Media and Ethnicity in the 2012 General Elections

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Abstract

The 2013 general elections came at a period when Kenyan was still recovering from the effects of the 2008 Post Election Violence. This was the worst political crisis ever witnessed in the country"s history since independence. Despite the fact that the healing process was still taking place and the new constitution yet to be fully implemented, issues of ethnicity seemed to be playing a major role in political rallies and presidential campaigns. This was further heightened by the media which kept on reporting negative ethnicity. The purpose of the study was therefore to establish whether the media contributes to ethnic polarization through the manner in which they cover political election campaigns. The study was informed by Agenda setting theory and the Critical Political Economy theory which govern media reporting of political issues. This study adopted a qualitative research design that targeted print media. Articles from the Daily Nation Newspapers starting from November 2012 to February 2013 were purposively sampled so as to give a representation of media reports. A total of 36 newspapers were used to collect data. The newspaper articles were coded according to themes using word matching and presence of acceptable synonyms or similar phrases. The study used content analysis as a means of analyzing the relevant data. The study established that the media adopted technique of using language and words that is largely based on ethnic politics, that politicians used the media to manipulate the norms in their favour and that presidential candidates perceived to have tribal backing from their communities, made it to the headline news more often than other candidates. The findings from this study will be able to provide direction to media scholars and social scientists that are assisting the media institutions to find alternative roles the media can play in the production of political news without stimulating or enforcing the trends of negative ethnicity.

Key Words: Ethnicity, Campaigns, Violence, Post-Election, Independence

INTRODUCTION

The media has undergone challenging moments since Kenya attained independence 50 years ago. Its mandate of being the watchdog of society has been one that has faced difficulty (Gachigua, 2008). Kwaka and Mutunga (2011) point out that the media's attempt at impartiality and independence from external control has always been complex and at times marred with intra- tribal or ethnic conflict. This is because most politicians and economic elite always strive to dominate the perceptions and beliefs of the society using the media as a tool to create or curve their socio-political interests away from the common man. Kwaka and Mutunga (2011), argue that the media is a powerful tool for the political elite since it helps them boost their quest for power and control of resources.

Being a nation of 42 tribes most political leaders have placed a lot of emphasis on the communities they come from with the belief that in order to stand a chance of winning the presidential elections one must garner an overwhelming support from his or her ethnic community (Yieke, 2010).Three regimes have exchanged hands since independence and despite the growth in population, economy and political democracy; the major factor that is still a drawback to the country's development is ethnicity. According to Yieke (2010), ethnicity is a widely viewed and practiced consensus in the Kenyan political system. In such circumstances, the media finds itself being part and parcel of the dialectical process of the production of this consent by shaping the consensus and at the same time reflecting it by reporting what the elite say during political events (Hall, 1982). This study aims to outline the role of the media in enhancing political ethnicity in the build-up to the 2013 general elections in Kenya.

The study pursued the following questions: a) is the language used in news articles largely based on ethnic politics during presidential elections? b) do news articles contain language that is likely to promote ethnic polarization? c) do politicians from dominant tribes in Kenya appear to make more headline news than other politicians?

Media and Ethnicity

According to the Waki Commission of Inquiry into the 2008 PEV, ethnic polarization and the mobilization of ethnic sentiments by political leaders during campaigns were partly to blame for the violence. Ngunyi (2009) argues that events preceding the 2013 general elections seemed to take the same shape similar to those that took place in the 2007 general elections. Ngunyi (2009) illustrates this in the manner in which political elite were re-aligning themselves on ethnic lines as a means of finding a formula to win the last presidential elections.

According to Yieke (2010), ethnicity has become the dominant ideology of the society at the expense of other fundamental socio-economic issues. Based on the news production process, the media presents the perception that Kenyans are more interested in political based reporting as compared to education, social, cultural and economic reporting (Gachigua, 2008). It is, however, not clear whether the media as an institution promotes stereotypes, mis-reporting of events and general misrepresentations which ultimately enhance political ethnicity. Consequently, this study attempted to find out whether the media as a means of dissemination tool simply reflect this dominant political ideology, or it is a victim of its own schemes and practices based on the political economy context of news making.

