



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

eCommons@AKU

Theses & Dissertations

1-30-2020

Self-censorship and Journalism practice in mainstream media in Kenya

James Odhiambo Okong'o
Aga Khan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.aku.edu/theses_dissertations



Part of the [Journalism Studies Commons](#), and the [Mass Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Okong'o, J. O. (2020). *Self-censorship and Journalism practice in mainstream media in Kenya* (Unpublished master's dissertation). Aga Khan University, East Africa.

AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Media and Communications

**SELF-CENSORSHIP AND JOURNALISM PRACTICE IN MAINSTREAM
MEDIA IN KENYA**

By

JAMES ODHIAMBO OKONG'O

535172

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in Digital Journalism

Nairobi, Kenya

30/01/2020

© Copyright

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2020 James Odhiambo Okong'o

APPROVAL PAGE

The Aga Khan University
Graduate School of Media and Communication

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in Digital Journalism

Members of the Thesis Evaluation Committee appointed to examine the thesis of
JAMES ODHIAMBO OKONG'O-535172, found it satisfactory and recommended
that it be accepted.

Alex Awiti, PhD.,
Chair, Thesis Evaluation Committee

Nancy Booker, PhD.,
Director, Academic Affairs

Peter Kimani, PhD.,
1st Supervisor

James Oranga, PhD.,
2nd Supervisor

Sam Kamau, PhD.,
Member Thesis Evaluation Committee

30/01/2020

DECLARATION

I, **JAMES ODHIAMBO OKONG'O-535172**, declare that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. The editorial assistance provided to me has in no way added to the substance of my thesis, which is the product of my own research endeavors.

Signature

30/01/2020

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is a culmination of an intense period of study and research. It is a product of huge intellectual and professional support from several people for which I remain eternally grateful. Profound gratitude to the German Development Bank-KFW Scholarships and the Aga Khan University, without their support, this work would have not been possible. Special gratitude to my research supervisor's Dr. Peter Kimani and Dr. James Oranga for their invaluable scholarly advice, guidance, and encouragement towards the completion of my thesis. I also wish to thank my Thesis Committee members for their critical input. To all Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications management, staff, faculty members and my fellow students, I say a big thank you for your invaluable support and input during my study. Sincere gratitude to my journalist colleagues who generously gave vital input for this study and I hope that together we can build a much better media for Kenyans. Finally, special appreciation to my brother Ken for his unconditional support and to my fiancé Agatha for the constant encouragement throughout the process.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between self-censorship and the practice of journalism in Kenya's mainstream media by answering the following questions: What factors drive self-censorship in Kenya's media? What impact does self-censorship have on the practice of journalism? And are journalists willing to self-censor? The study also discusses the findings of different scholars on self-censorship in Africa and other continents. Kenya has one of the most robust and pluralistic media in Africa, however, it still faces challenges in achieving its full potential as a public watchdog. The findings of this study show that self-censorship is a serious threat to the practice of journalism, the practice is linked to the diminishing trust in the media as well as the declining consumption of news content. The study sheds light on the major factors that lead journalists to self-censor categorizing them into three broad components namely: Institutional (ownership and editorial policies), National (politics, economic and legal factors), and personal/cultural factors. Journalists are forced into self-censoring by power players who include media owners, advertisers, the government and politicians. The power players have made regulations meant to put journalists under control, those who dare not to obey are punished. Besides, media organizations need advertisement revenue for survival thus they accept whatever corporate organizations, the state, and politicians tell them to do in exchange for advertising money. This has led to media owners and managers forcing journalists to work under certain policies that influence them to censor themselves. As a result, journalists choose not to write against the interest of power players. They hide facts, leave out information they think will upset the power players and are not willing to work on sensitive stories which they cannot write truths about. The study adopted a mixed-methods research approach, the method provides a better chance to understand whether dishonorable journalistic practices, as well as the utilization of media organizations by several vested interests, are responsible for self-censorship among journalists. The study recommends that media organizations should focus on: production of quality news content, championing for the full implementation of Article 34 in Kenya's Constitution on press freedom and adhere to it, regulate media ownership, and align editorial policies to the journalistic principles.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE	iii
DECLARATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	xii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the Study	1
1.3 Problem Statement	7
1.4 Purpose of the Study	8
1.5 Objectives of the Study	8
1.6 Research Questions	8
1.7 The Rationale of the Study	9
1.8 Significance of the Study	9
1.9 Assumptions of the Study	10
1.10 Scope of the Study.....	10
1.11 Limitations of the Study	11
1.12 Definition of Terms	11
1.12.1 Self-censorship	11
1.12.2 Media	12
1.12.3 Journalist.....	12
1.12.4 Journalism.....	12
1.13 Summary	12
CHAPTER TWO	13
LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 Defining Media Self-Censorship.....	13
2.2.1 Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Freedom of Expression	14
2.2.2 Historical Context of Media Censorship since the Pre-colonial Era	16
2.3 Theoretical Framework	25

2.3.1	Spiral of Silence.....	26
2.3.2	Propaganda Model.....	27
2.3.3	The Gatekeeping Theory	30
2.4	Emerging Gaps in the Review of Literature Based on the Study’s Objectives	32
2.5	Empirical Literature Review	35
2.6	Summary	36
CHAPTER THREE		38
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....		38
3.1	Introduction	38
3.2	Research Approach	38
3.3	Research Design.....	39
3.4	Study Site	39
3.5	Population.....	39
3.5.1	Target Population.....	40
3.5.2	Sample Size	40
3.5.3	Sampling Techniques and Procedures	42
3.6	Types of Data	42
3.7	Data Collection Instruments.....	42
3.8	Data Collection Procedures	43
3.9	Data Analysis	44
3.10	Data Presentation Methods.....	44
3.11	Ethical Considerations.....	45
3.12	Summary	46
CHAPTER FOUR.....		47
DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION		47
4.1	Introduction	47
4.2	Response Rate	47
4.3	Data Analysis	47
4.4	Questionnaire (Survey) Findings	48
4.4.1	Demographics of Respondents	48
4.4.2	Perceptions of Journalism Roles.....	52
4.4.3	Willingness to Self-censor among Kenyan Journalists	57
4.4.4	Respondents Perception of Ethical and Unethical Journalistic Practices..	59
4.4.5	Perceptions of Factors that Influence Self-censorship.....	60
4.5	Key Informant Interview Findings	65
4.5.1	Views on Self-censorship from the Key Informant Interviews	65
4.5.2	Factors that Contribute to Self-censorship in Kenyan Newsrooms.....	69

4.6 Summary	83
CHAPTER FIVE	84
DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	84
5.1 Introduction	84
5.2 Discussions of the Key Findings	84
5.3 Conclusion.....	87
5.4 Recommendations	89
5.5 Suggestions for Future Research.....	91
5.6 How does this Study Contribute to Knowledge	92
REFERENCES	93
APPENDICES	97
Appendix A Online Questionnaire.....	97
Appendix B Interview Guide.....	102
Appendix C AKU Ethics Review Committee Approval Letter.....	103
Appendix D Introductory Letter from AKU	104
Appendix E NACOSTI Research Licence	105

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1: Showing the number of accredited journalists in six mainstream newsrooms in Kenya</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Table 2: Shows the sample number of journalists for the survey from the six selected newsrooms.....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Table 3: Shows the stratification of respondents by category</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Table 4: Shows the distribution of stratified respondents per newsroom.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Table 5: Shows Educational Qualification of Respondents.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Table 6: Responses to the Question on Monitoring and Scrutinizing of Corporate organizations.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Table 7: Shows responses to the question on the use of media for monitoring and scrutinizing government and state officials</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Table 8: Shows responses to the use of media for setting the political agenda.....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Table 9: Shows response on media as a channel for advocating social change</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>Table 10: Shows response on the use of media to champion government policies</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>Table 11: Use of media to provide information that influences people to make the right political choices</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Table 12: Shows responses to question 25 above</i>	<i>59</i>

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1: Shows respondents job designations.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Figure 2: Shows the gender of survey respondents</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Figure 3: Shows the age bracket in (Years) of the survey respondents.....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Figure 4: Shows newsroom affiliation of the respondents.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Figure 5: Shows respondents years of newsroom experience</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>Figure 6: Responses on the question of journalists “reporting things as they are” ...</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Figure 7: Shows responses to the question of monitoring and scrutinizing of politicians.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Figure 8: Shows responses to question 24 above</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Figure 9: Summarized responses to the question on audience feedback.....</i>	<i>61</i>

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CA:	Communications Authority
CPJ:	Committee to Protect Journalists
CJR:	Columbia Journalism Review
GAA:	Government Advertising Agency
HRW:	Human Rights Watch
ICC:	International Criminal Court
KADU:	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU:	Kenya African National Union
KCA:	Kenya Central Association
KICA:	Kenya Information and Communications Act
KII:	Key Informant Interview
KNA:	Kenya News Agency
KTN:	Kenya Television Network
MCK:	Media Council of Kenya
MRC:	Mombasa Republican Council
NARC:	National Alliance Rainbow Coalition
NMG:	Nation Media Group
ODM:	Orange Democratic Movement
PEV:	Post Elections Violence
PNU:	Party of National Unity
PPU:	Presidential Press Unit
RMS:	Royal Media Services
RWB:	Reporters Without Borders
RQ1:	Research Question One
RQ2:	Research Question Two
RQ3:	Research Question Three
SG:	Standard Group
UDHR:	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN:	United Nations
VPPU:	Vice President Press Unit

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of this study, the problem statement, study objectives, research questions, and limitations of the study, justification, and significance of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

In vibrant democratic societies, the media are a very essential voice that champions the interests of the people. The media play the important roles of safeguarding human rights, stimulating economic growth, championing citizens' rights and aiding in conflict resolution (Curran & Hesmondhalgh, 2019).

Article 34 on the Bill of Rights in the Kenyan Constitution (2010), recognizes the importance of freedom of the media. Article 33 of the Constitution guarantees a free and independent media, it states that Kenyans have a right to seek, receive and share information. To ensure that Kenyans enjoy the right to seek, receive, and share information; the importance of having a free and independent media has been addressed. The Constitution recommends that parliament should set up an independent body whose mandate is to ensure that the media remains free from interference by the government, politicians, media owners and advertisers.

The United Nations (UN) also recognizes the important role of information dissemination played by the media on the right to communicate. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR] (1948), Freedom of Information is a basic human right. This right allows citizens access to information held by public institutions and to have a free and independent press.

The information that people receive through the media is critical because it assists them to form opinions and make decisions on important issues that affect them. In this regard, journalists are trained to adhere to specific principles while gathering and disseminating news content. Towards this end, the Media Council of Kenya (MCK), is the custodian of the journalists' code of conduct that media practitioners adhere to as they discharge their duties. The code of ethics, which is also adhered to globally requires journalists to be Independent, provide fair and accurate reporting, display high integrity, be accountable, offer parties an opportunity to reply, protect confidentiality of sources, desist from using obscene material, avoid hate speech among other unethical issues (Herrscher, 2002).

Other notable internationally recognized organizations that encourages journalist's to adhere to the code of conduct for the practice of journalism include the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) whose mandate is to encourage the free practice of journalism and to stimulate high ethical standards among media practitioners (SPJ, 2019); and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) whose main role is to promote press freedom (CPJ, 2019).

Despite having an elaborate professional code of conduct, and laws protecting journalists and granting citizens the right to know, the quality of news content produced by Kenyan mainstream media outlets is still wanting especially when it comes to reporting on corruption, conflict, and politics. Many a time, the journalists will: not tell the whole story, soften the tone of stories or not publish a story altogether out of fear of reprisals from the government, media owners, and advertisers and for personal reasons (Yesil, 2014).

Anthonissen (2008) posit that media self-censorship is self-imposed by the journalists and occurs when an individual or group decides to withhold information thought to be harmful to themselves or others.

Kenyan journalists and news organizations continue facing unorthodox ordinances from authorities in an attempt to silence them. According to Human Rights Watch (2017), harsh laws created by consecutive administrations in the country have created a hostile environment for reporting forcing journalists to adopt self-censorship.

An article in the Columbia Journalism Review (CJR) by Bennett and Naim (2015) titled: “*21st-century censorship*,” reveals that governments across the globe are responsible for disrupting media independence by determining the information that reaches the society. The article says that “media control by governments is worse in poor countries or those with autocratic regimes where governments determine how information is produced and consumed, and by whom” (p.2).

Bennett and Naim (2015, p.4) adds that: “In countries such as Hungary, Ecuador, Turkey, and Kenya, officials are mimicking autocracies like Russia, Iran, or China by redacting critical news and building state media brands. They are also creating more subtle tools to complement the blunt instruments of attacking journalists.”

Through the provision of truthful and factual information, the media plays the role of creating an informed society, a judicious mass that can effectively participate in democratic decision making and also steers the audience from half-truths (McQuail, 2005). However, most journalists are not discharging their mandate effectively due to self-censorship.

Journalists self-censor due to a multiplicity of reasons. Yesil (2014) opines that journalists may resort to self-censorship because of threats of reprisal by the

government, fear of sanctions by advertisers and the fear of in-house ‘unwritten rules’ imposed by media owners. According to the Media Observer (2015), other grounds that motivate Kenyan journalists to censor themselves include threats from vigilante groups, bribery (brown envelope) and material gifts, threats and intimidations from politicians and other elite people in society, plum job offers and job promotions in return for favors. From the above literature, it’s evident that the phenomenon of self-censorship is largely caused by fear.

In a 2013 interview with Julia Farrington of Index on Censorship, photojournalist Boniface Mwangi said that censorship in Kenya occurs largely out of choice - “it is more self-censorship than anything else,” (p.3). He added that media owners in the country are more focused on protecting their business interests because they fear to lose advertising revenue most of which come from the government and big corporate organizations.

While the expansion of the media in Kenya in the early 1990s was largely thought to facilitate the professionalization of journalism and empower journalistic independence, today, business tycoons and politicians with significant political, business, or personal interests in Kenya own many of the country’s mainstream media organizations (Mbeke, 2008).

Ownership in the hands of a few connected individuals has instigated processes that require Kenyan journalists to acquire new norms and adjust their practices (Simiyu, 2013). Although journalistic ethics dictate that there be a separation between the commercial and editorial sides of a news organization, media owners can still control major decisions such as the basic newsroom setup and the hiring and firing of top-level management staff that determine the organizational culture (Simiyu, 2013).

The sacking of Denis Galava from the Nation Media Group, Chacha Mwita from the Standard and Godfrey “Gado” Mwampembwa from NMG are all linked to media owners with pressure instigated by the state. These three cases are a testimonial that business interests seem to bypass journalistic interest in Kenyan newsrooms.

According to Allison (2016, p.6), Galava’s dismissal in January 2016 after writing an editorial that criticized President Uhuru Kenyatta’s leadership was seen as evidence of growing censorship in the country. Despite having published several other editorials before and holding a senior editorial position at the media house, Galava was told that he didn’t “followed the correct in house procedure” while publishing the editorial.

After Standard Group journalist Mark Kapchanga published a story alleging excessive expenditures by the state in March 2014 for a presidential retreat. Both Kapchanga and the then Standard Editorial Director Chacha Mwita were sacked, the latter was dismissed for commissioning the story. According to a (CPJ, 2015, p. 19) report:

Standard editors were summoned to State House, where a communications officer reminded them of the government’s 70 million Kenyan shillings (US\$723,500) advertising deal and said the revenue would continue so long as the paper published an apology, four journalists familiar with the episode told CPJ. The newspaper published an apology for allegedly inflating the cost of the retreat, despite a consensus in the newsroom that the story was accurate, according to two of the journalists. The Standard subsequently fired Kapchanga and Managing Editor Chacha Mwita, news reports said. CPJ’s requests for comment to two Standard editors were declined, and Chief Executive Sam Shollei of the Standard Group did not reply to an email or phone calls.

Mwita later sued the company for what he termed as “wrongful termination” of his contract. In his suit, he said that the then SG CEO Sam Shollei’s decision to sack him was not justified.

After working for NMG as a cartoonist for over two decades, Gado was discharged from his duties in March 2016. The celebrated cartoonist in an Interview with *Africa Uncensored* said that no reason was given for his contract termination. He, however, told CPJ that he suspected that government officials were behind his sacking (CPJ, 2016, p.4). Gado said that:

It is no secret that there were many in government who didn't like my cartoons over the years. But we had grown used to that and the *Nation* thankfully consistently pushed back. Things changed in 2013 after a new government came into place and the pressure became far more intense. I have no doubt that the *Nation* crumbled, which is quite sad and should be seen in the broader context of efforts by those in government to control the press.

In a study that sought to find out if media owners affect the ability of journalists to work independently. Simiyu (2013) reveals that 52 percent of the respondents said that media owners have authority over the kind of content that is churned out in Kenyan newsrooms.

According to Mwangi (2013), self-censorship has become more of a default setting for most journalists in the country. Should we care? Yes, because it affects the quality of news content produced in journalism thus fostering distrust among readers and viewers. Self-censorship is responsible for eating into the fabric of press freedom hence it is bad for democracy.

It is important to note that self-censorship is not necessarily a bad thing since there are instances when it is actually justified. However, the relationship between justified and unjustified self-censorship has always raised questions, the phenomenon of self-censorship also raises this fundamental question: does self-censorship always require a censoring agent?

Generally, all journalism contains bits of self-censorship brought about by the processes of reporting or writing, editing and the selection of details to omit or include

in the final published news story (Morris, 2017). He further asserts that self-censorship within newsrooms is justified and occurs due to various reasons. Some of the justifications include the “interests of decency, taste, avoidance of unnecessary harm, to keep from whipping up a violent situation, or even at the behest of the government to protect secret operations” (p. 8).

1.3 Problem Statement

This study sought to investigate a range of actions that can be construed as self-censorship in Kenya’s mainstream media. The study also explored factors that influence journalists to self-censor. Additionally, it also examines if the practice has the potential of eroding the quality of journalism.

According to Media Observer (2015), media organizations in Kenya are still struggling with the problem of publishing or broadcasting news stories without interference. Journalism in the country is controlled both internally and externally thus influencing journalists to self-censor. The media and journalists operate within stipulated policies and ‘unwritten rules’ that affect how news information is gathered, processed and eventually disseminated.

Yesil (2014); and Morris (2017) say that self-censorship affects the practice of journalism at the levels of news gathering and processing. This has an effect on the quality of news content that is eventually produced for dissemination and on journalism as a profession.

There is a need, therefore, to investigate whether dishonorable media practices, as well as the utilization of media organizations by different vested interests such as media owners, politicians, state, and advertisers, contribute to the incapability of the media to competently discharge its watchdog and agenda-setting role.

Lee (2015) says that self-censorship injures the credibility of news content thus causing distrust among news consumers. According to Media Observer (2015), self-censorship is a common practice among Kenyan journalists. It influences journalists to avoid some newsworthy stories, to intentionally leave out important information in stories, and to soften the tone of stories to fit with the interests of their news organizations and that of advertisers.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study sought to investigate the phenomenon of self-censorship in Kenya's mainstream media. The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between self-censorship and the practice of journalism in Kenya's mainstream media.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

- i. To explore factors that drive self-censorship in Kenyan mainstream media houses.
- ii. To determine the impact of self-censorship on the practice of journalism in Kenya mainstream media organizations.
- iii. To find out how willing are Kenyan journalists to self-censor.

1.6 Research Questions

- i. What factors drive self-censorship in Kenya's mainstream media organizations?
- ii. What impact does self-censorship have on the practice of journalism in Kenyan mainstream media organizations?
- iii. Are journalists willing to self-censor?

