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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Media and Communications

**THE INCLUSION OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH EXPERTS IN THE
COVERAGE OF COVID-19 IN PRINT MEDIA IN KENYA**

By

Sara Okuoro
553025

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

Nairobi, Kenya

11/02/2022
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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
SARA OKUORO-553025, find it satisfactory and recommended that it be accepted.

Nancy Booker, PhD.,
Interim Dean,
Chair, Thesis Evaluation Committee

Hesbon Owilla, Supervisor

Member,
Thesis Evaluation Committee

11/02/2022

DECLARATION

THE INCLUSION OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH EXPERTS IN THE COVERAGE OF COVID-19 IN PRINT MEDIA IN KENYA

I, **SARA OKUORO-553025**, 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

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family who have always supported me in my studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I give glory to God for giving me the opportunity to write this project. I wish to acknowledge my supervisor whose contribution facilitated the progress of this project. I deeply appreciate Mr. Hesbon Owilla from the Graduate School of Media and Communications at The Aga Khan University, for his support and dedication in ensuring that this thesis becomes successful. Without his encouragement, patience, and continuous revisions, it would have been difficult to bring it this far. I also wish to appreciate my family, friends, and colleagues, for the support and encouragement they have given me to soldier on despite the challenges and obstacles met along the way.

ABSTRACT

When the first cases of coronavirus infection emerged in Kenya, the focus of print media moved to cover COVID-19 pandemic stories. This study aimed to analyze the extent to which medical experts were included in the reporting since patient zero was diagnosed in Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to identify the sourcing methods adopted by mainstream print media, analyse the incorporation of health and medical experts and examine the nature of information given by health and medical experts in the coverage of COVID-19 stories in the first one year since the diagnosis of patient zero in Kenya. The study adopted the theory of mediatisation and the agenda setting theory. This study employed a descriptive survey design using mixed methods approach. The population of the study was all the print media in Kenya. Target population was The Standard and The Daily Nation newspapers. Purposive sampling was used to select the two major newspapers, between March 12, 2020 and March 12, 2021, using key words such as Covid, Covid-19 and Coronavirus among others. The study also purposely interviewed key reporters and editors. The study used a coding sheet and key informant interviews to gather data. Thematic analysis was used for qualitative data and SPSS descriptive analysis for quantitative data. It was found that documentations, government releases, journals, research institutions, researchers and other medical/health experts were the major sources of information for the newspapers. Health/medical experts were overall used in more than a third of the stories covering COVID-19. It was concluded that the stories covered in the study were in some instances instilling fear among the citizens and projecting the negative effects of COVID-19. The study recommends an approach that would see journalists publish more stories that give context and interpretive analysis of COVID-19 based on factual and verified data.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AKU:	The Aga Khan University
COVID-19:	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
IBM:	International Business Machines Corporation
ICU:	Intensive Care Unit
KTN:	Kenya Television Network
MoH:	Ministry of Health
NACOSTI:	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation
PLC:	Public Limited Company
SARS:	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNICEF:	United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO:	World Health Organization