According to van Dijk (1998) one of the core functions of the media is to provide factual and relevant information, presenting the reality as it is. Yet some of the fundamental arguments brought up by media and social scholars such as Althuser (1971), Hall (1982), Schudson (1989) state that the media is more keen to convey the messages of the elite more than any other individuals or social structures. The media seems to operate in a situation that is governed by the belief that what the elite say is the reality of things in the society; meaning that their comments and remarks are widely adopted by the populace as being factual and true (Schudson, 1989). Hall

(1982), points out the fact that in as much as the media claim their independence from control of the powerful elite through the belief that what they are producing as news is the reality of things, the actual fact is that they are caught up in the hegemony of the powerful who have articulated their right to dominate the society.

In Kenya today, the print media in particular is known to give weekly analysis of the political landscape, its changes and overtones. For instance, a sample of the *Sunday Nation* projects political occurrences, opinions and predictions. Rambaud (2008) states that during the 2007 general elections the print media undertook the huge task of covering virtually all the public campaign rallies by both the two main presidential candidates namely Mwai Kibaki of PNU and Raila Odinga of ODM. Journalists captured what was particularly interesting during these campaigns: statements, remarks and scrutinizing strategies. Rambaud (2008) points out that in the months of November and December 2007, nearly all the dailies and weekly newspapers carried headlines only related to the campaigns. He cites the two months as those with the most intensive election coverage. The *Daily Nation* for instance set aside 5 to 13 pages of printed material on this one topic (a varying total of 60 to 72 pages). The *Standard* gave it even more: from 6 to 15 pages per day (a sum total of 40 pages) 14 other newspapers The *People Daily* (50,000 copies) and the *Kenya Times* (15,000) bore the same ―electoral gravitation‖ (Rambaud, 2008) a tendency with two consequences: a rather monotonous content and the impression that Kenya had no other news other than politics. Ngunyi (2011) argues that the political campaigns leading to the 2013 general elections lacked ideology and were centered on tribal and ethnic based issues. He argues that the two issues, ethnicity and politics, seem to be intertwined especially during general elections.

According to Amutabi, (2009) most political elite peg their presidential ambitions on their tribal backgrounds which help them enhance their political dominance nationally. Most politicians have used numbers of their ethnic communities as a bargaining chip to create alliances with likeminded politicians from other ethnic communities. This implies that the more numerous an ethnic group is, the better recognition its leaders get in the re-configuration of alliances and attention from the political schemers. The perception that the ethnic group from which the president comes from will be the main beneficiary of the national resources has led to the balkanization of Kenyan politicians into tribal cocoons (Amutabi, 2009). The main goal is to outsmart political opponents from other ethnic communities during the presidential elections.

Electioneering in Kenya

The 2013 elections appeared to be more intriguing and complex than other previous elections due to a number of key factors. The first one being that this was a transitional presidential election process since the incumbent, President Mwai Kibaki, had served his two terms and was not running for the office; the second factor was that the elections came at a time when some of the presidential candidates had court cases in the ICC where they were facing charges of perpetrating the 2008 PEV; and the third one is that Kenyans had a new constitution in place that had new laid down

rules to the election process such as Presidential candidates naming their running mates three months prior to the election process (Ngunyi, 2009)

At the beginning of the year 2012, the candidates who appeared on the fore front included: Raila Odinga, Kalonzo Musyoka, Uhuru Kenyatta, William Ruto, Musalia Mudavadi, Martha Karua, Eugine Wamalwa and Peter Kenneth. However, by mid 2012, the number of top contenders narrowed down to Raila Odinga and Uhuru Kenyatta owing to the fact that each teamed up with other presidential candidates to form Coalitions such as the CORD which consisted of Raila Odinga and Kalonzo Musyoka as his running mate and the Jubilee Coalition which consisted of Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto as his running mate. The unifying factors between Uhuru and Ruto were the charges they were facing at the ICC and the fact that they were youthful leaders. For Raila Odinga and Kalonzo their unifying factors were that they viewed themselves as reformers and non tribalists, and they claimed that their main opponents were elements of tribalism alluding to the fact that Uhuru and Ruto were using their tribal groupings such as the GEMA and the KAMATUSA communities to solidify their support for the presidency.