1.7 The Rationale of the Study

Studies by Lee (2015); and Morris (2017) show that self-censorship has a negative impact on the practice of journalism. The practice is not limited only to the Kenyan media platform but the entire African continent and the world at large. In Kenya, self-censorship is rampant to the extent that media scholars have raised concerns about its negative impact on journalism through the Media Observer (2015). Despite the fact that self-censorship is a problem in the country, the researcher has come across very few empirical studies that have been conducted in the country to determine its effect on journalism. Therefore, this study is important because it will help shed light on the extent of the problem and add useful insights into the body of knowledge of Kenyan media.

1.8 Significance of the Study

Existing studies in Kenya on media and self-censorship is still insufficient. However, all the studies the researcher has come across on the phenomenon of self-censorship indicates that the practice curtails press freedom. According to Yesil (2014) self-censorship in many African countries including Kenya is practiced on the extreme hence hindering the media from fulfilling its agenda-setting and public watchdog roles.

This study is important because it comes at a time when the country is witnessing an erosion of the ideals of freedom of the press. According to Media Observer (2015); Yesil (2014); Morris (2017) the news content that is churned out by many news organizations, is filtered to suit the interests of the government, politicians, advertisers and media owners who in one way or another have an influence over the media. The findings of this study will benefit various media stakeholders particularly journalists, media scholars, media organizations, and policymakers. Journalists will

benefit from the study as it will shed light on how self-censorship impacts on journalism and also provide recommendations.

Besides, media scholars will also benefit from this study as it will form the foundation on which more scholarly work can be built on. Policymakers, media owners, and regulators will gain valuable knowledge on the extent to which self-censorship affects the practice of journalism in the country. This knowledge will help them to formulate policies that hopefully will minimize or curb acts of self-censorship.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

This study assumed that all potential respondents have encountered self-censorship in the course of their work. Additionally, this research assumed that the respondents offered reliable information that was analyzed to arrive at objective conclusions.

1.10 Scope of the Study

This study explored the phenomenon of self-censorship in the Kenyan mainstream media platform. It focused on journalists from six major media outlets namely: The Nation Media Group (NMG), The Standard Group (SG), Royal Media Services (RMS), Media Max Limited, Radio Africa Group and the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC).

The study focused on the period spanning 2013 to 2019 to evaluate the extent to which press freedoms have been curtailed or enhanced under President Uhuru Kenyatta's regime. This means that the periods when Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel Moi, and Mwai Kibaki were presidents were not considered but have been discussed to offer historical context.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

The study was carried out over a period of eight months which is a short time frame. The short time period under which the study was conducted could present a limitation on the depth and breadth of findings.

On methodology, the research instruments that were used for the study had weaknesses. For instance, respondents could have misinterpreted the questionnaire and gave wrong answers. Secondly, some respondents could have not provided honest answers. Finally, in-depth interviews require a lot of time to conduct and are expensive.

The idea of self-censorship is also difficult to convey as those who engage in it might not do so consciously. It could be a work culture that has been accepted without question.

1.12 Definition of Terms

1.12.1 Self-censorship

In this study, self-censorship was understood to occur as a result of pressure from economic, social pressure groups, media owners, state authorities, and illegal organizations imposed on journalists and media companies. Self-censorship occurs during news gathering and processing stages, reporters and editors out of fear or guided by their specific newsroom editorial policies, will: not tell the whole story, soften the tone of some stories or not publish or pursue some stories altogether out of fear of reprisals from the government, media owners, and advertisers or for other personal reasons.

According to Lee (2015, p.57):

Self-censorship is defined as a set of editorial actions ranging from omission, dilution, distortion, and changes of emphasis to the choice of rhetorical devices by journalists, their organizations and the entire

media fraternity in anticipation of currying favor and avoiding punishment from the power structures.

1.12.2 Media

The media in this context refers to devices that are used to communicate and interact with mass audiences. They include traditional forms of communication such as print (newspapers and magazines) broadcast (radio and television) and new media (digital platforms including social media and online blogs). Generally, the media is a means of communication, spreading information, expressing and sharing views, opinions, and ideas.

1.12.3 Journalist

In this study, a journalist was understood to be a person who writes news for newspapers, magazines, and on digital platforms or broadcast the news on the radio, television and online platforms. The Merriam Webster dictionary describes a journalist as “a person engaged in journalism especially a writer or editor for a news medium,” (para.1).

1.12.4 Journalism

Journalism in this context is understood to be the activity of gathering, processing and presenting news information to a targeted or mass audience.

1.13 Summary

This chapter tackled the essence of this thesis, specifically expounding on the phenomenon of self-censorship and exploring its effect on the quality of news. Additionally, it has also looked at the purpose and significance of this study, research objectives, assumptions, scope, and limitations. The chapter provides a basis for conducting a study on the phenomenon of self-censorship in Kenyan newsrooms and its relationship with journalism.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter positions this study within existing research and provides a framework for understanding press freedom in the mainstream media in Kenya. It also discusses the study's objectives namely: factors that influence journalists to self-censor; the impact that self-censorship has on the practice of journalism and the society at large and willingness of journalists to self-censor derived from information published by other scholars. The study borrows from different literature that has already been studied that connects its aim, objectives, and questions to a wider research perspective.

2.2 Defining Media Self-Censorship

In their professional life, journalists make different decisions when handling news content. Editors may cut off part of a story or add information to suit the interests and preferences of the audiences and this is professionally allowed as long as it doesn't alter the original message in the report. However, when journalists omit certain essential facts in a story, change the tone of a story or don't publish or pursue a story altogether due to fear of reprisal from the subjects of the story, then they are engaging in self-censorship (Yesil, 2014).

According to Lee (2015):

Self-censorship is defined as a set of editorial actions ranging from omission, dilution, distortion, and changes of emphasis to the choice of rhetorical devices by journalists, their organizations and the entire media fraternity in anticipation of currying favor and avoiding punishment from the power structures (p. 57).

Self-censorship occurs at the levels of news gathering (reporter level) and processing (sub-editor/editor level). It is professional misconduct because it denies the

audience an opportunity to know the truth (Morris, 2017). Besides, it also goes against the ethical principles of journalism that demands that media professionals should provide audiences with accurate, truthful and objective news information.

In a typical newsroom, Individual journalists adhere to set editorial policies enforced by the organizations they work for. However, every media house has its own internal house rules that may include some ‘unwritten laws’ enforced by media owners through editors and newsroom leaders (Index on censorship, 2013). More often, corporate media owners tend to favor big advertisers including corporations and the government as well as regulators so as protect their personal and business interests (Media Observer, 2015).

According to the Media Observer, (2015); Morris (2017), self-censorship is majorly driven by fear. It is not possible to speak about the phenomenon of self-censorship without mentioning censorship because the two are intertwined. Fear is a legitimate feeling, but in journalism, it comes at a price. When journalists operate under a fearful environment because of repressive laws enacted by the state, and through newsroom editorial policies or out of fear of media owners, big corporate and state advertisers, it puts press freedom in jeopardy because journalists will internalize these limits of freedom drawn by the intimidators and normalize them (Index on Censorship, 2017). They will automatically self-censor so that they won’t be any need of silencing them, “they will silence themselves,” (Index on Censorship, 2017, p.55). In exercising self-censorship, journalists abandon part of themselves to the aforementioned media censors.

2.2.1 Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Freedom of Expression

Countries that embrace the Bill of Rights regard freedom of expression as a fundamental human right (Makali, 2003). The moral autonomy perspective asserts that

free speech is based on the concept of liberalism which articulates that individuals should be left to determine matters of their moral choice (Brison, 1998).

The libertarian philosophy is based on the ideology of a free market of ideas. According to this perspective, press freedom means that individuals have a right to own means of publication with less intervention from the state (McQuail, 2005). This school of thought claims that a free market of ideas enables individuals to search and find the truth. Meiklejohn (2000) a press freedom crusader, and media scholar posit that freedom of speech and free media are meant to guarantee people democratic involvement in public deliberations thus ensuring inclusivity.

In recognition of the importance of free expression, many countries have enacted legislation to protect free speech and by extension a free press. In Kenya, the constitution guarantees free speech as a fundamental human right (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Despite this constitutional guarantee, the Kenyan media is not free due to censorship and self-censorship. Article 19 Law Program (2018) on media violations in Kenya shows that between May 2017 and April 2018, the country recorded a total of 94 incidents of violations involving harassment and threats on journalists as well as on news organizations. The report also reveals that the top dangerous issues to report on during the monitored period were on politics, elections, security, and corruption.

Another issue that affects media freedom is the fact that the Kenyan mainstream media is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals who have connections with the government, politicians and big corporate organizations (Mbeke, 2008). It is this kind of environment that influences newsrooms to have ‘unwritten editorial rules’ that journalists working within these news organizations have to unconditionally adhere to.

2.2.2 Historical Context of Media Censorship since the Pre-colonial Era

2.2.2.1 Kenya Media during the colonial era

Kenya was declared a British protectorate in 1895 but became a British colony in 1920 (Makali, 2003). Media history in Kenya can be traced back to the above period. According to Ochilo (1993), the content of media during this time was meant to facilitate the propagation of colonial ideologies and enhance the subjugation of Kenyans.

In 1902, Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee, a businessman cum politician founded the *African Standard*. At that time, the newspaper supported the views of the colonialists (Abuoga & Mutere, 1988). However, since Jeevanjee was opposed to colonialists rule, he sold the publication to two Britons Anderson and Mayer in 1905 who were pro-colonialists for it to survive (Smart, 2011).

Several other indigenous language newspapers were established by local politicians in the country with the aim of mobilizing their communities to fight for independence. The first of such indigenous newspapers was *Muiguithania* (Frederiksen, 2006). The paper was rolled out by the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) in 1928, the publication championed for the political rights of the local people (Makali, 2003).

Many other local language newspapers mushroomed and borrowed a leaf from *Muiguithania*. Smart (2011) argues that it is this kind of content that was critical of the white settlers' policies that influenced the colonialists to come up with repressive laws to gag local publications.

According to Makali (2003, p.69), "the authoritarian colonial government did not countenance press freedom." Instead, it came up with laws that were meant to suppress Africa owned newspapers. This is exemplified by the 1930 Penal Code that

was activated to forbid the publication of any news content that the colonialists considered seditious (Abuoga & Mutere, 1988). This was followed by an Emergency Order Council of 1939 which was applied to proscribe many books and newspapers targeted to the locals (Mbeke, 2008). In 1950, Newspaper Ordinance was repealed to repress the indigenous publications riddled with production and distribution bottlenecks. Some of the publications that were affected included *Inooro ria Agikuyu*, *Uhuru Wa Mwafrika* and *Sauti ya Mwafrika* (Mbeke, 2008).

As Kenya was nearing independence, the colonial government softened censorship towards local publications by allowing the publication and circulation of various local news publications such as *Ramogi*, *Thome*, and *Kikuyu Weekly* (Mbeke, 2008). However, in 1960, it eroded all that had been attained in this front through enacting the Books and Newspaper Statute that once again curtailed the mushrooming of local press and publications.

2.2.2.2 Kenya Media in the post-colonial era

2.2.2.2.1 The Jomo Kenyatta era (1963-1978)

According to Ogola (2011), the fallout between Kenya's first President Jomo Kenyatta and his deputy Jaramogi Oginga marked the beginning of media repression in independent Kenya. Soon after the fallout, Kenyatta devised an approach of using state machinery including the police and the judiciary to silence his opponents. It is during this period that he invented a new nation-building ideology. The media, politicians, religious leaders, and citizens were all inclined to support the governments 'national unity' agenda, "with support gathered through coercion and cooption" (p.80).

When the media started publishing information about the tension that marred KANU at the time, the Kenyatta administration enacted the Official Secrets' Act in 1968 to control an avalanche of leaks that would paint the government in a bad light.

Kenyatta's regime was also at fault for monopolizing the print media market through controlling advertising revenue. McChesney (1998) says that the state being the largest advertiser in the 1960s, gave all its advertisements to *The Standard* and *The Nation* newspapers ignoring the mushrooming alternative community publications.

Both *The Nation* and *The Standard* promoted the government's agenda of nation-building through preaching messages of national unity. The two news organizations deliberately became mild when it came to criticizing the state (Ogola, 2011).

Due to the oppressive nature of the regime, both President Kenyatta and his deputy Daniel Moi were not covered by the mainstream media. According to (Ogola, 2011), their stories were reported by the "Presidential Press Unit (PPU), the Vice-Presidential Press Unit (VPPU), and the Kenya News Agency (KNA). *The Nation* and *The Standard* thus became, almost by default, an informal publicity arm of the state" (p.82).

Loughran (2010) in his book *Birth of a Nation*, gives an account of how Kenyatta wanted to take control of the Nation Media Group. The book also shares insights on how the NMG proprietor, The Aga Khan, used his immense wealth to build a house for Kenyatta so as to dissuade him from trying to take over his business. According to Loughran (2010), *The Nation* newspaper even went ahead to endorse KANU through an editorial in the 1964 elections pitying Kenyatta's KANU against Jaramogi's KADU.

2.2.2.2.2 *The Moi era (1978-2002)*

Moi became Kenya's second president in 1978 through a constitutional succession following Kenyatta's death. He followed into Kenyatta's footsteps and

continued his policies (Ogola, 2011). During his reign, news broadcast was exclusive to the state (Oyugi, Wanyande & Mbai, 2003).

In June 1982, he forced parliament to enact a constitutional amendment that saw Kenya become a one-party state (Ogola, 2011; Nyamora, 2007). Besides, the government continued to use state machinery to intimidate and arrest journalists, the opposition and to illegally detain politicians and university lecturers (Oyugi et al, 2003).

Moi's regime dealt ruthlessly with dissenting voices. Any critical press was clamped down. Publications that criticized the government including the: *Beyond Magazine*, *Nairobi Law Monthly*, *The Financial Review*, and *Development Agenda* were all shut down (Adar & Munyae, 2001; Mbeke, 2008).

During this period, Kenya didn't have any press laws hence journalists were vulnerable to state intimidation. Press freedom was provided only in section 79(a) of the old constitution but was subject to the provisions of the Penal Code (Ogola, 2011). These provisions gave the government powers to have undue control over the media in the interest of national security, public order and public morality (Mbeke, 2008).

However, in 1992 the country reverted to a multiparty political system, for the first time since 1982 when Moi made it illegal (Nyamora, 2007).

In 1982 when Moi ordered the arrest of pro-democracy activists where "Al-Amin Mazrui, Edward Oyugi, George Mkangi, Kamoji Wachira, Willy Mutunga, and Mukaru Ng'ang'a were detained without trial" (Nyamora, 2007, p.12). Some of the activists escaped arrest and went underground. The activist would later form the *Mwakenya* Group and started publishing the *Pambana*, a news publication that the government declared seditious. In the same year, anyone in possession of the publication was charged with sedition.

Maina Kanyati, a university lecturer and Titus Andugosi a student were both charged with possessing the publication and sentenced to jail terms of six and ten years respectively (Ogot and Ochieng, 1995).

The *Mwakenya* trials were covered by the media which avoided any content that would offend the state. A good example is when one of Moi's allies Kariuki Chotara was mentioned in the trials, *Nation* newspaper editors removed his name from their report which amounted to self-censorship (Nyamora, 2007).

Towards the end of the cold war 1989-90, a few individuals who had fled the country started coming back. Notable figures among them were Njehu Gatabaki who founded *Finance* magazine, lawyer Gitobu Imanyara who founded the *Nairobi Law Monthly*, and Pius Nyamora who founded *Society*. These local publications are credited with championing for the pro-democracy movement in Kenya that led to the 1992 democratic elections.

To assert his influence in the country's mainstream media, Moi bought controlling shares at the Standard Group in the mid-1990s (Ogola, 2011).

During both Kenyatta and Moi regimes, the media was fully under state control. Journalists were subjected to constant torture, intimidation, harassment, fines, and imprisonment for expressing their views (Mbeke, 2008). Because of this, self-censorship ensued, out of fear of reprisals from the state.

However, in the early 1990s, Moi bowed to local and international pressures and section 2A of the old constitution was repealed paving way for political pluralism in Kenya (Ogola, 2011). The highlight of this new development was the liberalization of the media (Mbeke, 2008; Nyamora, 2007).

2.2.2.2.3 The Mwai Kibaki era (2003-2008)

According to Cheeseman (2011), President Kibaki came into power with lots of expectations and goodwill from Kenyans. Kenyans and the world at large expected Kibaki's administration to curb corruption that was rampant under the previous Moi regime, show respect for political rights and civil liberties and reform the country's political institutions that were over centralized under the previous regime (Cheeseman, 2011). According to (Wolf, Logan, and Owiti, 2004), Kenyans were the most optimistic people on earth in early 2003.

Kibaki inherited a media system that was under the ownership of a few connected individuals and the trend continued during his tenure. However, he is credited with contributing to enacting a number of progressive media legislations. The Freedom of Information Act 2007, Media Act 2007, and a new constitutional dispensation that champions for media freedom were all enacted during his reign (Shirima & Ndonye, 2017).

This is not to say that Kibaki's regime didn't suppress the media. Soon after he took office, his administration introduced a rule that required publishers to post a bond of KES 1 million with the state before publishing a newspaper or magazine. In June 2006, the government raided the Standard Group offices, confiscated computers, and other important data. The raiders also burnt newspapers, harassed, beat up and arrested journalists and temporarily shut down KTN TV (Mbeke, 2008).

During the 2005 referendum campaigns on the proposed Kenyan Constitution, Kibaki's government lost it again when it accused sections of the media of being anti-government. The government even went on a crackdown spree on dissenting media houses after losing the referendum (Mbeke, 2008).

The late Lucy Kibaki, the then-first lady, also raided the Nation Media Group offices in May 2005 protesting about a story that had been published in the *Sunday Nation* about how she had interrupted loud music at the residence of the then World Bank Country Representative Makhtar Diop, who was a neighbor to the first family (Mehler, 2007).

After President Kibaki's fallout with his NARC co-principal Raila Odinga, he formed the Party of National Unity (PNU) while Odinga founded the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), vehicles they used during the violent 2007 general elections (Krieglar, 2008).

Just before the 2007 general elections, the Kibaki administration abandoned its confrontational approach towards the media. The regime enacted the Media Act 2007 that did put into place self-regulation mechanisms for the media. However, the goodwill towards the media did not last long since after the Post-Election Violence erupted in late December that year, the government banned all live media coverage on national security threats ground (Mbeke, 2008; Krieglar, 2008).

2.2.2.2.4 Uhuru Kenyatta's era (2013- Present)

Uhuru Kenyatta inherited a more robust and independent media in 2013. Soon after becoming president, he invited editors for a breakfast meeting at Statehouse, a move steered towards fostering cordial relations between the government and the media (HRW, 2017).

However, the good relations didn't last long. According to the HRW, 2017, the government wasn't happy with how the media covered the September 2013 Westgate Mall attack where 69 people were murdered in the hands of terrorists. The government blamed journalists for "revealing too much" especially when media organizations aired

live footage of the rescue operations by Kenyan security forces. In retaliation, Parliament enacted new laws to curb the press that the media fraternity referred to as “draconian.” According to Shirima & Ndonye (2017), the government introduced “the Kenya Information and Communication (Amendment) Act [KICA] 2013, which removed the complaints commission from the MCK and formed a separate regulator; the Communications Authority of Kenya [CA]” (p.166). The administration is also responsible for enacting several other suppressive laws that include: the Security Amendment Law 2014, the (KICA) 2014, and the Powers and Privileges Bill 2015.

The Jubilee administration also introduced legislation that imposed hefty fines on journalists who failed to comply with the journalistic code of conduct through the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act (Government of Kenya, 2018; CPJ, 2018). The fines were also extended to news organizations that air programs that go against the established rules.

In 2015, the Jubilee administration founded the Government Advertising Agency (GAA), a body whose mandate is to consolidate all government institutions including ministries, state-owned corporations, universities and colleges, and other government agencies advertisements.

