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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Media and Communications

**A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE COVERAGE OF COVID-19 IN THE FIRST
SEVEN DAYS**

By

Chrystal Onkeo
543827

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

Nairobi, Kenya

May, 2021
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APPROVAL PAGE

The Aga Khan University
Graduate School of Media and Communications

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment 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
CELESTINE CHRYSTAL KERUBO ONKEO-543827, find it satisfactory and
recommended that it be accepted.

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May, 2021

DECLARATION

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE COVERAGE OF COVID-19 IN THE FIRST SEVEN DAYS

I, **Chrystal Onkeo-543827**, declare that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement 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 research endeavours.

Signature

Date

ABSTRACT

This study explored how the Kenyan print media covered Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the first seven days after the first infection was confirmed in Kenya. The study was guided by the following research objectives: - (i) To find out the prominence the Kenyan media gave COVID-19 stories in the first seven days following the announcement of patient zero, (ii) To identify the frames that were predominantly used by the media in the coverage of COVID-19 following the announcement of patient zero, and (iii) To examine the extent to which COVID-19 stories published in the first seven days following the announcement of patient zero, were covered along the risk of contagion. The theoretical framework adopted for this study was media framing theory. The researcher employed a quantitative research approach and directed quantitative content analysis of print media stories that were published in the two main newspapers, *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. The study targeted two newspapers out of a population of 44. The researcher adopted a content analysis code sheet as the data generation tool. Data was analysed using SPSS and presented in form of tables to check for patterns and relationships between variables. The study results showed that the predominant frames used by the Kenyan print media were action and consequence frames while the threat of contagion frame was moderately used. The frames appeared mostly in hard news stories and prominently in high focus stories. The study recommends the adoption of a framework incorporating both the tenets of agenda setting and framing in communication of messages during pandemics, to balance between causing panic and influencing public behaviour. This will give the public a sense of winning the war of stopping the pandemic while at the same time giving them pathways of their responsibility in mitigating contagion. The framework will require that all the stories have the threat of contagion frame and make them more prominent, thus, effectively increasing the media's efforts in communicating the risk of contagion in the initial days. The media's focus on the action and consequence frames at the expense of threat of contagion frame facilitated the setting of a different agenda from communicating the risk of contagion, crucial in the initial days to prevent community spread of the virus. The researcher further suggests the conduction of a phenomenological study to analyse lived experiences on the pandemic and more so on how individuals consumed information from the media and how infected and affected persons have been impacted by the pandemic. A follow up study should be done to investigate to what extent coverage has changed one year later after the first case of COVID-19 was reported in the country and even possibly compare findings with the outcomes of this study.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BBC:	British Broadcasting Corporation
CDC:	Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
COVID-19:	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CNN:	Cable News Network
WHO:	World Health Organization
H1N1:	Swine flu
MERS:	Middle East Respiratory Syndrome
MoH:	Ministry of Health
PPE:	Personal Protective Equipment
SARS:	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
KARF:	Kenya Audience Research Foundation
KEMRI:	Kenya Medical Research Institute