Other candidates such as Musalia Mudavadi, Peter Kenneth, Martha Karua and Paul Muite had been branded traitors for not relinquishing their candidacy to support front runners from their region or ethnic communities.

As illustrated above, a majority of the candidates hardly raised other fundamental ideological issues besides ethnicity. For most of them their strategy for winning the presidential election seemed to be governed or hampered by the ideology of political ethnicity. As argued by Amutabi (2009), the multiparty elections results of 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2007 revealed the presence of political ethnicity, where Kenyans overwhelmingly voted for individuals and political parties along the dictates of their own ethnic groups.

Hall (1982) raises a fundamental issue that appears to explain the role the media plays in such circumstances. He points out that media of a particular society will produce the very definitions of situations favoured by that society. In this case one can only assume that for the media to survive legitimately they must operate within the general boundaries or framework of the system they find themselves in.

This study therefore attempted to discover what kind of relationship the media has with the political elite during the news production process. The outcome of this relationship was able to shade light on whether news content contributes to the proliferation of negative ethnicity within the country.

Agenda Setting Theory

The agenda setting theory and the critical political economy theory which were employed in this study sought to determine the kind of position the media finds itself in when producing news content during presidential campaigns. The agenda setting theory of the mass media as propagated by Mc Combs and Shaw (1972) states that the mass media have the ability to transfer their salient issues on their news agenda to the public agenda.

The theory also points out the idea that people desire media assistance in determining political reality. Mc Combs and Shaw argue that the press is a powerful tool that determines and influences what people talk and think about.

They point out that the power of the press to set a nation's agenda, to focus public attention on a few key public issues, is an immense and well-documented influence. Newspapers provide a host of cues about the salience of the topics in the daily news – lead story on page one, other front page display and large headlines. In the Kenyan scenario for instance, the media have highlighted issues such as land injustices, the ICC cases against Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto and reforms. These topics have frequently made it to the front pages of most print media and given attention to the readers as to what direction or opinion their political leaders hold towards these topics.

According to Mc Combs and Shaw (1972), what we know about the world is largely based on what the media decide to tell us. More specifically, the result of this mediated view of the world is that the priorities of the media strongly influence the priorities of the public. Elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent in the public mind.

They categorize the agenda setting theory into two phases the first one being; the media agenda, which is the ability to have the public, rely on the media to get to know what salient issues are in the public domain, the second one being the public agenda which states that the media simply reflects public concerns that already exist.

For instance during the 2007 elections in Kenya the print media presented a platform for debate, where political activists and the civil society engaged each other in discussing key issues on the political agenda which included devolution of power, tackling corruption, and land (Rambaud, 2008). Secondly, the politicians are the other agenda setters through the deliberate comments or remarks they make during press briefings and public addresses.

They also do this through their _spin doctors' who deliberately cling on a particular topic of keen interest to their politicians and use it to influence public support through the press by repeatedly talking about it up to the point it becomes the major issue of discussion. Gakero (2008) points out that there was heavy engagement of political campaign consultants, political analysts and spin doctors who were hired by all the major presidential candidates. He adds that even though most spin doctors were content to work in the background their crafty work was discernable in the numerous advertisements in the media as well as in the subtle subterfuge news feeds carried in the media.

