stations**

The results of this study agree with a previous study done in Kenya by Ogola (2011), who asserted that the mushrooming of vernacular stations owned by politicians made it easier for them to tweak language and use words that can inflame communities during the 2007/08 post-election violence. He adds that lack of training on how to report on conflicts led to increased hostilities.

**4.2.6 Investigate journalism**

33% of the respondents agree that investigative journalism has not been an integral part of the journalism syllabus in Kenya while 23% of the respondents strongly agree. This is as shown in figure 10 below:
Investigative journalism can help unearth both perceived issues and real concerns of a people leading to the conflicts. However, it has been neglected by many media houses in Kenya. It can help unearth both perceived issues and real concerns of a people leading to the conflicts. Many alluded to high financial costs and time in doing investigative stories and features that either discouraged them or led their editors to decline to approve them in doing investigative stories. This paradigm of reporting can help the parties to a conflict realize the truth of why they could be in a conflict, especially an ethnic conflict like the Tana.

4.2.7 Peace building

Other than reporting, the media can also take part in peace building. McLaughlin (2002) ascertains that, media can play a good role in peace building in places that are surrounded by structural conflict. He gives an example of the violent conflict in Mali in 2008 in which Radio Douentza reminded the residents of the coexistence between communities and how they need
each other. According to the study, majority of the respondents agree that the Kenyan median did not play any role in peace building. The results are as shown in the figure below:

![Pie chart showing role of the media in peace building]

Figure 11: Role of the media in peace building
CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Key findings

According to the study, the Tana Delta was caused and escalated by a number of reasons. The four main causes of the violence are: social marginalization, politics, failure of the government in providing certain critical services to the people and the collapse of the three irrigation schemes. According to the result of the study, the violence was not caused by overpopulation, competition for resources and the existing government security machinery not effectively dealing with existing violence. Objective one of the study was therefore achieved.

Politics played a role in the escalation of this violence in two ways. First, famous politicians from the communities within the Tana Delta incited locals to fight. Secondly, some media houses are owned by politicians and hence they influence the content. The study also revealed that the violence pattern within the Tana Delta is heightened during an electioneering period.

The media played a role in the escalation of the conflict in many ways: lateness in reporting of the conflicting, imbalance reporting of the conflict, poor language and framing of the conflict, lack of training on conflict reporting, lack of skills on investigative journalism and the use of local and vernacular radio stations in reporting of the conflict. The study also revealed that the media did not take any part in peace building. Instead, some media houses collaborated with politicians in airing inciting messages. Objective two of the study was therefore achieved.
The Kenyan media failed below public expectations during this period. The public expected the media to be truthful, to prove that their first loyalty is to citizens, maintain independence from those they cover, monitor power and give voice to the voiceless, provide a forum for public criticism and problem solving.

The result was lack of trust in the media. The impact of their reporting was lack of clear picture on what caused the violence, an escalation of the violence and lack of proper knowledge on the players and issues informing the conflicts. Objective three of the study was therefore achieved.

5.2 Conclusions

Journalists can play important roles in conflicts. They can be the channel of communication between the parties to the conflict, provide information about the parties to the conflict and issues at hand and offer education on the different ways to peaceful resolution of the conflict. They can also help in building trust among parties to the conflict and the public, counteract misinformation, analyze the conflict, help identify the underlying interests of issues, allow parties to express their emotions, empower the parties like marginalized groups and help in consensus building.

The role of professional journalists is not to reduce conflict. However, they can play a big role in accurate and impartial news coverage and hence minimizing the escalation of the conflict. Balanced reporting of a conflict is very important because it may help in minimizing the escalation of a given conflict. Therefore, it is vital for a journalist to explain the war, deconstruct it and find out the real agendas which are the truth of the war. Journalists should therefore be
equipped with the tools and technique to enable them report informatively on conflicts. Furthermore, the language used by journalists must be clear, unambiguous and to the point. journalism as a duty calls for the dissemination of salient facts in such a way that decision making is left to the reader with whom all facts are shared.

One of the most critical institutions in shaping any given conflict is the media. It can be concluded that during the Tana delta conflict, the media failed to give the stories their due credence by not reporting factually. Factual reporting helps journalists to bring out all the sides to a conflict and expose assertions by leaders and issues at hand to the exact context. Without correct reporting, conflicts are not stopped in time and sometimes they end up being incited and escalated. Furthermore, journalists must interrogate through research, the different dynamics involved in the conflict to better inform their audience. To avoid cases of unbalanced reporting, journalists should be trained on how to report conflicts.