What this means is that the media cannot get direct advertisement from the aforementioned institutions without bidding through GAA. This move has been interpreted by some media critics and practitioners as a tact to deny the press the much-needed revenue since GAA has a say on which media houses get the advertisement money. According to NMG Editorial Director Mutuma Mathiu, GAA was set up to muzzle the media. The ICT ministry owes Kenyan media organizations up to KES2.5 billion. He adds that the government is guilty of taking “goods and services from the people” and refusing to pay for them (Mathiu, 2018).

Just like former President Moi, both President Uhuru and his deputy William Ruto have stakes in the media. This is a dangerous precedent due to the conflicts of interest that arise from political influence in the ownership and management of the media in Kenya. Political ownership as witnessed during the 2007 and 2013 general elections raises the scope for biased and politicized reportage (HRW, 2017). The media plays the watchdog role of monitoring the conduct of government officials and politicians which is vital for democracy (Ogola, 2011). Several other politicians have stakes too in the media across the country (HRW, 2017).

On January 30, 2018, the government was responsible for shutting down three major TV outlets namely: Citizen, NTV and KTN for seven days. The state accused the newsrooms of planning to air opposition leader Raila Odinga's mock swearing-in ceremony at Nairobi's Uhuru Park (Fick & Olubutsa, 2018).

Statistics paint a grim picture of the state of media freedom in Kenya in the past six years. According to the Freedom of Press report (2016), media freedom in the country has been really suppressed. Incidents of journalists being assaulted are on the rise and the police don't take any action even when these incidents are reported. As discussed earlier [see pgs.4 and 5], the unwarranted sackings of journalists Chacha, Galava and Gado due to pressure from the state don't make matters any better.

Comparing the four regimes, it is evident that every administration has been hostile to the media. Both Kenyatta and Moi regimes heavily controlled the media and used it to their advantage. However, under President Kibaki, the media was more robust and enjoyed some freedom compared to the two administrations before him.

During the 2013 general elections, Uhuru Kenyatta campaigned on the slogan of a 'digital president.' During his campaigns, he was fun, down to earth and

approachable. It was widely anticipated that President Uhuru would make the Kenyan media become even more vibrant and free. However, critics say that this hasn't been the case, instead, they accuse the Jubilee administration of reversing some of the media freedoms that were gained under the Kibaki presidency (HRW, 2017).

According to the World Press Index released by Reporters Without Borders (2019), since 2013, Kenya has experienced a worrying slump in media freedom. The report gives Kenya a global rating of 100 out of 180 countries on media freedom in 2019. It attributes Kenya's poor showing to the use of political situations and security grounds by the state to gag the media since 2016. This is exemplified by the physical attacks from security officers and the public on journalists during the 2017 election campaigns. The report also mentions threats and intimidations by politicians, censorship of content and confiscation of journalists' equipment as other atrocities that the media has faced.

Since assuming office, the Jubilee administration has been quite hostile to the press. As previously mentioned, the administration has employed a number of measures to ensure that it controls the media.

Kamau (2018) sums it up by saying that the Jubilee government has been successful in gagging the media by denying it the much-needed advertising revenue, initiating draconian media regulations, threatening and intimidating journalists thus compelling journalists to self-censorship.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

A number of theories such as the spiral of silence, propaganda theory, and gatekeeping theory are relevant to this study. As evidenced in the literature above, self-censorship occurs as a result of several factors that include personal values and beliefs,

in house policies and regulations, government regulations, ethical concerns, pressure from advertisers and media owners among others.

2.3.1 Spiral of Silence

The spiral of silence theory looks at the manner in which the media influences public beliefs (Potter, 2012). It shows how “public beliefs influence public discourse,” (p.75). The theory was created by Noelle Neuman (1974) in a bid to examine precedents of news reporting.

Noelle-Neumann (1974) observes that ‘spiral of silence’ sets in when:

Observations made in one context (the mass media) spread to another and encourages people either to proclaim their views or to swallow them and keep quiet until, in a spiraling process, the one view dominated the public scene and the other disappeared from public awareness as its adherents became mute (p.5).

Simply put, people fear to be isolated from those around them hence the tendency of keeping their views to themselves especially when they think that they are in the minority (Baran & Davis, 2015). The theory is connected to the tendency of people remaining silent when they feel that their views are in opposition to that of the majority. More often, it’s the fear of reprisal or isolation that drives the silence.

Within Kenyan newsrooms, journalists are often afraid to publish or pursue certain stories out of fear of losing their jobs or status (Media Observer, 2015).

The coverage of both the 2013 and 2017 general elections in Kenya can be analyzed using the ‘spiral of silence’ theory. According to Youngblood (2007, p.440), critics have been left to wonder if the “Kenyan media went too far by promoting peace and ignoring conflict.” After the violence that marked the 2007 general elections, the media was blamed for irresponsible reporting that helped ignite the violence (Kriegler, 2008).

Immediately the PEV ended in 2008, the public, government, and civic groups started advocating for peace journalism in the country (HRW, 2017). The Kenyan mainstream media bowed to the pressure and became peace advocates. The media was silenced and chose to conform to the will of the majority, forfeiting its watchdog role. A good example is a decision by Kenyan editors not to report the killing of 12 people, including police officers, in Mombasa on March 3, 2013. The Mombasa Republican Council (MRC), a vigilante group were suspected of the killings, yet the incident went unreported out of fear that it would ignite conflict (HRW, 2017).

2.3.2 Propaganda Model

This model explains how the mainstream media has become dependent on political and economic elites for survival. It clarifies why large news organizations strive to produce content that is favorable to the aforementioned group of elites.

Baran and Davis (2015) observe that the central argument of this theory is that powerful elites have immense control over the news media hence they have no trouble imposing their own truth on the populace. Further, they state that news content in media organizations is driven by politicians and advertisers who selectively offer bits of information while suppressing others. In Kenya, mainstream news organizations tend to bend news in favor of the state, politicians and big advertisers (Media Observer, 2015).

The propaganda model theory is attributed to Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's (1988) book titled *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass media*. The theory refers to news as a "raw material" that has to pass through different filters that ultimately determine the kind of news information that reaches the audience.

Proponents of this theory such as (Herman & Chomsky, 1988) argue that contrary to the majority view that the mass media are focused on finding and telling the truth, the reality is that the corporate-owned media more often bend news to fit with the interests of the dominant political and economic elites.

The propaganda model asserts that “money and power are able to filter out the news to fit print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p. 3).

According to this theory, the media are enterprises that offer their finished products that include audiences to other businesses. The theory applies to the Kenyan situation where news organizations offer favorable coverage to the government, state corporations and big corporate advertisers who finance their operations through advertisement revenue.

According to Herman and Chomsky (1988), the filters are used to determine what events are newsworthy, how they are covered, their placement on media platforms and the amount of coverage they receive.

The five filters that are used to manipulate news content are as follows:

1. Size, Concentrated Ownership, and Profit Orientation of the News Media

Big mainstream news organizations operate for profit hence the need to prioritize the financial interests of the owners through the creation of a good working relationship with corporations and investors. The size of a media corporation is determined by the amount of capital invested in the business to enable it to reach a mass audience.

2. Advertising License to do Business

Major mainstream media organizations derive much of their revenue from advertisements. This has made big advertisers behave as if they are licensing authorities to media enterprises. What this means is that these media organizations are at the mercy of advertisers or financiers and more often will produce content that caters to the advertisers' biases and needs.

3. Sourcing Mass Media News

Media organizations are inclined to develop symbiotic relationships with certain regular sources of information “by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest” due to the fact that they have a daily demand for churning out news to the populace. And since newsrooms can't afford to place reporters in every location where news is breaking, they've concentrated resources in specific places they believe that important news information will always come from. Statehouse, parliament, the courts, police stations and police headquarters, county assemblies, business corporations, and trade groups are considered central to news activities here in Kenya.

However, dependence on bureaucracies as news sources can be dangerous to news organizations especially in the event of disfavor from the sources. If a source bails out on a news organization, the organization loses audiences and ultimately advertisers.

4. Flak and the Enforcers

Flak is a negative response to a news item or program. Flaks take many forms including petitions, lawsuits, phone calls, parliamentary bills, threats, punitive action and any other forms of a complaint. Flak can bring losses to media houses due to missed advertisement revenue and costs of legal defense for petitions.

A good example of flak is the demand letter published by Raila Odinga through his lawyers demanding an apology over contents that were published in the *Sunday Nation* on August 18, 2019, alleging that he had announced his candidature for the 2022 presidential race.

5. Anticommunism as a Control Mechanism

Until the end of the cold war in 1991, anticommunism was considered as one of the filters. However, it was replaced by “War on Terror” as a social control mechanism. “War on Terror” is applicable in Kenya today as most stories that touch on terrorism are not published or are ‘highly censored’ due to national security concerns.

The ideologies of communists and war on terrorism have been used to help mobilize citizens against a “perceived enemy or enemies.”

The government, political and business elites regard terrorists as enemies because of the threat that they have posed on their superior positions. Articles that speak on terrorism in Kenya are highly censored by the government, editors and media owners.

2.3.3 The Gatekeeping Theory

This study employs the gatekeeping theory which “is the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people” every day (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p.1).

According to Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim and Wrigley (2001):

Gatekeeping is the process by which the vast array of potential news messages are winnowed, shaped, and prodded into those few that are actually transmitted by the news media. It is often defined as a series of decision points at which news items are either continued or halted as they pass along news channels from source to a reporter to a series of editors. However, the gatekeeping process is also thought of as

consisting of more than just selection, to include how messages are shaped, timed for dissemination, and handled (p.233).

According to this theory, a gatekeeper - reporter or editor – has the final say on which news information gets out to the public.

Gatekeepers within a newsroom set up, determine what a person's (news content consumer) social reality becomes because they have control over what the media churns out to the public (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

White (1950) suggested a “simple model to explain the selection process in newspapers and argued that news items were rejected for three reasons: personal feelings of the gatekeeper, insufficient space, and whether the story had appeared previously.” Therefore, gatekeeping can be used as a form of news regulation that can change the meaning of the original intended message. Gatekeeping indicates that the news content audiences get is as a result of the analysis of an editor's view of what is important and what has the potential to attract the attention of audiences.

But do journalists have a free will to make these decisions? A number of external forces have been identified as influencing the media gatekeeping process, they include individual journalist's characteristics such as values, background, experience, attitudes, education/training, work environment, and demographics (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

The gatekeeping theory is important in this exploratory study because it helps in identifying the process of filtering potential news stories into what is churned out to the public and examines the external forces as identified in the hierarchal model of influences that comprises five levels of influence on media content that include: “social systems, social institutions, media organizations, routine practices, and individuals” (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014).

2.4 Emerging Gaps in the Review of Literature Based on the Study's Objectives

Since time immemorial, the media plays the role of fostering democracy and just societies in countries across the globe through independent, factual, objective and well-investigated news stories.

The media's main role is to act as a watchdog in society. It plays the role of exposing and controlling corruption thus enhancing good governance. Therefore, the media acts as a catalyst that amplifies informed liaison between a government and its people (Bennett & Naim, 2015).

The media publishes information that the public consumes hence it shapes people's views and opinions (Mbeke, 2008). Journalists determine what stories are newsworthy, how they are positioned in a publication hence contributing towards influencing public opinion.

According to an article published in a journal by the Freedom House (Repucci, 2019) governments in both developed (North America, Europe and parts of Asia) and developing countries (Africa, parts of Asia, South America) still, gag the media despite the fact that the press should be independent of government interference.

The publication also says that freedom of the media has deteriorated more in Europe, a continent that previously boasted of well-established free media, and Asia where the world's "worst dictatorships are concentrated" (p.7). It adds that many African countries have also endured authoritarian rule for long periods, with the autocratic governments extending their dictatorship tendencies into media operations.

Media censorship denies the audience an opportunity to receive important information besides not allowing news organizations the freedom to publish and share certain news information. The media works as a link between authorities and citizens

with the primary role of providing truthful information to the public so that they can intelligently participate in democratic processes.

Censorship compromises the quality of news information that is churned out to the populace. Anthonissen (2008) argues that media censorship can take two different forms. One, it occurs when “an authoritative body imposes censorship in order to obscure information believed to be harmful either to itself or to others” and secondly, when “an individual or group exercises self-censorship by withholding information believed to be harmful to themselves or others” (p.401). Therefore, self-censorship and media censorship are related in that the censors influence journalists to censor themselves.

Media censorship is affected through suppressive legislations, assault on journalists, denying the press advertisements, and bribery among other atrocities (Anthonissen, 2008). The parties involved include “powerful institutions such as the government, big government corporations, and owners of the media, professional communities and the likes” (Anthonissen, 2008, p.402). More often, these parties will withhold information they deem sensitive or silence those in possession of such information (Morris, 2017).

According to Yesil (2014) self-censorship occurs when a government has enacted restrictive laws to curtail the operations of the press. By default, journalists will internalize such laws and end up self-censoring either knowingly or unknowingly. The (Media Observer, 2015) says that Kenyan journalists self-censor out of fear of reprisals from criminal gangs, powerful individuals, the government, and media owners who may be against the revelation of certain sensitive information; and pressures from both private and public institutions that provide advertisement revenue.

According to a 2019 report by RWB, press freedom in Sub-Saharan African countries is on a decline. The report attributes this to attacks and hatred towards journalists, media censorship both on traditional and new media platforms, economic pressures and judicial harassments.

Compared to other countries, Kenya with its pluralist media is considered to enjoy relative media freedom despite its low ranking in the global Press Freedom Index. Namibia which is the best-ranked country in the region at position 23, together with Burkina Faso (36) and Senegal (49) have pluralist and vibrant media just like Kenya. However, the situation is worse in countries like Eritrea at position 178, Djibouti (173) and Somali (164) that do not allow the operations of any independent media.

Press freedom in Tanzania (118) has declined under President John Magufuli. The RWB (2019) report indicates that journalists in the country are being ruthlessly attacked while the press has been gagged by the state. In 2019, the Tanzania police arrested journalist Erick Kabendera who was interrogated about the validity of his Tanzanian nationality and alleged sedition and publication of false information (Beaumont, 2019).

Globally, speaking on politically controversial issues more often do attract scrutiny, harassment or surveillance from governments (Lee, 2015). This is why journalists turn to self-censorship out of fear of reprisals. According to Riva-Palacio (2006), the consequences of self-censorship on journalists are so dire. They involve job losses, threats and intimidations, physical assaults on journalists and family members, and even death.

However, it is important to note that, the media's and journalism's first obligation is to the truth. When journalists self-censor, citizens suffer because they are

not able to make the right decisions while tackling societal issues. According to (Kovach & Rosentiel, 2007), good decision-making in society depends on the public having reliable, accurate facts and information put in a meaningful context.

Journalisms first loyalty is to the citizens. While media organizations answer to many authorities including media owners, advertisers, and shareholders, their main obligation is to provide well balanced and accurate news reports to the citizens.

2.5 Empirical Literature Review

Different scholars have conducted studies in various countries to enable them to understand the magnitude of self-censorship and its impact on journalism. A study conducted by Yesil (2014) in Turkey to investigate the nature, cause, and magnitude of self-censorship found out that self-censorship is a big problem in the country. The study was conducted using open-ended interviews, descriptive literature review and field research where the researcher used the qualitative research method.

According to the study, the government of Turkey strictly controls the mainstream media as well as the alternative media so as to prevent any state criticism from getting out. According to a report by the HRW (2016), 149 journalists in Turkey were in jail in 2016 facing criminal charges, including some who had been accused of spreading terrorist propaganda through the alternative social media platforms after an attempted coup by members of the opposition. This has led to growing self-censorship among journalists in the country. The report further says that 140 media outlets and 29 publishing houses were shut down by the Turkish government in 2016 through an emergency decree.

Yesil (2014) concludes by saying that most Turkish journalists self-censor due to political, economic and safety reasons.

In his study on self-censorship in Ethiopia, (Skjerdal, 2010) found out that the practice is so widespread in the country. The study was conducted through in-depth interviews with 61 journalists working for state-owned newsrooms. The study found out that journalists' self-censor to align themselves with local media policies and expectations of their employers. According to the study, the majority of the respondents justified self-censorship, terming it "normal." The study found out that many journalists self-censor due to political, cultural, religious and safety reasons.

Another study conducted in Fiji by (Morris, 2017) on self-censorship found that the practice affects a majority of journalists in the country. The study employed a mixed-method approach but was largely driven by the quantitative approach. The five senior journalists who participated in the in-depth interviews all concluded that media self-censorship in the country is caused by government control of the press and is a major problem in the country. The study revealed that many journalists self-censor due to political reasons.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has broadly discussed the phenomenon of self-censorship in Kenya and its implications especially on the profession of journalism. Although there exists a huge amount of literature on media self-censorship, there exist few empirical studies that have been conducted in Kenya to evaluate the extent of the problem and why journalists self-censor. The chapter also provides an extensive evaluation of the philosophical foundations on which the concept of freedom of expression is based, why self-censorship and sanctioned censorship practices are threats to freedom of expression and Kenya's historical background within the context of media censorship. The Chapter has also reviewed some key literature from scholars on media on self-censorship both locally and in the global arena. Finally, the chapter has discussed key theories that have

been used in this study which include spiral of silence, the propaganda model and the gatekeeping theory.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter looks at the procedures used in conducting the study. It also shows the geographical location where the research was conducted, study design, target population, sample design and the population size that was used in the study, data collection methods and the data analysis techniques.

3.2 Research Approach

This study adopted a mixed-methods research approach to investigate the phenomenon of self-censorship in Kenya's media. The approach combines both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. This method is instrumental in helping to produce quality responses to the three research questions that the study aimed to answer.

According to Creswell (2011), mixed methods refer to a methodology in research that advances the systematic integration of quantitative and qualitative data within a single study. The integration or mixing permits a more complete and synergistic utilization of data than conducting separate quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.

The method allowed for triangulation of data. This provided a better chance to understand whether dishonorable journalistic practices, as well as the utilization of media organizations by several vested interests such as advertisers, media owners, state, prominent business people and politicians, are responsible for influencing journalists to self-censor and the impact it has on the practice of journalism.

3.3 Research Design

The study adopted an explanatory sequential research design to examine the relationship between the phenomenon of self-censorship and the practice of journalism in Kenya's mainstream news organizations. The researcher began the study with a general idea [self-censorship and journalism] and used the research as a tool to bring out or identify issues that could be the focus of future research. According to Kumar (2019) in sequential explanatory design, the data are collected over the period of time in two succeeding phases. Thus, a researcher first collects and analyzes the quantitative data. Qualitative data are collected in the second phase of the study and are related to the outcomes from the first, quantitative, phase.

3.4 Study Site

The study targeted journalists from Kenya's six mainstream media organizations, namely: The Nation Media Group, Standard Group, Royal Media Services, Media Max Limited, Radio Africa Group, and the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation. All the six newsrooms are based in Nairobi but have bureaus and staff across the country, the study was conducted in the specific newsrooms where the journalists congregate on a daily basis.

3.5 Population

This study focused on individual journalists as a major entity. The survey was intended to capture the views of at least 207 journalists – specifically targeting reporters/correspondents who are involved in [news gathering] and sub-editors and editors who are involved in [news processing] and dissemination from the six news organizations.

The interviews were meant to provide an in-depth analysis of the nuances that are difficult to measure through quantitative approaches. The researcher interviewed

seven journalists – targeting at least one editor or senior reporter each from all the six media organizations. The researcher used purposive sampling to identify the respondents. The total population for the study was 213 respondents.

3.5.1 Target Population

A target population refers to the population which a researcher wants to base study findings (Kumar, 2019). This could be a group of people or individuals to whom the study applies. The target population for the study was all journalists at the reporter (news gathering) and editor (news processing) levels from the six aforementioned media organizations.