Political Economy Communication Theory

According to Golding and Murdock (1991), critical political economy of communication is interested in the interplay between economic organization and political, social and cultural life. Political economy of communication is also concerned with the effects of economic dynamics which relate to the range and diversity of public cultural expression and its availability to different social groups through sets of social relations and the power play. This ranges from the way news is structured by the prevailing relations between press proprietors and editors or journalists and their sources to the way that

television viewing is affected by the organization of domestic life and power relations within the family.

Golding and Murdock (1991) also point out that political economy communication is interested in the ways that communicative activity is structured by the unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources. This involves instrumentalism and structuralism. From this perspective, it is easier to understand why the privately owned media in Kenya will not publish any information or news story that is perceived to be criticizing political leaders whom they are affiliated to. Rambaud (2008) points out that during the 2007 presidential elections the *Daily Nation* was perceived to be in favour of the pro Kibaki government due to numerous advertisements. This meant that most Kenyan readers perceived that the *Daily Nation* had minimal criticism of the Kibaki administration as compared to the *Standard* which was perceived to be pro Raila and ODM.

The argument was further strengthened by Rambaud (2008) in his analysis of the media during the 2007 elections. He quotes F.O. Wanyama and Jaindi Kisero both of Nation Media Group as saying ―if The Nation publishes pro-Kibaki stories, those supporting Odinga will not buy the paper: that has no economic weight!‖ He further cites them saying that when a paper chooses a political camp it loses on the commercial front.

Yet on the same fundamental issue of commercial survival but different circumstances, Rambaud (2008) quotes Douglas Okwatch, News Editor of the *Daily Standard Newspaper*, as saying ―In terms of editorial policy, we cover the two candidates as fairly as possible. We try to give them equal space and content. But we are seen as an opposition newspaper… it is a question of perception and communication. If you follow our operations you will notice that we sell more in the opposition regions: Nyanza, Rift Valley, and Coastal Provinces. Therefore if we carried a positive story on the government, we would sell less.‖ During the 2007 election period, the opinion polls conducted by the media concluded that it was the readership that determined editorial orientation of a newspaper (Rambaud, 2008).

RESULTS

Analysis and Presentation Response Rate

A total of 60 articles were identified to contain stories related to presidential campaigns and activities, presidential aspirants and political parties which were the units of analysis in relation to the 2013 Kenyan general elections. Data was collected using a total of 60 story assignment sheets. Out of the 60 articles, 53 articles were found to be relevant to the objectives of this study giving a response rate of 88% as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Response rate

Story Assignment Sheets used	Relevant	Relevant Response Rate
60	53	88%

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) a 50% response rate is adequate, 60% good and above 70% rated very good. This implies that basing on this assertion; the response rate in this case of 88% was very good.

News Content and Ethnic Politics during Presidential Elections

The study sought to find out whether the language used in news articles that covered the general elections were largely based on ethnic politics. According to the 53 articles identified, 51 (96) % were found to contain language and words based on ethnic politics. The study used the following categories of Election candidates, Coalitions and Alliances and ethnic communities to base its findings. For instance the 53 articles identified reported on the activities, preparedness of candidates, political parties and the IEBC in regards to the March 4th 2013 Kenyan elections.

These were to be the first elections since the 2007-2008 post-election violence. The articles reviewed reported on the ongoing registration process; the voter numbers in relation to ethnic blocs and regions in the country. For instance the articles titled: *IEBC now targets 12 million voters* (Daily Nation, 9th December, 2012), and *Voter apathy threat to General Election* (Daily Nation 12th December 2012) all illustrated the concern most political leaders had with the voter registration process. The study found out that large voter turnout was a major factor in determining how ethnic numbers were going to shape the outcome of the election. This is illustrated by the article: *Central and Nyanza top vote register* (Daily Nation 19th December 2012). This article expounds on the issue of large voter registration and how it would eventually shape new ethnic and regional alliances and coalitions among the political elite.