Media captures the public’s mood and shape perceptions people have on issues surrounding them and society. Therefore, the media should minimize cases of making violent language more animated and exciting as it can spark people’s fears and aggression. Furthermore, words used by leaders and politicians should accurately be reported without distortion because such may lead to exacerbating the conflict. In case of conflicts, Media stations should develop a series of public service announcements reminding fighting communities about their traditional collaboration and advising restraint, informing security officers of the affected areas promptly and educating the fighting communities on the importance of peace in the society.
5.3 Recommendations

Guided by recommendations and views on the way forward as presented by the interviewees during one and on interviews, discussions and from the questionnaire, this study noted some critical issues. Good journalism is more precise on explaining things like telling cover-ups and culprits or victims of both sides to a conflict. There are a number of ways in which the media practitioners can help ensure they are better placed in reporting on conflicts.

1. One is enhanced learning on peace journalism. This technique involves unlearning and learning pivotal players in reporting. These include the issues leading to and sustaining the conflict, individuals involved and why they are doing it and institutions that either fane or help curb the conflicts. Some of these institutions include the government, local civil society groups, schools, churches and hospitals.

2. Secondly, students of journalism need to be equipped early enough with tools and knowledge on conflict reporting. This should be done through teaching peace journalism as part of the journalism units in institutions of higher learning.

3. Thirdly, institutions of higher learning teaching journalism need to have media outlets including magazines, online newspapers and radio stations are useful training environments for their students.

4. Fourthly, the civil society, donors and government through the Media Council of Kenya need to have journalism hubs in different parts of the country. These hubs would offer training,
mentorship and capacity enhancement to practicing journalists. It would also provide avenues where journalists from different media houses would meet to exchange insights and improve each others’ skills, knowledge and techniques.

5. Fifthly, media houses need to establish media labs. Through these labs, fresh journalists or journalists who have just joined them would be taught conflict reporting. There would also be mentorships from experienced journalists. These trainings could also involve other issues like the code of conduct for journalists and storytelling techniques among others.

It is therefore very important for journalists who are reporting conflicts to understand peace journalism. Various institutions and individuals need to collectively and individually do their part in promoting peace journalism.

5.4 Future work
This research can be extended in future to incorporate the role of peace journalism in structural conflicts. Furthermore, the effectiveness of peace journalism should also be investigated.
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APPENDICES

Appendix I: The questionnaire

This questionnaire is divided into two sections. Please complete each of the questions by putting a tick in the appropriate box or by writing in the space provided.

GENERAL INFORMATION

SECTION A

1. Gender Male □ Female □

2. Age Between

□ 18-24 □ 25-30 □ 31-40 □ above 40

3. Highest Level of Education.

□ Primary □ Secondary □ Tertiary College □ University

□ Any other, specify…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

4. Years lived in the area or service in the area and organization

□ 1-5 □ 6-10 □ Above 10
SECTION B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of Kenyan media during the Tana Delta conflict</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media plays a role in conflict escalation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media coverage of conflicts is critical as it helps shape the conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conflict can be reduced through good reporting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>journalists have a critical role to mitigate conflicts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to cover a conflict with little or no objective knowledge of the conflict, its root causes and history is tantamount to fanning the flames of the conflicts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics influences the content media covers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of information can make people desperate, restless and easy to manipulate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>media can support peace initiatives because media has the power to influence beliefs, opinions and attitudes of people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African media has failed to give due coverage the success stories on conflicts from the continent and as a result, international media thrives in reporting negatively about the conflicts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media can play a good role in peace building in places that are surrounded by structural conflict.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media plays a role in mobilizing, fanning and inciting parties of the conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Journalists have to engage with various constraints as they report

Adjectives such as ‘brutal’, ‘cruel’ and ‘barbaric’ were used during the reporting of the Tana Delta

Reporting on the Tana Delta was done devoid of emotions and other prejudices by journalists

Journalists used the Tana conflict to find pathos and tragedy, heroism and camaraderie’s, acts of selfishness and personalized experiences of suffering

lack of training on how to report on conflicts may led to increased hostilities

Investigative journalism can help unearth both perceived issues and real concerns of a people leading to the conflicts

effective media is critical for winning non violent agendas to conflicts

**Causes of the Tana Delta conflict**

The conflict was as a result of an increase in population

The conflict was politically-motivated

The conflict was land-motivated

The conflict was a result of the collapse of the three major irrigation schemes

The conflict was a result of competition for resources

One rivalry communities experiences underdevelopment, poor infrastructure, poor communication and social amenities

The conflict was as a result of social marginalization in one of the rivalry communities

Government security machinery has not been able to
effectively respond to violence

Misperceptions and miscommunications heightened the conflict

Existing security mechanisms are not responsible

Influential people use their offices and human feelings to incite communities against others

**Way-forward**

The Kenyan media is characterized with factual reporting, balance and general professionalism

The media is robust and also supported solid by institutional frameworks

The media played a role in initiating peace initiatives
Location of Tana River County in Kenya. (Source: Tana River District Development Plan 2010 – 2015)
APPENDICES III: MAP OF TANA RIVER COUNTY