The survey targeted a total of 1009 journalists (reporters and editor level journalists) as respondents from the six aforementioned media organizations. This is the number of accredited targeted journalists from the selected media organizations as per the MCK August 2019 records.

Table 1: Showing the number of accredited journalists in six mainstream newsrooms in Kenya

Media Organization	Population Size
The Standard Group (SG)	282
Nation Media Group (NMG)	239
Royal Media Services (RMS)	155
Media Max Limited	249
Radio Africa Group	16
Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC)	68
Totals	1009

3.5.2 Sample Size

To calculate the quantitative sample for an infinite population we use $S = Z^2 * P(1-P)/M^2$, where:

- The confidence level is 90% and that gives a standardized Z score of 1.645
- M (Margin of error) = 5% or 0.05

- Population proportion (P) is standardized at 50% or 0.5

$$S = 1.645^2 * 0.5 (1-0.5)/0.05^2$$

$$= 2.706 * 0.25/0.0025 = 0.6765/0.0025$$

$$\underline{\mathbf{S = 270.6}}$$

$$S^s = S/1+ (270.6/1,009)$$

$$270.6/1.4$$

$$\underline{\mathbf{S^s = 213}}$$

Table 2: Shows the sample number of journalists for the survey from the six selected newsrooms

Media Organization	Sample Size
The Standard Group (SG)	60
Nation Media Group (NMG)	50
Royal Media Services (RMS)	33
Media Max Limited	53
Radio Africa Group	3
Kenya Broadcasting Corporation	14
Totals	213

For these figures, the researcher manually calculated the figures by dividing the population size (x) in each newsroom (stratum) by the total number of respondents (1009) and multiplying by the total sample size (213).

Table 3: Shows the stratification of respondents by category

Respondents	Size or number
Reporters/Correspondents/Senior Reporters	787
Editors/Sub-editors	222
Totals	1009

Table 4: Shows the distribution of stratified respondents per newsroom

Respondents	Standard	NMG	RMS	Media Max	Radio Africa	KBC	Totals
Reporters/Correspondents/Writers	47	39	26	41	2	11	166
Editors/Sub editors	13	11	7	12	1	3	47
Totals	60	50	33	53	3	14	213

3.5.3 Sampling Techniques and Procedures

The respondents (reporters/correspondents, and editors/sub-editors) for the survey were selected through a stratified random sampling method. The strata comprised of journalists from the six newsrooms: The Nation Media Group, Standard Group, Royal Media Services, Media Max Limited, Radio Group Africa and KBC.

The number of respondents in each stratum (newsroom) has been provided in (Table 2 and 4) above. In the qualitative strand, the researcher employed a purposive sampling technique to select respondents for the in-depth interviews. This is because the follow-up interviews required competent and experienced journalists (editors and senior reporters) who had the capacity to competently speak to the phenomenon of media self-censorship and how it impacts on the practice of journalism in Kenya.

3.6 Types of Data

The researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative (countable) data was collected through the questionnaire while the interview guide was used to collect the qualitative (non-quantifiable) data (Kumar, 2019).

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

The study adopted the use of two data collection tools namely: a questionnaire and an interview guide. The researcher used structured questionnaires for the preliminary survey to collect the quantitative data. The questionnaires were

administered online, closed-ended questions were preferred since they are simple and easy to answer and analyze. The second strand of the study was conducted through one on one in-depth interviews. The interview guides contained semi-structured questions all of which were derived from the survey responses and study objectives.

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire tool, the researcher conducted a pilot study among a select group of journalists who were not part of the sampled population to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the test scores (Kumar, 2019).

Data collection for the study was conducted in two phases. The first strand was an opinion seeking survey using questionnaires aimed towards finding out factors that drive self-censorship in Kenya's mainstream media houses. This was followed by in-depth interviews with a selected team of editors and senior reporters from all the six news organizations under study. The senior reporters and editors responded to the survey findings besides sharing insights on how self-censorship impacts on journalism. They also shed light on how self-censorship affects the nature and quality of news content produced by the news organizations under study.

Questionnaires are an effective means of measuring attitudes, behaviors, preferences, opinions and, intentions of large numbers of respondents more cheaply and quickly than other methods (Creswell, 2011). On the other hand, the researcher used an interview guide with open-ended questions which is the most effective tool for qualitative research because it helps one better understand, explain and explore respondent's opinions, experiences, and behavior (Kumar, 2019).

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaires were administered through an online form that was distributed through emails and social media platforms. The aim here was to obtain a

large quantity of data representative of the targeted population that was then be analyzed automatically on Survey Monkey.

On the other hand, the qualitative in-depth interviews had open-ended questions and probes in a semi-structured format. The interviews intended to produce detailed explanations and rich descriptions from a number of editors and senior reporters. The responses were recorded on a voice recorder and later transcribed into text manually.

3.9 Data Analysis

The raw quantitative data was cleaned and entered into an Excel sheet on Survey Monkey for analysis. To elaborate on the characteristics of the major variables, descriptive statistics were applied – descriptive analysis is used in quantitative research to describe what the collected data shows or to show what’s going on in particular collected data.

On the other hand, findings of the collected qualitative data were analyzed via narrative analysis techniques whereby the researcher reformulated stories presented by the respondents while taking into account the context of each case and the different experiences as presented by each respondent in response to the research questions.

3.10 Data Presentation Methods

The quantitative data was presented through a descriptive analysis where the findings were analyzed through Excel automatically on Survey Monkey while the qualitative data was analyzed through explanatory narratives to show findings, outline trends and provide context. The narratives were aligned with the study objectives and theories.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained a letter of approval from the AKU Ethics Review Committee, an introductory letter from AKU and a NACOSTI Research License (See appendices C, D and E respectively).

Self-censorship is a sensitive topic hence the researcher had to take into consideration a number of ethical issues namely: the use of informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity.

Informed consent is a voluntary agreement whereby in both quantitative and qualitative strands, the respondents were made to understand the importance of participating in the study. The researcher sought permission from the respondents to conduct the study in the said media houses besides ensuring that participation was voluntary. In the survey, the respondents consented by ticking YES after carefully reading through the questionnaire while for the interviews, they were issued with a consent form explaining the relevance of the study and what it was meant for. All seven respondents signed two copies, one of which they retained while the researcher kept the other.

The researcher relied on source protection to gather and reveal information in the public interest from confidential sources. The sources for both the survey and interviews required anonymity to protect them from physical, economic or professional reprisals in response to their revelations. Personal details including names, IP addresses, emails, and phone numbers were excluded from the questionnaire prior to administering it online.

3.12 Summary

This discusses the methodology. The study adopted a mixed methodology through an explanatory sequential design whereby the researcher began with the qualitative data collection and analysis. This was followed by quantitative data collection and analysis. The chapter also explains the study population, sampling procedures and data collection procedures that were utilized in the study as well as the validity and reliability of the instruments.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and findings of the study. Data was collected through a major survey followed up by in-depth interviews. The chapter centers on the analysis, presentation, and interpretation of the raw data gathered. Both the survey and interviews were conducted among journalists working at the newsgathering and news editing levels drawn from the “big six” mainstream news organizations in Kenya namely: SG, NMG, RMS, KBC, Media Max, and Radio Africa Group. The survey results were analyzed automatically on Survey Monkey while the interviews were manually transcribed and used in the analysis as a descriptive narrative in response to the research objectives.

4.2 Response Rate

The study targeted 213 respondents. The survey received 193 responses while the in-depth interviews got seven responses totaling to 200 responses which is a 93.9 percent response rate. The high response rate is important because it shows that the results are representative of the target sample.

4.3 Data Analysis

This study answered the following questions: what factors drive self-censorship in Kenya’s mainstream media houses; what impact does self-censorship have on the practice of journalism; and finally, are Kenyan journalists willing to self-censor? Both the survey and the interviews were guided by the research objectives and theories.

4.4 Questionnaire (Survey) Findings

The survey received a total of 193 responses from the intended 206 responses. This shows that 93.7 percent of the targeted respondents returned the survey questionnaire.

4.4.1 Demographics of Respondents

The researcher classified the respondents into age, sexual orientation, education level and years of work experience.

4.4.1.1 Respondents job designations

The majority of the respondents (52.11%) were reporters/writers/correspondents while the findings also indicate that there were less than one percent assignment editors who participated in the study as shown in figure 1 below.

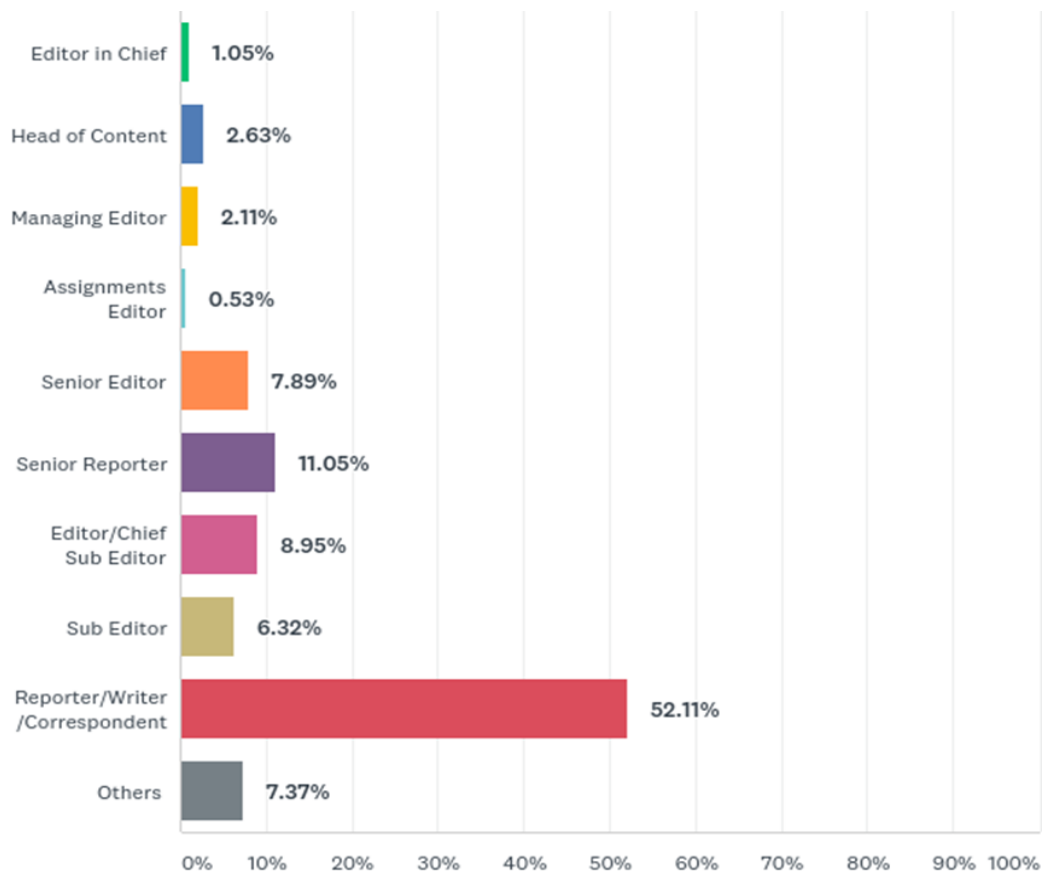


Figure 1: Shows respondents job designations

The majority of the journalists surveyed (52%) were employed as reporters and correspondents who have little authority in news organizations. The next largest group were editors, senior editors, and newsroom managers with a combined score of (24%) who have significant authority within the newsroom, followed by senior reporters who have some decision making authority at (11%), followed by sub-editors at six percent. It is important to note that most of the respondents were reporters (52%) followed by editors. This is significant because self-censorship occurs at the point of news gathering/reporting and processing.

4.4.1.2 Gender of respondents

When it comes to the gender of respondents, more men (54%) than women (46%) responded to the survey with five respondents skipping the question altogether.

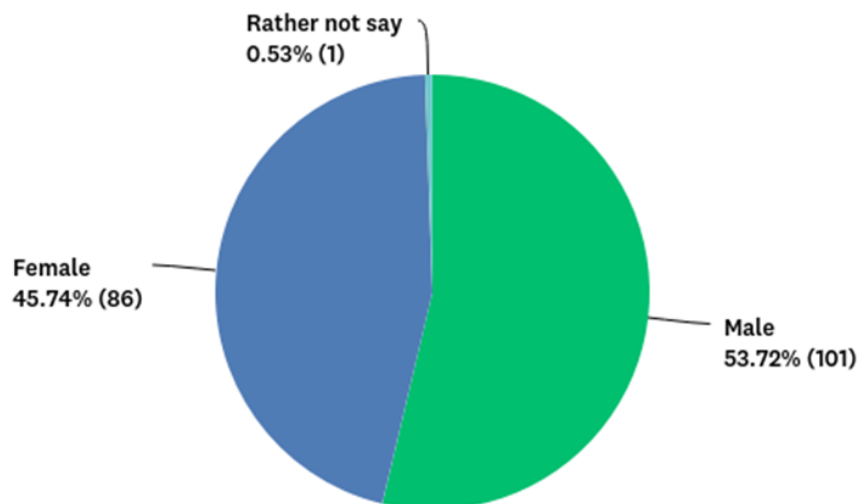


Figure 2: Shows the gender of survey respondents

4.4.1.3 Age of respondents

The majority of the respondents fell into the age group of 25-34 years (46%), followed by journalists aged between 35-44 years (29%), ages 18-24 years (17%) and

44-55 years (8%). As such, this survey shows that the majority of Kenyan journalists are relatively young.

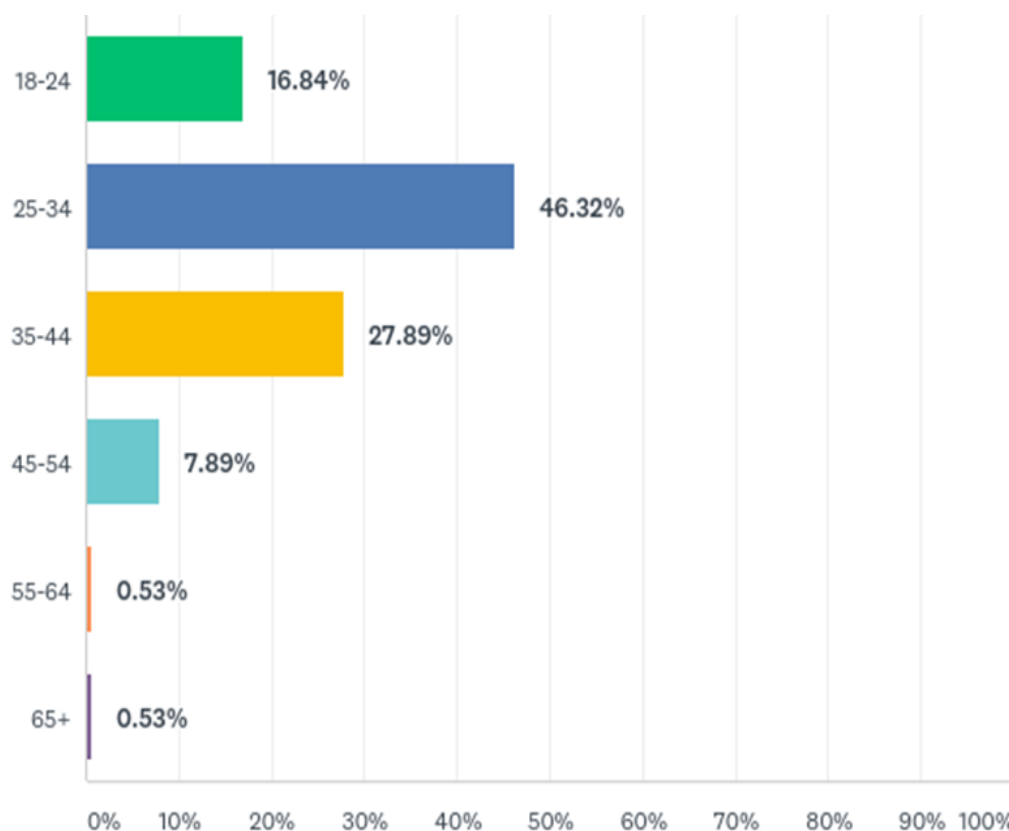


Figure 3: Shows the age bracket in (Years) of the survey respondents

4.4.1.4 Educational qualifications of respondents

The survey also revealed that most Kenyan journalists (reporters and editors) are bachelor's degree holders (66%), followed by master's degree holders, then diploma and certificate holders. Ph.D. holders are the least as shown in table 5 below. These results indicate that journalists working in the Kenyan mainstream media possess professional journalism training therefore they are qualified to work as members of the fourth estate.

Table 5: Shows educational qualifications of respondents

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
High School	0.00%	0
College Certificate/Diploma	11.11%	21
Undergraduate Degree	66.14%	125
Masters Degree	20.63%	39
PhD	1.06%	2
Rather not say	1.06%	2
TOTAL		189

4.4.1.5 Information on respondents newsroom affiliation

The results indicate that the majority of the respondents were from the Standard Group (23.68%) newsroom while Radio Africa had the least number of journalists surveyed as shown in figure 4 below.

The results indicate that SG and NMG are the two biggest media organizations in the country based on the number of journalists they have.

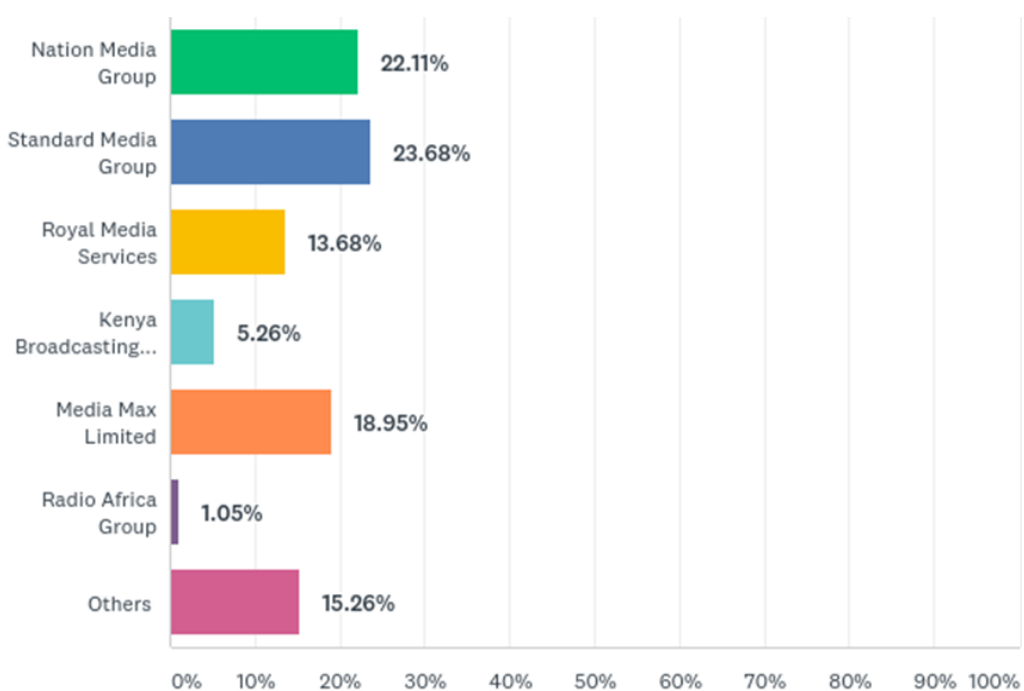


Figure 4: Shows newsroom affiliation of the respondents

4.4.1.6 Information on respondents years of work experience

The study sought to find out the number in years of work experience that the respondents possess as journalists. The majority of the respondents have 6-10 years of work experience (25.8%) while only three percent have over 21 years of work experience.