For instance, the Jubilee Alliance, comprising the Kalenjin and the Kikuyu, together with the related Meru and Embu groups from the Mt Kenya region, were indicated to have numbers that gave the alliance a head start. On the other hand, the articles reported on how the Raila and Kalonzo placed emphasis on Kenyans registering in large number pointing to the fact that they perceived that their alliance which was CORD had a weak numeric starting point. Their alliance comprised of the Luo and Kamba who seemed not to have sufficient numbers to match Jubilee's strength.

In this regard the study found out that the media covered 4 major party coalitions mainly CORD, Jubilee Alliance, Amani Coalition and the Eagle Alliance. Articles such as: *48 hours to seal the winning deal* (Daily Nation 2nd December, 2012 and *Last minute deals as windows close* (Daily Nation 5th December, 2012) depicted the intrigues of ethnicity during coalition formation. On the other hand, news articles such as: *Big Two go for numbers, experience as rivals cast their lots with new faces* (Daily Nation 26th January, 2013) illustrated the manner in which the media sought to attract the attention of readers by using words such as; numbers, the Big Two to show the magnitude of ethnic coalitions among the political elite.

Other article headlines such as: *We will win the presidency in round one, says Cord alliance* (Sunday Nation 13th January 2013) and Jubilee *poised for poll victory, say Uhuru and Ruto* (Daily Nation 26th January, 2013), depict the political and ethnic rivalry between the two major coalitions. The media reported that the Kenyatta-Ruto alliance

represented a formidable force which seemed to attract the full support of their respective communities, particularly Kenyatta's Kikuyu and Ruto's Kalenjin. On the other hand, the article titled: *Raila and Kalonzo put ink to paper in coalition pact* (Daily Nation 5th December 2012), indicated how Raila Odinga of ODM decided to counter Kenyatta's and Ruto's move by forming his own alliance, CORD, with Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka from the Wiper Democratic Movement, as well as the Ford Kenya party led by Moses Wetangula. CORD was a coalition of Odinga's Luo, Musyoka's Kamba and Wetangula's section of the Luhya.

The study also analysed other articles which reported on the formation of the Amani coalition, featuring the then Deputy Prime Minister Musalia Mudavadi, Eugene Wamalwa (New Ford Kenya), Gideon Moi (KANU), and former cabinet minister and businessman Nicholas Biwot (Vision Party of Kenya). The articles reported on how the coalition could claim a sizable proportion of Mudavadi's and Wamalwa's Luhya community in Western Province, and Gideon Moi's Kalenjin community. This is illustrated in the article titled: *Mudavadi"s move a game changer for Raila, Uhuru* (Daily Nation 6th January, 2013).The article reported on how Mudavadi's Amani Coalition had the capability of eating into the Jubilee coalition's vote in the Rift Valley and CORD's vote in Western.

The fourth coalition comprised of Peter Kenneth of KNC and Raphael Tuju of POA who formed the Eagle alliance. However, according to the news articles analysed, this alliance received the least media coverage. The two younger politicians were reported to be in the race for the crucial youth votes with a non-tribal and policy-oriented platform. According to these finding, the articles seemed to promote political ethnicity more than issue based politics since they opted to highlight on the ethnic numerical strategies the politicians hoped would make them win the elections rather than focus more on issues such as education, health and employment. The articles also opted to focus more on the political personalities and the ethnic communities the represented rather than on the issues they presented.

Table 2. News content related to political ethnicity

Category	No. of Articles	Percentage
Election Candidates	21	41.2%
Coalitions and Alliances	13	25.5%
Ethnic communities	17	33.3%
Total	51	100%

News Articles and Ethnic Polarization

In order to establish whether the media enhanced political ethnicity during the election period, it was deemed significant to investigate whether news articles contained language that was likely to promote ethnic polarization. According to the 53 articles identified, 35 (66%) were found to contain language that was likely to promote ethnic polarization. The study used the following categories to validate its findings: ICC cases, land, reforms, and regional numbers.