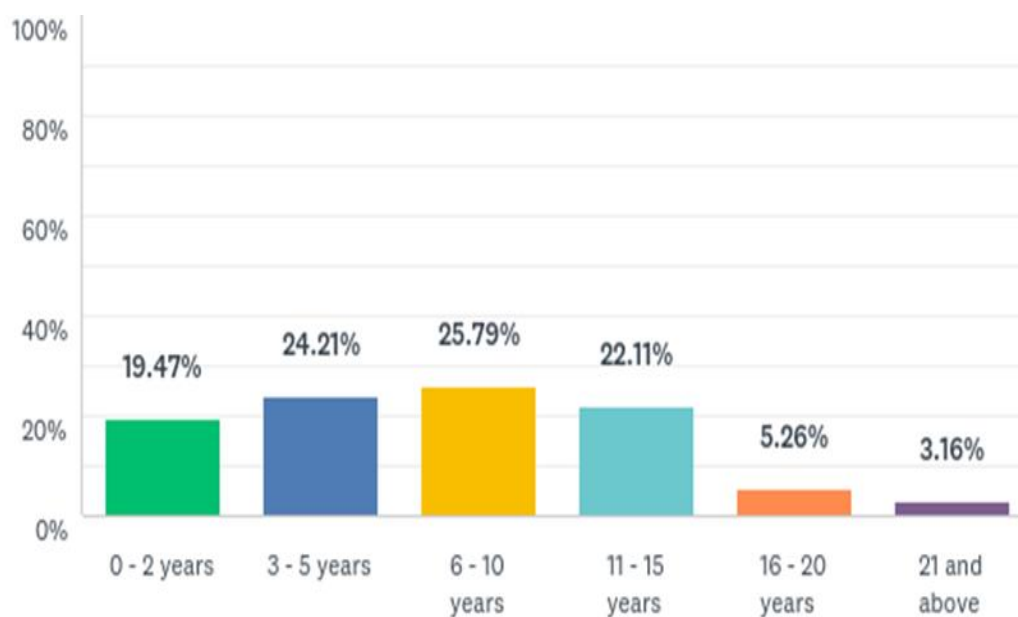


Figure 5: Shows respondents years of newsroom experience

The above findings show that Kenya's mainstream media organizations have a balance of skilled newsroom staff when it comes to on the job experience. However, the data also shows that the country has fewer journalists with over 15 years of newsroom work experience. Since the country has had an active press since the pre-independence period, where do the more experienced journalists go?

4.4.2 Perceptions of Journalism Roles

4.4.2.1 Reporting things as they are

The study sought to find out how journalists perceived their roles in society. The first question under this category sought to find out how important it is to report things

as they are. The findings indicate that 55 percent of the journalists said that reporting things as they are is extremely important, a further 41 percent said that it is very important. None of the respondents said that it is not so important or not at all important as shown in figure 6 below.

Here’s the scale: journalist. [1] Extremely Important [2] Very Important [3] Somewhat Important [4] Not so Important [5]

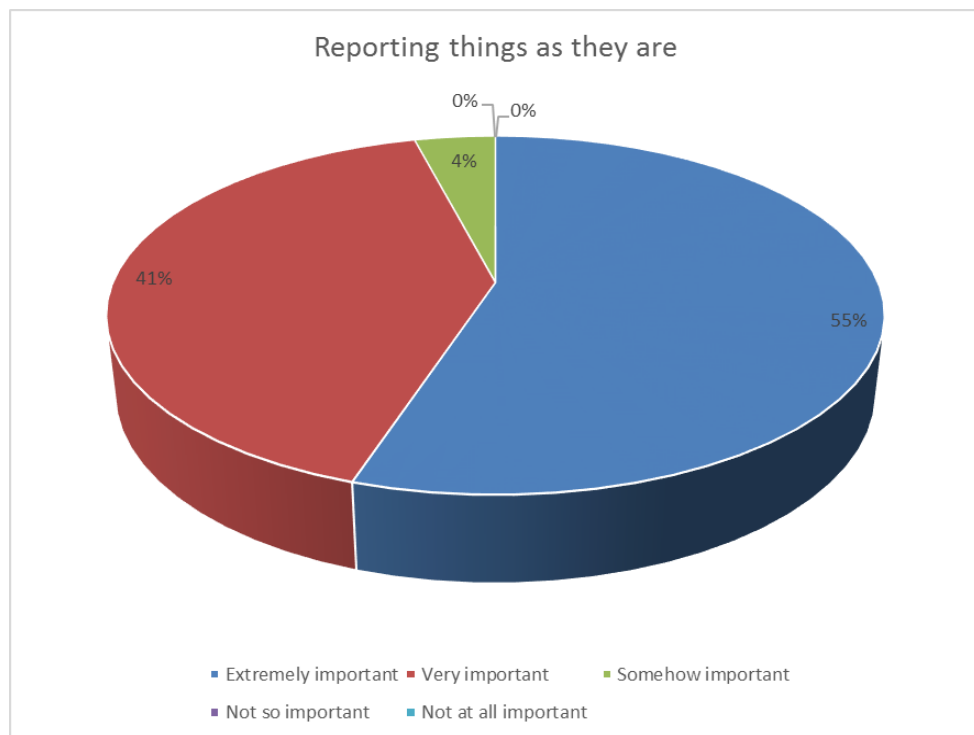


Figure 6: Responses on the question of journalists "reporting things as they are"

4.4.2.2 Monitoring and scrutinizing political leaders

The study sought to find out how journalists ranked the importance of monitoring and scrutinizing political power. The findings indicate that 65 percent of journalists agreed that it is important to monitor and scrutinize political power while only one percent said that it is not important or not important at all (see figure 7).

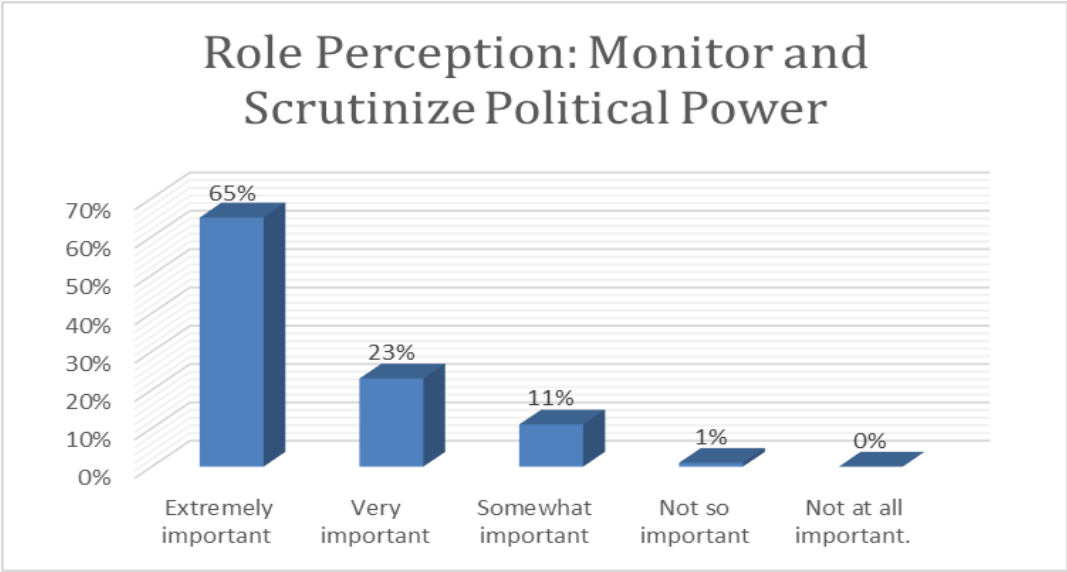


Figure 7: Shows responses to the question of monitoring and scrutinizing of politicians

4.4.2.3 Monitoring and scrutinizing corporate organizations

The study sought to find out how journalists ranked the importance of monitoring and scrutinizing corporate organizations. The findings indicate that 47 percent of journalists agreed that it is important to monitor and scrutinize corporate organizations while only one percent said that it is not important while none of the respondents said that it is not important at all (see table 6).

Table 6: Responses to the question on monitoring and scrutinizing of corporate organizations

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Response Scale	47.34% 89	37.77% 71	14.36% 27	0.53% 1	0.00% 0	188	1.68

4.4.2.5 Monitoring and scrutinizing government and state officials

The study sought to find out how journalists ranked the importance of monitoring and scrutinizing government and state officials. The findings indicate that 71 percent of journalists agreed that it is important to monitor and scrutinize government

and state officials while only one percent said that it is not important while none of the respondents said that it is not important at all (see table 7).

Table 7: Shows responses to the question on the use of media for monitoring and scrutinizing government and state officials

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Response Scale	70.74% 133	23.94% 45	4.79% 9	0.53% 1	0.00% 0	188	1.35

4.4.2.6 Setting the political agenda

The study sought to find out how journalists ranked the importance of the media in setting the political agenda in society. The findings indicate that 32 percent of journalists agreed that it is important for the media to set the political agenda while nine percent said that it is not important while two percent of the respondents said that it is not important at all (see table 8).

Table 8: Shows responses to the use of media for setting the political agenda

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Response Scale	33.87% 63	39.25% 73	15.59% 29	9.14% 17	2.15% 4	186	2.06

4.4.2.7 Advocating for social change

The study sought to find out how journalists ranked the importance of the media in advocating for social change in society. The findings indicate that 77 percent of journalists agreed that it is important for the media to advocate for social change while two percent said that it is not important while none of the respondents said that it is not important at all (see table 9).

Table 9: Shows response on media as a channel for advocating social change

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Response Scale	76.60% 144	19.15% 36	2.66% 5	1.60% 3	0.00% 0	188	1.29

4.4.2.8 Championing government policies

The study sought to find out how journalists ranked the importance of the media towards championing government policies. The findings indicate that only 11 percent of journalists agreed that it is important for the media to champion government policies while 17 percent said that it is not important while two percent of the respondents said that it is not important at all (see table 10).

Table 10: Shows response on the use of media to champion government policies

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Response Scale	11.29% 21	24.19% 45	45.16% 84	17.20% 32	2.15% 4	186	2.75

4.4.2.9 Providing Information that makes people make the right political decisions

The study sought to find out how journalists ranked the importance of the media in the provision of information that makes people make the right political decisions. The findings indicate that a whopping 76 percent of journalist agreed that it is important for the media to provide information that allows people to make the right political decisions while only one percent said that it is not important while none of the respondents said that it is not important at all (see table 11).

Table 11: Use of media to provide information that influences people to make the right political choices

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Response Scale	76.19% 144	20.63% 39	2.65% 5	0.53% 1	0.00% 0	189	1.28

Overall, the general response aggregated from the weighted average score on the eight questions (12-19) on the questionnaire among all the respondents on media role is “extremely important” denoted by 2 on the scale. (*See the average calculated below*)

$$1.49+1.46+1.68+1.35+2.06+1.29+2.75+1.28 =13.36$$

$$13.36/8 = 1.67 \text{ [2]}$$

4.4.3 Willingness to Self-censor among Kenyan Journalists

RQ3: Are journalists willing to self-censor?

This section responds to question number three for this study. The section of the survey aimed at measuring the respondent’s willingness to self-censor had the following instructions where respondents were asked to select a response that matches their views:

The survey asked the respondents to record their first impressions by stating whether they agree or disagree with the four statements (Questions 23-27) using the provided scale: it? [1] Strongly Agree [2] Agree [3] Neither Agree nor Disagree [4] Disagree [5] Strongly Disagree. The responses were ranked on a Likert scale with STRONGLY AGREE assigned a score of 1 and STRONGLY DISAGREE with a score of (5).

The responses for question 23 are as indicated below: seven percent of the respondents indicated that they strongly agree that it is difficult for them to express their

opinions if they think that other people won't agree with it, 26 percent said that they agree, 27 percent said that they neither agree nor disagree, 31 percent disagreed and nine percent strongly disagreed. The average weighted score was (3.10) which is a neutral score.

Question 24 also posted a neutral weighted score of 2.76 (3). The responses are as shown below:

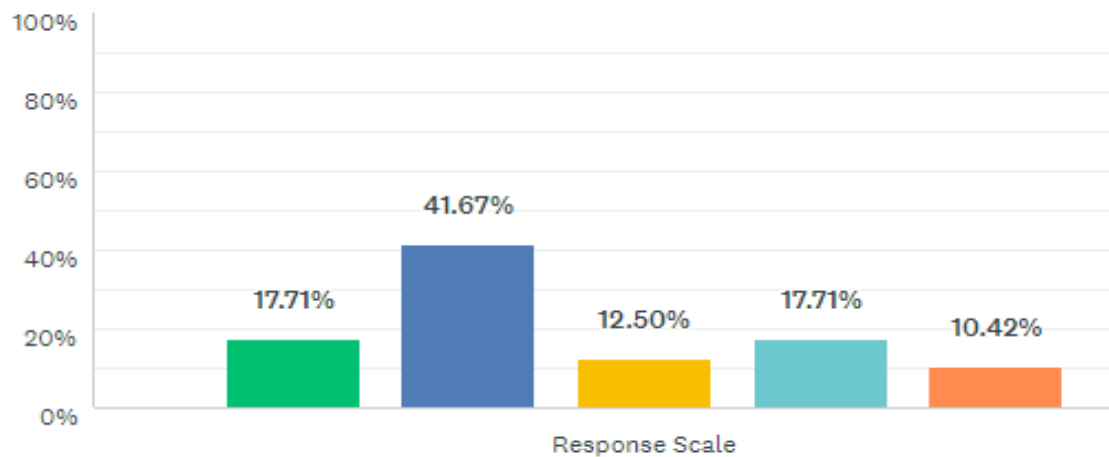


Figure 8: Shows responses to question 24 above

Question 25 attracted 2.42 (2) weighted score meaning that most of the respondents agreed that if they have a problem with others, they have no problem letting them know. 22 percent of the respondents said that they strongly agree, 34 percent said that they agree, 26 percent said that they neither agree nor disagree, 23 percent said that they disagree and six percent said that they strongly disagree.

The final question (26) under this category posted a neutral weighted average score of 3.10 (3) meaning that a majority of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. The responses are as indicated in (Table 12) below.

Table 12: Shows responses to question 25

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Response Scale	6.88% 13	29.10% 55	26.98% 51	21.16% 40	15.87% 30	189	3.10
BASIC STATISTICS							
Minimum		Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation		
1.00		5.00	3.00	3.10	1.18		

These survey findings are interesting because they corroborate the findings of the follow-up interviews with selected editors and senior reporters. The questionnaire responses show that self-censorship is widely practiced in Kenyan newsrooms. The responses to the “willingness to self-censor questions” show that many journalists are willing to self-censor while others are “neutral” meaning that they could be belonging to the group that self-censor unconsciously due to the influence internal editorial policies, personal values and beliefs, fear of media owners, the state, lawsuits (defamation), threats and intimidations, and influence by key advertisers. The interviews brought out the fact that internal newsroom editorial processes and decision making highly influence journalists to self-censor.

4.4.4 Respondents Perception of Ethical and Unethical Journalistic Practices

The questionnaire also sought to understand the respondent’s perceptions of what is ethical or unethical during news gathering and processing. The respondents were asked to rate how they [strongly agree] or [strongly disagree] to the statements using three questions (20-22). Here’s the scale: statements. [1] Strongly Agree [2] Agree [3] Neither Agree nor Disagree [4] Disagree [5] Strongly Disagree

Question 20 sought to find out if journalists should strictly adhere to the Code of Conduct for Professional Practice of Journalism regardless of the context and situation at hand. 62% of the respondents said that they strongly agree, (31%) agree,

three percent neither agree nor disagree, another three percent disagree, and one percent strongly disagree. Based on the weighted average (mean), it is evident that most of the respondents “agree” (2) that journalists should fully adhere to the professional code of conduct.

The next question under this category sought to find out if what is ethical in journalism depends on personal judgment and circumstances. Seven percent responded that they strongly agree, (19%) agree, (16%) neither agree nor disagree, (25%) disagree and (33%) strongly disagree. Cumulatively, the general response was “disagree” with a weighted average score of 3.58 (4).

Question 22 sought to find out if journalists are allowed to set aside moral standards under some extraordinary situations. Five percent responded that they strongly agree, (26%) agree, another (26%) neither agree nor disagree, (29%) disagree, and 15%) strongly disagree. The general response was neutral with a weighted average of 3.23 (3) “neither agree nor disagree.”

4.4.5 Perceptions of Factors that Influence Self-censorship

RQ1: What impact does self-censorship have on the practice of journalism in Kenyan mainstream media organizations?

This section responded to the research question number one of this study. The responses were ranked on a scale of 1-5 as follows: Audience feedback [1] Extremely Influential [2] Influential [3] Somewhat Influential [4] Little Influential [5] Not Influential.

The section had questions on factors that influence self-censorship in news organizations. They included audience feedback, media ethics and regulations, media censorship, government and state officials, politicians, pressure groups, business people, relationships with news sources, security personnel, advertisers, media owners,

and editorial policies. The responses were ranked on a scale of 1-5 where the respondents selected the response that reflected on their opinion or view.

4.4.5.1 Audience feedback

The question on “audience feedback” attracted the following responses: 32 percent of the respondents said that audience feedback was extremely influential in their work, 46 percent influential, 17 percent somewhat influential, and three percent little influential, and two percent not influential. The average weighted score was 1.96 (2) meaning that audience feedback is “influential” in shaping the news content that journalists churn out. See a summary of the responses below:

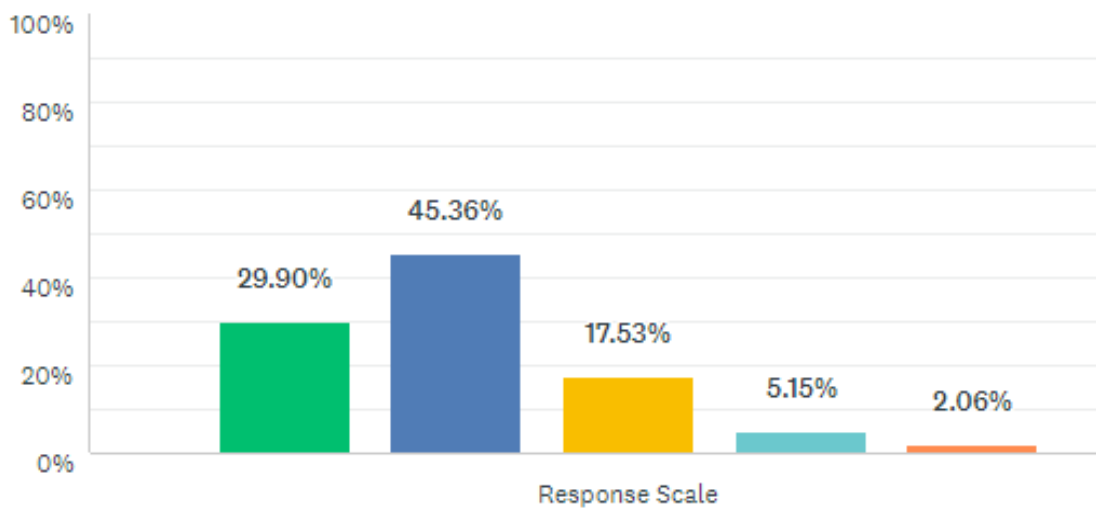


Figure 9: Summarized responses to the question on audience feedback

4.4.5.2 Media ethics and regulations

Generally, the respondents consider media ethics and regulations to be “extremely influential” in their day to day work. This is because the question attracted a weighted average score of 1.32 (1). A whopping 73 percent of the respondents answered that ethics and regulations are extremely influential, 23 percent influential, four percent somewhat influential, one percent little influential and none of the respondents said that it was not influential.