The study established that the media gave much attention to the ICC cases mainly because two of the major top contenders for the presidency were suspects facing charges at the ICC. Articles such as: *Karua tells Uhuru and Ruto to drop bids over ICC* (Daily Nation 16th November, 2013) and *Suspicion and ICC at the Centre of Coalitions impasse* (Daily Nation 18th November 2013) all indicated the magnitude of the ICC cases in regards to the elections. These articles reported on the ICC proceedings and their implications on ethnic coalitions. For instance, both Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, who were leading contenders in the election, had significant support from their respective ethnic communities. As illustrated by this article: *Hague cases won"t stop us, says Ruto and Uhuru* (The Sunday Nation 13th January, 2013) explains how the media reported on the candidates' determination to depict the ICC indictments as a form of victimization to members of their respective communities.

The study established that reforms and the 2010 constitution were equally significant and frequently reported issues by the media. The articles reported on stories that depicted the candidates' commitment to fully implementing the constitution once elections were over. This is because 2010 constitution was radically restructured to counter check the powers of the executive and embrace devolution of power. Indeed it had important consequences for the elections.

Articles such as: *Kalonzo says Uhuru opposed to reforms* (Daily Nation 2nd January, 2013) and *Cord: Rivals cannot be trusted with power* (Daily Nation 26th January, 2013) all depict the sensitivity of reforms during the March elections. Furthermore, the study established that Land which has been a traditionally sensitive matter in Kenya was equally covered by the media. It became a political football in the competition in the election campaign especially between the two major contenders namely; Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga. The news articles reported on how Odinga and his coalition partners consistently criticised Kenyatta on the basis that his family owned large tracts in various parts of the country, yet plenty of Kenyans were landless. This is illustrated in the following article: *Raila hits out at rivals over their wealth* (Daily Nation 30th January 2013).

The study found out that the media reported on ethnic numbers as a determining factor during the 2013 Kenyan general elections. For instance, the article titled: *5m voters outside Cord, Jubilee bases to determine poll winner* (Sunday Nation 30th December 2013) depicted how ethnic polarization was high among the supporters of the two main presidential contenders. The article above focused more on the ethnical numerical strength of each candidate and not on their party manifestos as strategies to win the elections. The article further describes the ethnic affiliation each of the main contenders had in regards to the 5 million swing votes.

Articles such as: *Amani moves to strengthen support in western* (Daily Nation 12th January 2013) depicted Musalia Mudavadi's commitment to solidify votes from his ethnic community and deny his rivals any chance of getting any votes in western.

Table 3. News content related to ethnic polarization

Category	No. of Articles	Percentage
ICC Cases	9	25.7
Land and Reforms	12	34.3%
Regional numbers	14	40
Total	35	100

Ethnicity in News Coverage, Prominent Candidates and Minority Candidates

The study sought to establish whether presidential candidates perceived to have tribal backing from their communities make more headline news than other candidates. According to the 53 articles identified 45 articles (85%) contained coverage of presidential candidates. They were represented as follows:
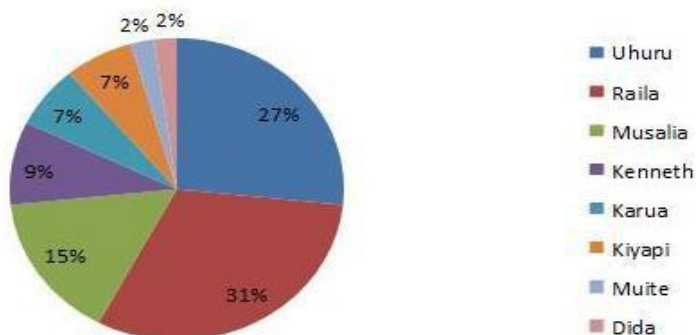

Figure 1. Coverage of presidential candidates
Source: Researcher (2013)

Out of the 45 articles identified, 33 (73%) contained headline coverage of the three leading presidential candidates. Raila Odinga, who represented the Luo, Kamba and Luhya communities owing to his alliance with Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka and Moses Wetangula was the most prominently covered politician in newspaper articles (31.1%) followed by Uhuru Kenyatta who represented the GEMA and KAMATUSA communities owing to his alliance with William Ruto (26.7%). With the exception of Musalia Mudavadi (15.6%), the other candidates such as Peter Kenneth (8.8), Martha Karua, (6.7%) and James Ole Kiyapi. (6.7%) never made it to the front page headlines during the 3 month campaign period. Paul Muite and Abduba Dida only received 2.2% of the articles analyzed.

The prominent contenders were covered more frequently as depicted in articles such: *Top seat aspirants in war of words as campaigns hot up* (Daily Nation 14th January 2013) and *Echos of family rivalry in race for top job; Uhuru and Raila* (Sunday Nation 9th December 2013). On the other hand, the rest of the candidates were perceived as minority candidates who did not receive tribal backing from their respective communities and hence never made it to the front page headlines**.**

DISCUSSIONS

The study sought to identify articles reporting on election campaigns that enhance political ethnicity in the run up to the 2013 Kenyan general elections specifically as carried by the *Daily Nation* newspapers. The study found out that the print media adopted a model of reporting on election campaign news in the fashion of hard news, in which such news was found to be personalized, dramatic, conflict-filled, and involved extreme physical action and intensity. According to the 53 articles identified, 96.2% were found to contain language and words based on ethnic politics.

These findings agree with Gachigua's (2008) research on the media's role in Kenya's Volatile 2007 post-election violence. Gachigua (2008), points out that the motivating factor in structuring campaign news as hard news is that such structuring is appealing to the readers and that this appeal is desired in order to sustain competition and media profits, which are the driving forces of media operating in a liberalized economy as commercial entities. The study found out that the media adopted the technique of using language that is largely based on ethnic politics during election campaigns in order to attract more readers.

The study also sought to examine articles reporting on election campaigns that were likely to promote ethnic polarization. According to the 53 articles identified, 35 (66%) were found to contain language that was likely to promote ethnic polarization. The study observed that politicians' understanding of the media hard news norms and routines were prone to manipulate such norms in their favour. In this regard the study analysed instances in which politicians in the 2013 Kenyan general election campaigns, manipulated hard news norms to get desired publicity. The study found out that the political coverage in the print media was predominantly personality and ethnic based, not issue-driven. The study found out that most of the articles analysed only focused on the party manifestos during the period they were launched. News content concerning issues such as voting patterns of ethnic communities featured more frequently as compared to party or coalition manifesto.

The study found out that the media predominantly focused on sensational politics comprising of provocation of passions and uncritical news reporting. For instance remarks such as *Ruto: We forgive PM but deny him Votes* (Sunday Nation 4th November, 2012) and *Fish elsewhere, Mudavadi tells rivals* (Sunday Nation 13th January 2013) were likely to promote ethnic polarization rather than national cohesion. The study found out that the print media tended to favour topics that were conflictual in nature which focused primarily on utterances from the political elite that tended to enhance ethnic polarization.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the findings, the study established that presidential candidates perceived to have tribal backing from their communities made it to the headline news more often than the other candidates who were perceived to be minority candidates. The articles analysed showed that the election campaigns were regularly structured in forms of battles or sporting events with metaphors of these battlegrounds extensively employed to describe the electioneering process. These findings explain why the print media placed more focus on the two leading presidential candidates namely Raila Odinga and Uhuru Kenyatta. The two contenders frequently made it to the headline news more than the other presidential candidates. These headlines mostly were fashioned in a manner that depicted a titanic battle between the two ethnic communities the two contenders represented. It is presumed that bringing out such conflict was an important device for driving forward hard news stories because unraveling of conflict between the two main presidential contenders became a sure attention-grabber for the mass audience especially during the electioneering period.

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