4.4.5.3 Media censorship

The respondents of the questionnaire said that media censorship is “influential” in fuelling self- censorship. The average weighted score from all the respondents on this question was 1.71 (2). 59 percent of the respondents said that censorship is extremely influential in their work during news gathering and processing, 25 percent influential, 13 percent somewhat influential, six percent little influential and one percent not influential.

4.4.5.4 Government and state officials

The survey responses showed that government and state officials are “somewhat influential” in impelling self-censoring tendencies within newsrooms. The average score for this question was 2.52 (3). 17 percent of the respondents said that government and state officials are extremely influential towards influencing journalists to self-censor, 31 percent influential, 38 percent somewhat influential, 12 percent little influential and only three percent said that the government is not influential.

4.4.5.5 Politicians

According to the survey findings, politicians are “somewhat influential” towards manipulating journalists to self-censor. The question on politicians posted a weighted average score of 3.30 (3) on the scale. 10 percent of the respondents said that politicians are extremely influential towards impelling journalists to self-censoring tendencies, 18 percent said they are influential, 25 percent said they are somewhat influential, 27 percent said they are little influential while 21 percent said that they are not influential.

4.4.5.6 Pressure groups

The survey findings indicated that pressure groups are also “somewhat influential” towards impelling journalists to self-censor. The question posted a weighted average score of 3.02 (3) on the Likert scale. Seven percent of the respondents said that

pressure groups are extremely influential towards impelling journalists to self-censor, 22 percent of the respondents said they are influential, 42 percent said that they are somewhat influential, 21 percent said that they are little influential while nine percent said that they are not influential.

4.4.5.7 Business people

According to the survey findings, business people “somehow influence” journalists to self-censor. The question on business people attracted a weighted average score of 3.37 (3) with 12 percent of the respondents saying that business people are extremely influential towards impelling journalists to self-censor, 18 percent said that they are influential, 19 percent said they are somewhat influential, 24 percent said they are little influential while 27 percent said that they are not influential.

4.4.5.8 Relationship with news sources

The survey showed that relationships with news sources also “somehow influences” journalists to self-censor. The question attracted a weighted average score of 3.04 (3) with 17 percent of the respondents saying that relationship with news sources is extremely influential towards impelling journalists to self-censor, 20 percent said that it was influential, 18 percent said that it was somewhat influential, 33 percent said that it had little influence while 13 percent said that it had no influence.

4.4.5.9 Security personnel

The survey indicated that security personnel also “somehow influence” journalists to self-censor. The question on security personnel attracted a weighted average score of 3.44 (3) on a scale of 5. Nine percent of the respondents said that security personnel extremely influence journalists to self-censor, 23 percent said that they are influential, 15 percent said that they are somehow influential, another 23 percent said that had little influence while 30 percent said that they are not influential.

4.4.5.10 Advertisers

The respondents indicated that advertisers are “influential” towards impelling journalists to self-censor. The question on advertisers attracted a weighted average score of 2.21 (2) with 33 percent of the respondents saying that advertisers are extremely influential towards impelling journalists to self-censor, 29 percent said that advertisers are influential, 26 percent said that they are somewhat influential, 9 percent said that they are little influential while 4 percent said that they are not influential.

4.4.5.11 Media owners

The survey findings showed that media owners are “influential” towards impelling journalists to self-censor. The question on media owners in the questionnaire attracted a weighted average score of 1.63 (2) with 54 percent of the respondents saying that media owners are extremely influential towards impelling them to self-censor, 34 percent said they are influential, 8 percent said they are somehow influential, 3 percent said that they are little influential with 2 percent saying that they are not influential.

4.4.5.12 Editorial policies

The survey findings showed that editorial policies are “extremely Influential” towards impelling journalists to self-censor. The survey findings show that this is the leading cause of self-censorship among journalists in Kenya. The question on editorial policies on the online questionnaire attracted a weighted average score 1.27 (1) with a whopping 81 percent of the respondents saying that editorial policies are extremely influential in their decision making while gathering and processing news, 13 said that editorial policies are influential, 4 percent said that they are somewhat influential, 1 percent said that they have little influence with another 1percent saying that they are not at all influential.

4.4.5.13 Personal values, cultural and religious considerations

The survey findings indicate that personal values “somewhat influences” journalists in their work especially during news gathering and processing. The question on values in the online questionnaire attracted a 2.97 (3) weighted average score with 18 percent of the respondents saying that personal values, cultural and religious considerations are extremely influential in their decision making, 20 percent said that they are influential, 23 percent said that they are somewhat influential, 25 percent said that have little influence and 15 percent saying that they have no influence.

4.5 Key Informant Interview Findings

The researcher conducted a total of seven interviews drawn from the media organizations under study. The interviews supported the findings of the survey, they revealed that self-censorship is rampant among Kenyan journalists with some doing it knowingly while others self-censor unknowingly due to the influence of internal newsroom policies, censors from media owners, advertisers, politicians, the government, and threats and intimidations among other factors.

The study revealed that self-censorship is a common problem among journalists in Kenyan and widely practiced in mainstream media organizations; the main reasons that influence journalists to censor their news stories are economic and political pressures, and that self-censorship practices of journalists put in danger of the future of journalism in the country.

4.5.1 Views on Self-censorship from the Key Informant Interviews

In order to gauge the candid views on self-censorship among journalists based on the survey responses, specific questions were asked to seven senior reporters and editors from different newsrooms. All the newsrooms under study were represented

except Radio Africa Group whose candidates bailed out of the interviews and did not respond to repeated email requests and phone calls.

The respondents who participated in the follow-up interviews were asked whether they had encountered or practiced self-censorship, factors that contribute to the manifestation of self-censorship in news organizations, and the impact it has on the practice of journalism. All the respondents requested utmost confidentiality showing the sensitivity of the topic in Kenya.

4.5.1.1 Is self-censorship something to worry about?

RQ2: What Kind of impact or effect does self-censorship have on the practice of journalism in Kenyan mainstream media organizations?

This section specifically responds to question two of this study that asks. When asked whether self-censorship was an issue to worry about, the interviewees unanimously indicated that it was. One print editor said: “There are circumstances where I would support self-censorship but there are circumstances I would not as a newsroom manager, I would not advocate for it.” The editor further said that “I would not advocate for it when someone wants to kill a story and tells you that, I want you to take this angle and leave this angle because this angle will probably paint us in a bad light” (Respondent 2, Interviewed by author on November 20, 2019).

When asked whether self-censorship has an effect on the quality of journalism or news, the journalist said:

Yes, it does. Because you see you select what to write. You might decide to self-censor and leave out very important details that needed to come out that the public needed to know but its either you'll be compromised or just from your own assessment you decide to leave it out. So that will definitely make you not an objective or impartial journalist.

Self-censorship has led journalists to sensationalize news stories thus veering off from reporting facts which impacts negatively on the journalism trade, warned a

broadcast editor. The respondent said that “I believe that if Kenyan media organizations stop the obsession with sensationalizing news information especially issues that are not of public interest, it will really help us avoid some of the issues we face like self-censorship...”

The government uses media regulation to influence journalists to self-censor and more often, some stories of public interest will not see the light of day, observed a senior print journalist, the respondent added that “most media houses in Kenya do not really want to be on the government’s wrong books. Over the past few years, the government has formulated policies that sort of take away press freedom. Such regulations leave journalists with no choice but to self-censor.”

The interviews also brought out the fact that media owners and commercial departments of private media organizations do not care about the journalism and the quality of stories. All they care about is their personal and business interests. A senior editor in one of the leading newspapers in the country said that “self-censorship is not good for journalism but could be good for the media business because it serves the media owners in protecting their business and personal interests as investors” (Respondent 1, interviewed by author on November 18, 2019). The journalists added that self-censorship affects the quality of news stories and this, in the long run, affects the audience or readers' trust.

Self-censorship has killed the morale and interest of the audience. This is because they know that most of the stories we run are highly censored or filtered, this has partly contributed to declining readership we are currently experiencing especially for our major newspapers in the country. The audience no longer trusts that our stories are objective enough and that is why they refer to as lately as *Githeri* Media.

The respondents also said that self-censorship has contributed to the declining consumption of news content by the audience.

“Because of self-censorship, many sensitive stories are toned down or do not see the light of day. This, in the long run, means that we do not produce objective stories hence we lose the audience.” (Respondent 4, Interviewed by the author on November 21, 2019).

The journalist added that mainstream media organizations in the country have the tendency of censoring stories yet the same stories get their way on the online blogs. A good example is a story about Ida Odinga and her daughter in law Lwam Bekele tussling over the late Fidel Odinga’s property in court. Mainstream media organizations failed to publish the story but it was picked up by blogs and it became one of the highly read stories online. The respondent added that “If you fail to publish such juicy stories that are in the public interest, you lose readership. Lately, trust in the media has been waning. We are losing serious readers.”

Self-censorship is bad for journalism “because internal and external pressures influence you to choose what to write about, you might decide to leave out crucial details of a story that needed to come out. That definitely makes you a not so objective journalist and the audience can’t trust you” (Respondent 2, Interviewed by the author on November 20, 2019).

Self-censorship has an effect on both the media organizations and journalist’s credibility. Added the respondent:

If we keep on not giving our readers the information they seek, they will get it elsewhere. With social media, you can’t hide or sit on crucial information. I’ll give an example of inter-ethnic violence during the 2017 general elections in Mathare slums in Nairobi. The media failed to cover it despite the fact that there were skirmishes. However, the stories were highly shared via social media platforms. During this period, the public lost trust in the mainstream media for avoiding conflict-related stories. So, if we continue self-censorship for our own selfish interests, the public will totally lose trust in us.

4.5.1.2 Are there moments when self-censorship is justified?

The general response to this question was “yes.” The interviewees said that self-censorship comes in handy while dealing with hate speech from politicians and their followers, stories touching on minors, national security issues and other unethical issues contained in the code for conduct for the practice of journalism.

A respondent who works as an editor said that the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism justifies self-censorship under certain special instances that include the “interests of decency, taste, avoidance of unnecessary harm, to keep from whipping up a violent situation, or even at the behest of the government to protect secret operations” (Respondent 5, Interviewed by the author on November 21, 2019).

4.5.2 Factors that Contribute to Self-censorship in Kenyan Newsrooms

RQ1: What impact does self-censorship have on the practice of journalism in Kenyan mainstream media organizations?

The selected senior reporters and editors were also asked to speak about factors that contribute to self-censorship in news organization or rather how self-censorship manifests itself newsrooms.

All the interviewees mentioned a number of factors that influence self-censorship that include media owners and their business interests, editorial policies, advertisers, media censorship (state, media owners, advertisers, politicians) legal concerns, personal values and beliefs, threats and intimidations, and bribes or financial incentives as issues that influence journalists and news organizations to self-censor.

This study has summarized/clustered the aforementioned factors into three broad categories namely institutional, national and personal or cultural factors.

4.5.2.1 Institutional factors

The findings of both the survey and the in-depth interviews show that these are the major factors that influence journalists to self-censor. They include internal editorial policies and media ownership.

4.5.2.2 National factors

National factors that include politics, economic considerations, and legal concerns also play a major role in influencing journalists to self-censor.

4.5.2.3 Personal or cultural factors

As humans, we all have our own values and beliefs that we have developed throughout the course of our lives. Our personal values guide the way we live our lives and the decisions we make. The issues that were mentioned here included personal attitudes, political, religious and tribal affiliations and personal biases.

The factors have further been broken down as shown below:

4.5.2.3.1 Media ownership

All the respondents mentioned media ownership as one of the major factors that influence journalists to self-censor in the country. The interviews brought to light the fact that media owners are feared due to the authority they wield over employees.

“You cannot, for instance, paint the owner of a newspaper in a bad light because that is the person who pays your salary.” (Respondent 2, Interviewed by the author on November 20, 2019) A senior broadcast editor corroborated the respondent’s sentiments by saying that journalists while gathering or processing news stories always bear in mind “who is providing the money that pays their salaries and caters to the cost of operation in the newsroom.” (Respondent 4, Interviewed by the author on November 21, 2019)

The journalist added:

You realize that most media owners also have other businesses in other sectors of the economy. For instance, just talking about the Kenyatta family, they are into media besides having other businesses in the hospitality and banking sectors among others. If you work for a news organization owned by the president's family for instance and come across a story touching on their other businesses, you really want to treat it like a sister company with some child gloves.

“At times, as a journalist, you will just automatically censor yourself without even being told because you cannot shoot your employer in the foot,” said (Respondent 6, interviewed by the author on November 23, 2019) the journalist added that “for some of these stories, you just have to use your common sense even if you’re not told.”

The respondent who has worked for three different mainstream media organizations in Kenya said that “media ownership is the number one cause of self-censorship among journalists and media organizations in the country.” The respondent added that reporters and editors are impelled to protect the interests of media owners, “in media ownership, you protect the interests of the owner not only his monetary interests but his business interests as well as issues to do with politics and there stand in society.”

The issue of political ownership of media in the country also came up. (Respondent 3, Interviewed by the author on November 20, 2019) said that politicians own media houses because they want to protect their business and political interest. The journalist said that he has previously worked in such a news organization where he would not be allowed to touch on stories that reflects the media owner, his friends and business associates in a negative light. He gave a recent example where “the Standard newspaper had to be recalled when it had already gone to press because it had published a story that ‘tarnished’ the image of former Prime Minister Raila Odinga.”

The above sentiments were corroborated by another respondent who said in one of the leading media organizations in the country, a media owner forced the organization to recall newspapers because of a story that painted a politician who is believed to be a friend to the media owner in a bad light. (Respondent 6, Interviewed by the author on November 23, 2019).

Him as a politician is keen on forging political ties and we have a recent example of when he pulled the plug on a story that was seen to be negative on Raila Odinga because he wants to forge ties with him, the story was true but the newspapers were recalled and republished without the story of the former Premier.

4.5.2.3.2 Advertisers

Commercial media bias is a common thing in the Kenyan media because almost all the mainstream media organizations in the country depend on advertisement revenue for survival. The issue of advertisers (state and corporate) came out strongly during the interviews with all the respondents saying that they have lots of influence on the media due to the fact that they provide revenue that keeps the newsrooms operational.

A senior broadcast editor said that “media houses run on advertisements and so if you’re looking for advertisement and this particular big advertiser comes on board, and a negative story about them comes up, you go ahead and do the story, they’ll definitely pull out of the advertising deal, that’s what they always do.” Respondent 4, Interviewed by the author on November 21, 2019).

She added that when advertisers pull out, media organizations suffer because they won’t be able to make money.

You don’t have money to pay your staff at the end of the month and to continue funding news gathering and processing activities. So, there are some things you just decide which one is the weightier evil or whatever you will call it. So, yes, you have to honor your contract with advertisers, sometimes at the expense of telling a good story.

“We recently pulled down a story because it painted one of our advertisers in a negative light,” said (Respondent 7, Interviewed by the author on November 27, 2019). The respondent added that the story was on misappropriation of funds at the Kenyatta University and they were asked to pull it down by the top management. The respondents mentioned some organizations that over the years have had lucrative advertising contracts with various media organizations in the country.

A respondent confessed that on the same day that the researcher interviewed him, he refused to pursue a controversial story because it tainted the image of a major advertiser with the media organization where he works. “I got this big story from one of my sources, but after learning that it reflected one of our advertisers in a bad light, I couldn’t continue pursuing it. No one asked me not to, but I knew that it could put me into trouble.” (Respondent 1, interviewed by the author on November 18, 2019).

The establishments mentioned as some of the untouchables by media organizations over the years include the Kenya Commercial Bank, East African Breweries Limited, Safaricom, some Insurance firms and betting companies, Kenya Airways, parliament and government ministries, and parastatals.

The interviews revealed that advertisers are aware of the fact that it is the revenue they give to the news organizations that keep them afloat. This has made them developed a tendency of threatening and intimidating journalists and media organizations especially when the newsrooms publish stories that paint them in negative light irrespective of whether the stories are true.

A senior editor said that the *Standard* newspaper published a negative story on SportPesa, a sports betting firm that used to be a big advertiser with the company and they withdrew their advertisement. The respondent admitted that because of the

SportPesa saga, he recently refused to pursue a similar story because the organization in question had an advertising contract with the media organization he works for.

“There’s this newspaper that publishes stories on grievances of Kenyans. So, an aggrieved client calls with a legitimate case that ordinarily we would publish, but because it touches on an advertiser we have a contract with, I couldn’t go ahead with it because I knew the consequences.” (Respondent 6, Interviewed by the author on November 23, 2019)

The interviews also revealed that for the longest time in Kenya, no mainstream media house would publish negative stories on the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University because they were some of the biggest media advertisers in the country.

4.5.2.3.3 Editorial policies

Editorial policies are in-house guidelines by which media organizations operate. The interviewees mentioned internal editorial policies as one of the major factors that influence journalists to self-censor.

The study found out that “media houses impose non-journalistic regulations on journalists who have no choice but to adhere to them.” (Respondent 7, Interviewed by the author on November 27, 2019)

It is also of great importance to note that the survey findings put editorial policies as the leading factor that influences journalists to self-censor followed closely by media owners and advertisers respectively.

Editorial policies have to be followed to the latter, said (Respondent 2, interviewed on November 20, 2019):

At the *Nation*, we have our own policies, we refer to the policy document as the Nation’s journalism bible. It is a guideline on how everyone is supposed to conduct themselves while working for the organization and

also contains regulations that are to be adhered to while working on stories. Everyone, including us editors, took an oath to abide by it, meaning that we have to adhere to everything that it represents.

However, the respondent also said that some of the regulations contained in the policy influence journalists to self-censor because they are designed to protect the interests of the media owner.

The above sentiments were echoed by (Respondent 6, interviewed on November 23, 2019). The journalist said that editorial policies are regulations that basically guide journalists on how to treat stories “but having worked in a number of media organizations in the country, I have seen non-journalistic policies that regulate journalists not to pursue stories that speak negatively on some prominent individuals and big organizations.”

The respondent further said that:

An editorial policy should only capture everything that is journalistic from how a story is written to how stories are sourced, how stories are rendered, writing headlines, and the type of English to use whether it is British or American. It should touch on practically all aspects of the practice of journalism but should not be used to muzzle journalists as is the case.

His sentiments were corroborated by (Respondent 6, Interviewed on November 27, 2019) who said that editorial policies also contain some regulations that influence journalists to self-censor.

The respondent mentioned that there is a policy at his workplace that dictates that any stories that speak about Cabinet Secretaries have to be approved by senior editorial directors while those that touch on the organization's staff and their family members “must be approved by the human resource manager.” The respondent said that these policies have led to self-censoring habits among journalists because more often

such stories never see the light of day or are toned down. “More often, many journalists won’t even bother pursuing such stories.”

The above remarks were echoed by (Respondent 7, Interviewed on November 27, 2019) who said that the Interior CS Fred Matiangi and President Uhuru Kenyatta are always covered positively by his organization. “You can’t publish a negative story on the President and CS Matiangi at my organization.”

(Respondent 3, interviewed on November 20, 2019) said that he wrote an article about President Kenyatta paying millions of shillings to hire a private jet on some of his 2019 trips but the editors toned down his article.

What I wrote and the story that was published under my byline were two different things. The story was not just censored, but it was rewritten and another angle introduced to make the President look good. It even said things like the President doesn’t use a private jet but is in the process of procuring one. The editors totally toned it down by removing and changing some crucial information.

Besides the documented rules “there are others, I don’t know whether to bring this up or not, but there are other unwritten rules that one learns about on the job,” said (Respondent 2, Interviewed by the author on November 20, 2019). He went ahead to mention that:

The unwritten rules are not documented on the editorial policy, you get to learn them while on the trade. No one will tell you about these rules, but over time as a journalist, you will get to know them and abide by them. The more you interact with other media workers, the more you learn them. For instance, you will be told that this is probably a no-go zone or you’re not supposed to do it this way, you’re supposed to do like this..., you see that.

His sentiments were corroborated by (Respondent 5, interviewed on November 21, 2019). The editor said journalists learn new things on the job, “including things that are not taught in any journalism school.” The respondent added that:

When you’re new in the business there are some stories you would want to write but after some time, you naturally come to accept that

there are some issues you're not supposed to touch. There are some issues you cannot write about, there are people you cannot write about ... and there are some people that you're supposed to give positive coverage even when whatever they've done does not warrant it.

4.5.2.3.4 *Censorship*

Journalists in their day to day work, make difficult choices about what to share and what to hold back. More often, they experience pressure from outside forces to suppress news information. This study shows that media censorship by the government, media owners, and other regulators influence journalists to self-censor.

According to (Respondent 1, Interviewed on November 18, 2019), government regulations sometimes use “national security concerns” to gag the media. The journalist added journalists are more likely to self-censor especially on news stories that touch on terrorist groups, terror attacks, and police and military operations due to national security concerns. “If the state doesn't want a story that touches on the military, police or terrorism to come out, they'll use national security as a scapegoat.”

The journalist emphasized that not every story that touches on terror or security issues should be overlooked, but specific stories that “may genuinely put the security of Kenyans at risk. So, we will not run a story that may feed information to Kenya's perceived enemies. We won't as well run a story about Kenyan secret military war plans with another country.” The journalists added that other stories that wouldn't be published by his organization include stories on strategies by the government to weed out local militia groups and gangs like the “Mungiki and Sungusungu.”

The state is known for using “national security concerns as a scapegoat to intimidate, torture and harass journalists. (Respondent 5, Interviewed on November 21, 2019) said that the unlawful arrest and detention of former *Nation* journalist John Ngirachu in November 2015 was an example. “Ngirachu's arrest over a story he wrote

on the KES3.8 billion spending by the Ministry of Interior on a contract that the then Auditor General Edward Ouko had questioned was a blatant disregard of the Constitution.”

Alphonse Shiundu of the *Standard* and James Mbaka of the *Star* were also asked to record statements with the police over the same story. According to the respondent, the then Interior Cabinet Secretary, the late Joseph Nkaissery said that “no one should mention anything about my ministry except the President and his deputy.” Ngirachu was asked to name his source(s) and illegally detained and later released after a number of days in custody after a public outcry by Kenyans on Twitter (KOT).

The respondents also mentioned the Government Advertising Agency as an organization that the state uses to muzzle the press. (Respondent 7, Interviewed on November 27, 2019) said that the government uses the state corporation to regulate media advertisements.

After realizing that media houses rely on advertisements for survival, the government being one of the biggest media advertisers decided to regulate who gets advertisements through this body that decides who gets advertisements from the state and its allied institutions.” The journalist added that “it’s not a law parse, it’s just a government policy and they are using it to mishandle the press so that you can never touch them.

4.5.2.3.5 *Legal concerns (defamation)*

If a journalist or a publication makes a false statement against a person or organization and the reputation of the organization is damaged, then there can be legal consequences targeted towards the person(s) who were involved in gathering and processing the story. Defamation applies to both written and oral statements on newspapers, magazines, TV, radio and on digital news platforms.

The interviews revealed that journalists are often careful not to publish stories that will attract legal consequences because falsehoods taint the image of news

organizations besides making them pay hefty fines to the defamed individuals or organizations.

“The organization I work for punishes journalists who are charged with defamatory cases through demotions, warnings, and even sacking,” said (Respondent 6, interviewed on November 23, 2019). The journalists said that his organization's approach of punishing workers who are charged with defamation has created some form of fear among journalists. He added that whenever the organization is sued for defamation:

The writer and the editor of the story have to take full responsibility for any libelous stories because the company feels that it's losing so much money on defamation cases. Every time, we have to go through stories with the head of legal and in case of even the slightest hint that a story could be defamatory, it has to be discussed with senior editors.

The journalist added that if the company's internal investigations “conclude that you, the writer or editor is to blame for defamation, you get punished. And it happened recently actually.” He said that a senior reporter wrote a story alleging that former Prime Minister Raila Odinga had not paid customs fees for one of his luxury cars. However, the car in question was registered under the late Fidel Odinga who is the eldest son to Mr. Odinga. The journalist failed to include that crucial information in the report. Raila wrote a formal complaint to the media organization “threatening to sue the organization. It was also later ruled by the internal editorial committee that the writer did not follow the correct procedures before publishing the story and he was fired.”

The interviews also revealed that one of the media organizations under this study does not hire lawyers or legal representatives to represent journalists in court cases. According to (Respondent 7, interviewed on November 27, 2019) journalists have to attend all the court sessions in person no matter how long the case takes.

He went ahead to give an example:

I will give you a case of the Nation Media Group where I have friends. *Nation* will hire a lawyer for its journalists, but unfortunately for us, for the over ten years that I have been working here (in reference to his media organization), it's often journalists who represent themselves in court and sometimes the cases drag for years. So, of course, it gives you that kind of fear that you will really want to avoid any stories that might lead you to the courts.

According to (Respondent 3, Interviewed on November 20, 2019) "it is always safer for journalists to stay away from stories that could lead to defamation because, in the long run, they destroy a journalist's reputation and even career." He said that "the more cases you have as a reporter and you keep on losing them, the more the level of trust among the people who consume your content and that of your employer go down."

The respondent mentioned the hefty fines that defamation cases have attracted in the past giving an example of a libel case between the People Daily and former CS the late Nicholas Biwott. "In 2002, the People Daily paid Biwott KES20 million after it published a defamatory article against him touching on Turkwel hydro-electric dam."

4.5.2.3.6 Threats and intimidations

Most of the respondents acknowledged the fact that threats and intimidations from within and outside the newsroom influence journalists to censor themselves. (Respondent 5, Interviewed on November 21, 2019) said that online audiences are fond of "hurling insults" in the comment section of stories on social media platforms that news organizations use as content distribution channels.

Whenever we publish information that doesn't auger well with certain groups of people, we receive lots of online backlash calling us 'githeri media' and it doesn't feel good you know. It makes you think twice before publishing such content because our content is supposed to appeal to the readers and viewers.

The interviews also revealed that journalists also receive backlash from sources and bosses. (Respondent 2, Interviewed on November 20, 2019) said that a source once

gave him contents of a report that hadn't been officially released that he ended up publishing in the next day's newspaper.

So, I published a story based on the contents of the document in the following day's newspaper which happened to be the day that the findings of the document were to be released. After they saw my story, they changed their position. It made me look like a liar and I was questioned by my seniors and even asked to reveal my source.

The journalist went ahead to say that on a different occasion, he was also given "newsworthy" information by another trusted source who didn't tell him that the information was off the record. "When I had published the information, I received several phone calls from my source because apparently, he didn't like the angle that I took with the story. The source even threatened to sue for defamation if the story wasn't retracted."

In a separate incident, an advertiser summoned journalists from a media organization for portraying them negatively, this was revealed by (Respondent 7, Interviewed on November 27, 2019) He said that "the organization, an Airline company, summoned the writer and top editors because they did a negative story on them. Unfortunately, the media organizations' commercial department sided with the advertiser." The respondent went on to say that the organization even threatened to pull out of an advertising contract they had with the news organization. "They asked that the story be retracted."

Threats and intimidations from politicians are also a common thing in Kenyan newsrooms. According to (Respondent 1, interviewed on November 18, 2019) threats and intimidations, especially from politicians and corporates, are a normal occurrence in newsrooms. "We have received phone calls and emails especially after publishing explosive stories not just from politicians but from business leaders as well." The

journalist added that sometimes they receive backlash while the story is still at the newsgathering or processing stages.

Sometimes back, I was working on an explosive story, about corruption at a corporate organization and because I had to give them a right of reply and get their side of the story before publishing, I called them. They didn't respond to my questions as I had expected but threatened to deny my news organization advertising revenue. They even warned that they would sue me and my organization for defamation if the article is published labeling us 'githeri' media.

(Respondent 4, interviewed on November 21, 2019) said that she hasn't been personally threatened, but journalists working on the investigations desk in the media house she works for are often threatened by organizations or individuals implicated in stories. "We receive formal complaints almost every week from politicians and organizations about threats on our reporters for producing stories that don't auger well with them."

This was corroborated by (Respondent 3, Interviewed on November 20, 2019) who said he has been threatened on a number of occasions "via emails, phone calls and even through colleagues." The journalist went ahead to give an example of a controversial story he had published that landed him in trouble. "There's a story we did on a politician and his cronies who had grabbed parts of the Ngong Forest. I received calls warning to go slow because I am still young. I had to move houses and I also moved my family after the threats persisted because we didn't retract the story."

4.5.2.3.7 Personal values and beliefs

As humans, personal values and beliefs help to guide our behaviors and decisions we make at work and at home. The interviews show that personal values and beliefs influence journalists self-censor.

According to (Respondent 4, Interviewed on November 21, 2019) some journalists will not work or produce some stories because they don't believe in a story's

content. “Sometimes, there are journalists who would refuse to do some stories because they don’t believe in the contents of stories, this happens on stories touching on religious matters and politics.”

“Societal beliefs and customs” play a role in impelling journalists to self-censor. This was said by (Respondent 1, interviewed on November 18, 2019) The journalist mentioned religious differences, tribal affiliations and political differences as some of the key issues that play out in newsrooms where he has worked. The respondent who covered the 2007, 2013 and 2017 elections said that some journalist plays the tribal card during electioneering periods.

Reporters and editors take sides and will alter stories, leave out some important information or sensationalize other stories depending on which side of the political divide they support. Such cases are usually more rampant, especially during electioneering periods. Elections in this country bring the bad side of journalists with media workers even openly showing a preference for certain political candidates and parties.

4.6 Summary

The chapter has discussed the study findings for both the quantitative and qualitative strands. The findings show that self-censorship is widely practiced in Kenyan mainstream media organizations and impacts negatively on the profession of journalism.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The study examined the relationship between the phenomenon of self-censorship and journalism in Kenya's mainstream media. The goal of this study was to scrutinize the factors that influence journalists to self-censor and to show the impact that self-censorship has on the practice of journalism. This chapter presents a summary of the study's findings, conclusions drawn from the findings, suggestions, and recommendations.

The study provides some damning findings of self-censorship and its implications in Kenya. It shows that threats of censorship still loom large in the country. The study revealed that more often journalists and editors are still unable to make decisions without undue internal and external influence. While the respondents have indicated that editorial independence can never be absolute, it is regrettable that self-censorship which seems to be prevalent in the country is hindering the media from executing even the most basic of its roles in a pluralistic context.

5.2 Discussions of the Key Findings

The study findings show that self-censorship is a common practice in Kenyan newsrooms and impacts negatively on the kind of news content that is churned out by media organizations. The Media Observer (2015); Yesil (2014); Morris (2017) in chapter two of this study also corroborates the above findings.

Both the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study in an attempt to respond to the question on factors that influence journalists to self-censor have revealed that media policies, fear of reprisals from media owners, advertisers, the government,

politicians, elite business people, and criminal gangs are the leading causes of self-censorship among journalists in Kenya. Other factors include: Corruption in form of both material and monetary forms, ethical and legal concerns, personal values and beliefs.

According to the respondents, the four major factors that influence journalists to self-censor include internal editorial policies, fear of reprisals from media owners, advertisers and state regulations respectively. These factors have also been widely mentioned in the literature review section of this study.

The study shows that self-censorship is so rampant in Kenya to an extent that it has become a default setting among journalists with some censoring even without knowing. This has, in turn, lowered citizen's trust in the media which has had a huge effect on media content consumption. As a matter of fact, the respondents partly linked the declining readership and media revenue to self-censorship.

The history of media in Kenya is characterized by censorship from the government, media owners and regulators. Kenyan media has come a long way, from full state control under both Presidents Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Moi's regimes to a more liberated and pluralistic media under Presidents Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta's regimes. In recent years, Kenya's media has been fraught with difficulties such as operations revenue hence it has been at the mercy of advertisers, business and political elites.

Other difficulties that the Kenyan media has been facing include internal and external intimidations and threats, regulations including government regulations and internal editorial policies, and the pressure to protect the business and political interests of media owners.

While media owners political and business interests, government regulations and loyalty to advertisers have had an unmistakable impact on how Kenyan journalists work and the kind of stories they pursue and churn out, the findings of this study shows that journalists are aware of the partially free media environment that they are operating under. And that they yearn for a media that embraces its true watchdog role, but their hands are tied since they need money from advertisers. Journalists also have to abide by government regulations and other censors besides remaining loyal to their employers.

The study has shown that self-censorship is responsible for watering down the quality of news content that reaches the populace thus causing distrust.

The survey has shown that influence by editorial policies, media owners and advertisers are the leading causes of self-censorship among journalists in Kenyan newsrooms.

An interesting finding was that acculturation to newsrooms internal editorial policies and “unwritten rules” have the potential of impelling journalists to censor themselves sometimes without even knowing that they are actually self-censoring. What this means is that to some journalists, self-censoring has become more of a default setting.

Generally, the findings of this study indicate that there are times when self-censorship is justified and when it is not justified. But going by the responses from both the survey and the in-depth interview, the general feedback is that self-censorship is not good for media business because it is responsible for watering down the quality of news content thus killing the trust between journalists and the audience. This, in the long-run impacts negatively the trade of journalism.

5.3 Conclusion

Self-censorship due to commercial, entrepreneurial and political interests has made the primary duty of the media, which is to generate and share information freely, not possible. The study showed that self-censorship has become widespread in Kenya because journalists fear reprisals for what they write, say, or report.

The state is not the only factor that influences journalists to self-censor. This study actually showed that politicians and the government are no longer the powerful censors of the media in Kenya. According to the findings, the major factors that influence journalists to self-censor include media owners, internal editorial policies that include some “unwritten rules,” advertisers, and legal or defamation concerns.

This study also showed that Kenyan mainstream media is concentrated in a few hands making journalists and newsroom operations susceptible to political, administrative and economic influence. For instance, the economic orientation of media owners and their relationship with other businesses is just as much a problem for newsroom independence as the concentration of media ownership in a few hands.

The findings of this study also showed that when media is owned by politicians, as is the case in Kenya, then political ambitions and leanings affect how journalists in these media organizations operate. Self-censorship, in this case, from political influence then remains apparent. Where politicians are the private media owners, it is easier for journalists from such newsrooms to self-censor, because journalists and editors cannot afford to write, publish or broadcast stories that would negatively paint the ownership and their political leanings.

The most frightful outcome of this study is the normalization of self-censorship among Kenyan journalist that is caused by internal editorial policies. Journalists are

driven by the fear of reprisals from media owners, advertisers, politicians, and editors/newsroom managers. The aim of these forces is to control media content, particularly that which is considered unfavorable to them and their associates.

The study also revealed that self-censorship is influenced by external forces and threatens the ethical principle of independence which asserts that the fundamental objective of a journalist is to write a fair, accurate and unbiased story on matters of public interest. Due to self-censorship, trust in the media in Kenya has gone down while readership has also dipped.

During both the 2013 and 2017 general elections in Kenya, the media was largely muted. Mainstream media organizations opted not to report on conflict due to pressure from the state and civil right groups, opting to practice peace journalism. This is a clear form of collective self-censorship, ostensibly in defense of national cohesion.

The findings also show that self-censorship is also used by media organizations to prevent the publication of information that has the potential to harm their financial bottom-lines. In Kenyan media organizations, the profit motive overrides public interest. Even in situations where the security of journalists is at stake, there is an overarching view that self-censorship is increasingly being applied for reasons relating to the protection of commercial and entrepreneurial interests.

The study has also shown that there are actually times when self-censorship is justified. The justifications given by the respondents include interests of decency, taste, avoidance of unnecessary harm, to keep from whipping up a violent situation, or even at the behest of the government to protect secret operations.

The findings of this study support the theories that have been used that include the spiral of silence, the propaganda theory, and the gatekeeper's theory. The

journalist's willingness to remain silent and loyal to their employers, advertisers, and regulators despite having the full knowledge that it is wrong shows how as a "spiral of silence" culminates. The "propaganda" and "gatekeeping" theories are also embedded in many parts of the study. Respondents have revealed that news stories often go through so many filters within news organizations and more decisions on whether to publish or not always lies with top editors and sometimes media owners or even commercial managers.

Generally, these findings support Herman and Chomsky's (1994) assertions captured in the propaganda theory that societal elites including media owners, advertisers, politicians, state officials, and other tycoons use their influence to dictate what is churned out to the audience as news.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations: While advertising continues to be the most profitable revenue source for mainstream media in Kenya, it is important for media companies to look for alternative revenue streams in order to offset declines in revenue. This will ensure that the media organization is not over-dependent on corporate and government advertisements for revenue which in turn will see a decline in cases of self-censorship.

Unregulated ownership of media outlets as is the case in Kenya is harmful to democracy. Therefore, there's a need to regulate media ownership because of the influence media owners have on journalists and the news content that is churned out by news organizations. The findings of this study have shown that media ownership carries with it the power to select, to edit, and to choose the methods, manner, and emphasis of presentation. Concentrating the mainstream media in the hands of a few elites is

therefore dangerous as these groups of people have the power to dictate the kind of news content that is churned out to the populace.

In Kenya, media ownership is the concentration at the hands of a few politically connected individuals and business organizations (Simiyu, 2013, p. 3). Such organizations “often abrogate their role of being independent watchdogs to that of corporate mercenaries who adjust their critical scrutiny to suit their private purpose.” This can be best exemplified by the 2005 referendum where news content by many media organizations reeked of partisanship.

The findings of this study show that many journalists in Kenya are forced into self-censoring by internal editorial policies. Therefore these policies ought to be revised to allow journalists the freedom to work on stories without fear of reprisals. The Media Council of Kenya should scrutinize and review internal editorial policies of each and every news organization in the country to ensure that they are aligned with journalistic principles of objectivity, balance, accuracy, fairness, and accountability.

The respondents have also revealed that self-censorship is responsible for eating into the fabric of press freedom. According to the findings of this study, the media in Kenya is not free due to censors by media owners, advertisers and the state besides the fact that the country has laws that champion for the freedom of the press. Media freedom is essential in any democratic society, therefore media professionals and stakeholders should strive to have article 34 of the Constitution (2010) on press freedom fully implemented. This is because independent and free media is important. After all, it plays a vital role in informing citizens about public affairs and monitoring the actions of the government and politicians. According to Article 19:

The defense of media freedom requires us to protect against not only traditional forms of media restrictions, (such as the forced closure of

newspapers, or the use of public advertising to control media content) but also against unprecedented new challenges, such as the control of information and ideas by private power-holders, or the difficulties of financing and promoting accurate and reliable information online.

This study has also revealed that self-censorship is responsible for the production of highly filtered media content. Besides some stories of public interest fail to find their way into major news outlets. The study recommends that Kenyan news organizations should strive to churn out quality news content that appeals to the audience. This, in the long run, will contribute towards earning the people's trust which is crucial for the media business. People's trust in media is a fundamental premise of political representation and a functioning democracy. According to (Pavlickova, Nyre & Jurisic, 2013), "the confidence in journalism as a type of mediated communication is presumed through people reading journalistic texts and approaching media to use them to learn about the world, politics, and society."

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

This study confined itself to self-censorship and the practice of journalism in Kenya's mainstream media. There is so much scope to further study based on the findings that include: The impact of self-censorship on media freedom; an analysis of the connection between media ownership and self-censorship; and a probe into the relationship between self-censorship and the declining trust in media.

The study findings strongly link self-censorship to the declining press freedom in the country thus it will be important to conduct elaborate research in this area. Secondly, media ownership carries with it the power to select, to edit, and to choose the methods, manner, and emphasis of presentation. The findings of this study indicate that this power has been abused by mainstream media owners who hence the need to conduct a separate study in the area. And finally, the study has also shown that self-censorship

is directly connected to the deteriorating trust in the Kenyan media thus it will be of importance to do a qualitative study on the subject.

5.6 How does this Study Contribute to Knowledge

This study is important because it comes at a time when Kenya is witnessing an erosion of the ideals of freedom of the press. The findings of this study show that media content is filtered to suit the interests of media owners, advertisers, government, and politicians who in one way or another have an influence over the media.

These findings will benefit various media stakeholders particularly journalists, media scholars, media organizations, and policymakers. Journalists will benefit from the study as it has shed light on how self-censorship impacts on journalism besides showing the major factors that influence journalists to self-censor.

Besides, media scholars will also benefit from this study as it can be used as a foundation on which more scholarly work can be built on. Policymakers, media owners, and regulators will gain valuable knowledge on the extent to which self-censorship affects the practice of journalism in the country. This knowledge will help them to formulate policies that hopefully will minimize or curb acts of unwarranted self-censoring practices.

REFERENCES

- Abuoga, J.B., & Mutere, A. (1988). The history of the press in Kenya (5). *African Council in Communication*.
- Adar, K. G., & Munyae, I. M. (2001). Human Rights Abuse in Kenya Under Daniel Arap Moi, 1978. *African Studies Quarterly*, 5(1).
- Allison, S. (2016, January 27). Blow to Kenya's media after editor is sacked for criticizing President. *The Guardian UK*.
- Anthonissen, C.. (2008). "18. The sounds of silence in the media: Censorship and self-censorship.". *Handbook of communication in the public sphere* 4, 401.
- Article 19. (2018). *Kenya: Violations of Media Freedom (May 2017 - April 2018)*. Nairobi: Article 19.
- Assembly, U. G. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. UN General Assembly 302(2).
- Babbie, E. (2007). *The practice of social research*. 11th. Belmont, CA. Thomson Wadsworth, 24(511), 66.
- Baran, S., & Davis, K. (2015). *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future*. Boston. MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Beaumont, P. (2019, October 29). Tanzania President Magufuli condemned for authoritarian regime. *The Guardian*.
- Bennett, P., and Naím, M. . (2015). 21st-century censorship. *Columbia Journalism Review*, 53(1), 14.
- Brison, S. J. (1998). The autonomy defense of free speech. *Ethics*, 108(2), 312-339.
- Committee to Protect Journalists. (2015). *Broken promises: How media ownership and advertising curb critical reporting*. CPJ.
- Committee to Protect Journalists. (2016). *Gado blames government pressure as cartoonist's contract at Kenya's Nation ends*. CPJ.
- Cook, P and Heilmann, C. (2010). *Censorship and Two Types of Self-Censorship*. CPJ. (2018, May 05). *Committee to Protect Journalists*. Retrieved from <https://cpj.org/2018/05/kenyan-president-should-not-sign-cybercrime-bill-i.php>
- Creswell, J. W. (2011). Controversies in mixed methods research. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 4, 269-284.
- Frederiksen, B. F. (2006). Writing, self-realization and community: Henry Muoria and the creation of a nationalist public Sphere in Kenya. *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*, 18(2), 150-165.
- Freedom House. (2016). *Kenya: Freedom of the Press 2016*. Retrieved from Freedom House: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/kenya>

- GeoPoll. (2019, February 26). *Kenya TV And Radio Audience Data: February 2019*. Retrieved from www.geopoll.com: <https://www.geopoll.com/blog/kenya-tv-radio-data-2019/>
- Government of Kenya. (2010). *2010 Constitution*. Nairobi: Government printer. Kenya.
- Government of Kenya. (2018, May 23). *Kenya Gazette*. Retrieved from kenyalaw.org: <http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Acts/ComputerMisuseandCybercrimesActNo5of2018.pdf>
- Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing consent: A propaganda model*.
- Herrscher, R. (2002). "A Universal Code of Journalism Ethics: Problems, Limitations, and Proposals." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 17(4), 277-289.
- Human Rights Watch. (2017). *"Not Worth the Risk": Threats to Free Expression Ahead of Kenya's 2017 Elections*. Nairobi: Human Rights Watch.
- Human Rights Watch. (2016, December 15). *www.hrw.org*. Retrieved from Silencing Turkeys Media: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/12/15/silencing-turkeys-media/governments-deepening-assault-critical-journalism>
- Index on Censorship. (2013, August 9). *Xindex*. Retrieved from Index on Censorship: <https://www.indexoncensorship.org>
- Index on Censorship. (2017, March 9). *Xindex*. Retrieved from Index on Censorship: <https://www.indexoncensorship.org>
- James Curran and David Hesmondhalgh (eds). (2019). Media and Society. *European Journal of Communication*, 34(4), 467–468.
- Kamau, S. (2018). At War: Government and Media Tensions in Contemporary Kenya and the Implications for Public Interest. In *Perspective on Political Communication in Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 113-127.
- Kovach, B. and T. Rosenstiel. (2007). *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*. Three Rivers Press.
- Kriegler, J. (2008). *Report of the independent review committee on the general elections held in Kenya on 27th December 2007*. Govt. Printer.
- Kumar, R. (2019). *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*. Sage Publications Limited.
- Lee, F. L. (2015). Press freedom in Hong Kong. *Routledge Handbook of Chinese Media*. Routledge, London and New York, 131-144.
- Loughran, G. (2010). *Birth of a nation: The story of a newspaper in Kenya*. IB Tauris.
- Maggie, F & Olubutsa, G. (2018, February 1). Kenya government ignores court order suspending shutdown of three TV stations. *Reuters*.
- Makali, D. (Ed.). (2003). *Media Law & Practice: The Kenyan Jurisprudence*. Phoenix Publishers.
- Mathiu, M. (2018, August 10). GAA was a terrible idea that should be disbanded now. *Daily Nation*.

- Mbeke, O., Ugangu, W., & Okello-Orlale, R. (2010). *The Media we want. Kenya Media Vulnerability Study*. 38-61.
- Mbeke, P. O. (2008). *Background Note: The Media, Legal, Regulatory and Policy Environment in Kenya: A Historical Briefing*. Commissioned by the BBC World Service Trust.
- McChesney, R. W. (1998). "The political economy of global communication. Capitalism and the information age: The political economy of the global communication revolution". 1-26.
- McQuail, D. (2005). Book Review: Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics. *European Journal of Communication*, 20(2). 266-268.
- Mehler, A. (2007). *Africa Yearbook Volume 3: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara in 2006*. Brill.
- Meiklejohn, A. (2000). *Free speech and its relation to self-government*. The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd.
- Morris, R. (2017). *Watching our words: Perceptions of self-censorship and media freedom in Fiji*. Pacific Media Centre.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974). The spiral of silence a theory of public opinion. *Journal of communication*, 24(2), 43-51.
- Nyamora, P. (2007). *The role of alternative media in mobilizing for political change in Kenya 1982-92: Society Magazine Case Study*. The University of South Florida.
- Ochilo, P. J. O. (1993). *"Press Freedom and the Role of the Media in Kenya."*
- Ogola, G. (2011). The political economy of the media in Kenya: From Kenyatta's nation-building press to Kibaki's local language FM radio. *Africa Today*. 57, No.3, 77-95.
- Ogola, G. (2018). *How Kenyatta has gone about stifling the free press in Kenya*. University of Central Lancashire.
- Ogot, B. A., & Ochieng, W. R. (1995). *Decolonization & [and] Independence in Kenya: 1940-93*. East African Publishers.
- Oyugi, W. O., Wanyande, P., & Odhiambo-Mbai, C. (Eds.). (2003). *The Politics of Transition in Kenya: from KANU to NARC*. Heinrich Böll Foundation.
- Potter, W. J. (2012). *Media effects*. Sage Publications.
- Reporters Without Borders. (2019, August). *2019 World Press Freedom Index*. Retrieved from Reporters Without Borders: <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>
- Repucci, S. (2019). (2019, December 7). *Freedom and the Media: A Downward Spiral*. Retrieved from Freedom House: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-media/freedom-media-2019>
- Riva-Palacio, R. (2006). Self-censorship as a reaction to murders by drug cartels. *Nieman Reports*, 60(2), 31.

- Schenkkan, N., & Repucci, S. (2019). The Freedom House Survey for 2018: Democracy in Retreat. *Journal of Democracy*, 30(2), 100-114.
- Shirima, M. A. and M. M. Ndonge. (2017). "Mapping out Media-Politics Relationship in Kenya: Comparing the Mwai Kibaki-Uhuru Kenyatta Regimesâ€™™ Media ownership, Usage and Control."
- Shoemaker, P. J., & Vos, T. (2009). (2009). *Gatekeeping theory*. Routledge.
- Shoemaker, P. J., Eichholz, M., Kim, E., & Wrigley, B. (2001). Individual and routine forces in gatekeeping. *Journalism & mass communication quarterly*, 78(2), 233-246.
- Simiyu, T. F. (2014). Media ownership and the coverage of the 2013 general election in Kenya-democracy at the crossroads. *Global Media Journal-African Edition*, 8(1), 114-145.
- Skjerdal, T. (2010). Justifying self-censorship: A perspective from Ethiopia. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 7(2).
- Skjerdal, T. S. (2010). Research on brown envelope journalism in the African media. *African Communication Research*, 3(3), 367-406.
- Smart, D. (2011). "Narrating colonial realities: discourse, difference and the East African Standard in colonial Kenya, 1922-1954".
- The Media Observer. (2015). *Self - Censorship and Press Freedom*. Nairobi: Media Council of Kenya.
- Wolf, T. P., Logan, C., Owiti, J., & Kiage, P. (2004). *A new dawn?: Popular optimism in Kenya after the transition*. (IDASA)., Institute for Democracy in South Africa.
- Yesil, M. (2014). The Invisible Threat for the Future of Journalism: Self-Censorship and Conflicting Interests in an Increasingly Competitive Media Environment. *International journal of business and social science*, 5(3).

APPENDICES

Appendix A Online Questionnaire

Self-censorship and Journalism Practice in the Mainstream Media in Kenya

Copy of Kenya Media Survey 2019

My name is James Okong'o. I am a Master's student at the Aga Khan Graduate School of Media and Communication (GSMC) at the Aga Khan University in Nairobi, Kenya.

This survey is aimed at formulating an overview of Kenya's media industry today, understanding some of the issues Kenyan journalists must deal with on a day to day basis besides obtaining an insight into the phenomenon of self-censorship and how it impacts on journalism.

The survey should take between 5-10 minutes to complete on a smartphone, computer or tablet. Your responses about newsroom experiences will be greatly appreciated as they will help inform the study I am undertaking and hopefully contribute to the development of Kenya's media industry. However, your participation in this study is voluntary.

All your responses to this survey will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

If you require more information about this study or would like to contact me with any issues, you can do so at james.okongo@aku.edu or call me on 0780771819.

Here's the link to the survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/create/preview/?sm=HzDWpAbl0_2BpKP5R2T9vAyj9xK87GIzwe9prFbrt0zuI_3D&tab_clicked=1

1. I agree to take this survey

Please indicate your consent to continue taking this survey

Yes

No

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey which should take between 5-10 minutes.

2. Which age set do you belong to?

18 – 24 25 – 34 35- 45 45 – 54 55- 64 65 and above

3. What is your sexual orientation?

Female Male Transgender Rather not say

4. What is your educational level?

High School Certificate College Diploma Undergraduate Degree Master's Degree PhD Rather not say

5. How many years of work related experience do you have?

0 – 2 3 - 5 6 – 10 11 -15 16 - 20 21 and above

6. Which news organization do you work for?

Nation Media Group Standard Group Royal Media Services Media Max Limited Kenya Broadcasting Corporation Radio Africa Group Others

7. Which form of mass media do you work for?
 Newspapers Television Radio Digital only Converged
Others....

8. Which of the following categories describes your current designation in your news organization?
 Editor in Chief
 Head of Content
 Managing Editor
 Assignments Editor
 Senior Editor
 Senior Reporter
 Editor
 Chief Sub Editor
 Sub Editor
 Reporter/Correspondent
 News Writer
 Other

9. Which newsroom beat do you cover
 Politics and Current Affairs General Reporter Business/Agriculture
Technology Sports Entertainment Others

For the next two questions, please choose your answers using the following scale

Please select only one answer

- [1] Means Complete Freedom
- [2] Means a Great Deal of Freedom
- [3] Means Some Freedom
- [4] Means Little Freedom
- [5] Means No Freedom

10. As an individual journalist, how much freedom do you have in selecting the news stories you work on?

Complete Freedom 1 2 3 4 5 No Freedom

11. How much freedom do you have in deciding which aspects of a news story should be emphasized?

No Freedom 1 2 3 4 5 Complete Freedom

For the next section please use the provided scale to record how important you consider the following statements in your work as a journalist.

Please select only one answer

[1] Means Extremely Important

[2] Means Very Important

[3] Mean Somehow Important

[4] Means not so Important

[5] Means not at all Important

12. Reporting things as they are

Extremely Important [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not at all Important

13. Monitor and scrutinize political leaders

Extremely Important [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not at all Important

14. Monitor and scrutinize big corporate organizations

Extremely Important [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not at all Important

15. Monitor and scrutinize the government

Extremely Important [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not at all Important

16. Set the political agenda

Extremely Important [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not at all Important

17. Advocate for social change

Extremely Important [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not at all Important

18. Support government policies

Extremely Important [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not at all Important

19. Provide information that make people make the right political decisions

Extremely Important [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Extremely Important

The following statements describe the different approaches to journalism. Please state whether you agree or disagree with the statements.

Select only one answer for each question

[1] Strongly Agree

[2] Agree

[3] Somewhat Agree

[4] Strongly Disagree

[5] Strongly Disagree

20. Journalists should always adhere to the code of professional conduct, regardless of the situation at hand and context.

Strongly Agree [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Strongly Agree

21. What is ethical in journalism depends on personal judgment and circumstances

Strongly Agree [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Strongly Disagree

22. Is it acceptable for a journalist to set aside moral standards under some extraordinary situations

Strongly Agree [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Strongly Disagree

23. Is it difficult for me to express my opinion if I think that others won't agree with it?

Strongly Agree [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Strongly Disagree

24. Is it easy for me to express my opinion around others who I think will disagree with me?

Strongly Agree [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Strongly Disagree

25. If I disagree with others, I have no problem letting them know

Strongly Agree [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Strongly Disagree

26. It is safer to remain quiet than to share an opinion that you know most people don't share

Strongly Agree [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Strongly Disagree

Please select the amount of influence the following has on your work as a journalists especially during news gathering and processing

Mark only one answer

[1] Extremely Influential

[2] Influential

[3] Somewhat Influential

[4] Little Influential

[5] Not Influential

27. Your friends, family and acquaintances

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

28. Audience feedback

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

29. Media ethics and regulations

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

30. Media Censorship

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

31. State officials

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

32. Politicians

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

33. Pressure groups

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

34. Business people

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

35. Relationship with news sources

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

36. Security officers including police and military

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

37. Advertisers

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

38. Media owners

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

39. In House Editorial policies

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

40. Personal values, cultural and religious consideration

Extremely Influential [] 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 Not Influential

Appendix B Interview Guide

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is James Okong'o and I'm conducting a qualitative research survey on self-censorship and journalism practice in the mainstream media in Kenya. The interview will take approximately one hour and I would like to request your permission to record it so that I don't miss anything you say. I will also take notes during the session.

This research is in partial fulfillment of the Master of Arts in Digital Journalism course I am undertaking at the Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications. Please provide your honest opinion.

Questions

1. In your line of duty as a journalist (reporter/editor), have you encountered moments that you would recognize as self-censorship? These would include times when you would stop to consider the ramifications of reporting certain facts and, after considering them, decided against reporting it altogether or decided to rephrase to 'soften' the tone of the story? If so can you give an example or examples?
2. In your own opinion, does self-censorship have an impact on journalism? If so, please expound.
3. Is self-censorship a topic that is discussed openly or freely among your colleagues?
4. In your own opinion as a media practitioner, how does self-censorship manifest itself?
5. In your own opinion, what are some of the factors that make Kenyan journalists self-censor?
6. Does self-censorship have an impact on the practice of journalism?
7. Does self-censorship affect the quality of news content produced by news organizations?
8. We have media houses in Kenya that are partly or fully owned by politicians, how does that affect editorial decisions?
9. Can we say that there are occasions when self-censorship is justified?
10. Can we also say that self-censorship is unjustified?

Appendix C AKU Ethics Review Committee Approval Letter



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Media and Communications

REF: AKU-GSMC/ERC/2019/001

Date: October 30, 2019.

Dear James Okong'o (Student No. 535172)

**RE: SELF-CENSORSHIP & JOURNALISM PRACTICE IN THE MAINSTREAM
MEDIA IN KENYA**

This is to inform you that Aga Khan University - Graduate School of Media and Communications Ethics Review Committee has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your approval period November 1, 2019 to October 31, 2020 and your application's approval number is AKU-GSMC/ERC/2019/001.


This approval is subject to compliance with the following under the supervision of your two supervisors:

1. Only the approved documents including the informed consent form and the data collection instruments will be used.
2. Any changes, made on the approved documents, that may increase the risks of affect the welfare or safety of the participants or compromise the integrity of the study must be reported to GSMC within the shortest time possible. The amended documents will be taken through a fresh review and the due process of approval.
3. In the event that the research cannot be completed within the one year approved period, the researcher will request for renewal of approval 30 days prior to the approval period.
4. The researcher will be required to submit a comprehensive progress report when applying renewal of approval.
5. Submission of an executive summary report to the GSMC's Ethics Review Committee within 90 days of completion of the study.
6. Produce all the data collected using the approved tools as and when required by the Ethics Review Committee within the 90 days of completion of your study.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be required to obtain a research permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The process is and you can access the application portal from the website on <https://www.nacosti.go.ke/>.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

 Dr Nancy Booker
Director - Academic Affairs

Nine (9) West Building, 7th Floor, Mkungu Close, Off Parklands Road
P.O. Box 30270 - 00100 G.P.O. Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254 20 3740062/63, +254 (0) 731 888 055; +254 (0) 719 231 530
Email Address: info.gsmc@aku.edu; Website: www.aku.edu

Appendix D Introductory Letter from AKU



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Media and Communications

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P. O. Box 30623 – 00100
Nairobi

October 25, 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

JAMES OKONG'O (STUDENT NO. 535172)

James Okong'o is a registered student at the Aga Khan University, Graduate School of Media and Communications. He is enrolled in the Master of Arts in Digital Journalism Programme and has completed his course work. He is now working on his Master's thesis. Mr. Okong'o's topic is "**Self-censorship and Journalism Practice in the Mainstream Media in Kenya.**"


The purpose of my writing is to request you to assist Mr. Okong'o complete this important academic exercise. Any information collected will be used solely for academic purposes. Upon completion of the research, Mr. Okong'o's thesis will be available at our library. He will also submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of his completed work to your department.


We appreciate your support to our student towards the successful completion of his thesis research.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,


Dr. Nancy Booker
Director – Academic Affairs


REPUBLIC OF KENYA


NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **611957** Date of Issue: **05/November/2019**


RESEARCH LICENSE




This is to Certify that Mr.. James Okong'o of Aga Khan University, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi on the topic: Self-censorship and Journalism Practice in the Mainstream Media in Kenya for the period ending : 05/November/2020.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/19/2583**

611957
Applicant Identification Number


Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &
INNOVATION

Verification QR Code



NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.