

Use of Contemporary Broadcast Media in De-escalating Intra-communal Violence among the Abakuria in Kenya

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Abstract

The rapid growth in the vernacular broadcast media sector in Kenya has been lauded as key in the social and economic transformation of the rural communities. However, how they can be used in conflict management still remains datable. The aim of this study was to evaluate the contemporary vernacular media intervention in the Abakuria community which has been prone to internecine intra-ethnic conflicts for a long time. The study analysed sources of information from broadcast media and their role in conflict resolution; evaluated the existing media reportage of intra-ethnic conflict; identified shortfalls in the usage of existing broadcast media platforms for resolving ethnic conflict and assessed the suitability of vernacular broadcast media in resolution of intra-ethnic conflict among the Abakuria community. The study used libertarian and social responsibility theories to advance understanding of the media in enhancing conflict management. It used a mixture of survey and qualitative methods of research design. Data was obtained from 162 victims of previous conflict and 162 local community members as well as 12 media practitioners and 12 key informants from the four divisions of Mabera, Ntitaru, Kegonga and Kehancha. Analysis of previous media reports was also done.

Introduction

Although there are several methods that have been employed in the past and even now still being used to manage various conflicts, the use of mass media have been noted for its functional roles in managing large scale conflicts in the society through their expansive reach and social education capacity. However, mass media in official or national languages rarely penetrate the ethnic fabrics of the rural communities where the conflicts have been mostly reported to occur. In such instances, strategies that decouple the link between a given community and their internal conflicts can be approached through vernacular mass media. Therefore this study focuses on intra-ethnic conflict and the possible intervention of vernacular mass media in prescription of solutions to these underlying problems.

In order to realize the aforementioned, this chapter starts by presenting the background to the problem of intra-ethnic conflict in the world, within the regional and local context and finally among the Abakuria community of South-Western Kenya. The link between the mass media and resolution of intra-ethnic conflict is explored to aid in creating a locus of setting for the study both geographically and conceptually, where it has been noted that there is consistent lack of vernacular mass media of any form. This chapter also highlights the problem of the study by presenting the knowledge gaps to shed more light on the potential of vernacular broadcast media in resolving intra-ethnic conflict among the Abakuria community.

Ethnic conflict in the global and regional context

Conflict, in its broadest sense, has been part and parcel of human existence since the evolution of mankind (Pettersson and Wallensteen, 2015). As Davies (2004) states:

Conflict as questioning, dialogue, struggle or debate is universal, found within families, communities, and nations (Davies, 2004, p. 9).

As a result, many of today's conflicts are generated within individual societies spread across borders to their surrounding environment and communities (Hussein, 2014). The number of major conflicts around the world in contemporary history is considerable and are becoming increasingly diverse and fragmented posing more threat to world peace and stability than ever (Hegre, and Niggard, 2015; Tomlinson and Benefield, 2005; Wallensteen and Eriksson, 2015). Most of them have been characterized by immense violence, while many are still unresolved and constitute deadlocks in international, regional and local interrelations (Vandeberg, 2009; Gardner, 2014; Duursma, 2014; Wallensteen and Pettersson, 2015). Thus, the understanding of the root causes of conflicts and their management from a global to local level has increasingly become very dynamic (Sommers, 2002; Guilherme and Morgan, 2011; Fjelde and Ostby, 2014). However, it is the conflicts that are linked to ethnicity that are more significant despite attracting less attention worldwide.

Statistics show that one-third of the population in the African continent is income-poor and one-quarter is poor in terms of the UNDP's Human Development Index" (Brown, 2009; Montville, 2013). Majority of those people are located in the Sub-Saharan Africa, which significantly tends to project the most mediocre development record, the slowest economic growth, and also includes some of the world's poorest countries - as outlined in various reports in the past 2-3 decades by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program

and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, among others (see: World Bank.org; UNDP.org; OECD.org). For example, the most recent Human Development Report produced by the UNDP indicates that while "the global HDI is now 0.702, [...] the lowest regional HDI values are for Sub-Saharan Africa (0.502) (Piterse, 2010; Brown, 2009).

Intra-Ethnic conflict in Kenya

Sub-ethnic identity among the Kenyan ethnic communities dates back to the origin of the settlement now known as Kenya (which is described as a conglomeration of ethnic communities) (Adamson, 1967; Oyugi, 2000). The ethnic groups of Kenya sometimes use their sub-ethnic groups by such primordial categories as clans, religion, region, district or ancestral origin as a basis of ethnic identity (Okoth, 2005; Mwakikagile, 2007; Ndegwa, 2009). For example among the Luhya ethnic community, there are sub-ethnic identities such as the Bukusu, Maragoli, Batshotsho, Idakho, Isukha, Kisa, Marachi, Tirik among others who speak the common Luhya language but have different sub-ethnic identities (Were, 1967).

Among the Luo ethnic group, identification is always based on shared ancestry like Joka-Jok, Jok-Omolo, Joka-Owiny, and the Luo Basuba among others and also due to geographical resettlement. On the other hand, there are Jo-Nyakach, Jo-Kano, Jo-Ugenya, Jo-Alego and Jo-Karateng to connote the areas where these people have settled (Mwakikagile, 2001). In such a circumstance where only a geographical area separates the member of the same ethnic community, conflicts have still arisen in the past (Ibid). Yet compared to the statistics in the SSA, there is still very little seminal information available in published literature about intra-ethnic conflicts in Kenya.

There are reports of intra-ethnic conflicts in Kenya which more often than not occur in a small scale (Gettleman, 2012). Although most of these conflicts are minor skirmishes (Howard, 2015), it has been noted that in the recent past, they have been more rampant and more pronounced (Ibrahim and Jenner, 1997; Oucho, 2002). Several factors have been identified as the cause of outbreaks of ethnic violence among members of the same ethnic group or populations living in close proximity to each other and therefore share the same cultural orientation (Ellsworth, 1999; Oucho, 2002). According to Eriksson, Sollenberg and Wallensteel (2002), factors responsible for the intra-ethnic violence include: past legacies and post-colonial policies; political orientation, (un)availability of land; access to water and pasture resources; loss of traditional grazing land; cattle raiding; lack of alternative sources of livelihood; terrorism; harassment and theft as well as extortion. These factors are becoming increasingly mobilized in the struggle for power and social positions among some Kenyan ethnic communities.

According to Sikuku (2011), there have been several cases of intra-ethnic clashes in Kenya but the major one points to the Sabaots residing in and around the Mt. Elgon region pitting the Sabaot Land Defence Force of the *Soy* clan and the Moorland Forces of the *Mosop* clan resulting in massive loss of lives and destruction of property. Other available reports in Kenya indicate that ethnic conflicts have been experienced and manifested by feuding groups who engage in armed and even unarmed but very active conflicts normally for scarce resources among the said groups, as has been reported in Kenya in the past (Amisi, 1997; Ibrahim and Jenner, 1997; Ruto, Olaf, Ralf and Wotzka, 2003; Yamano and Deininge, 2005; Terry, Peter, Marl and Fred, 2007; ICG, 2008; Sikuku, 2011; Koni, 2012). The scale of these intra-ethnic conflicts is diverse among each different ethnic group. In majority of the cases, the conflict is classified as minor and go unreported (Amisi, 1997; Oyugi, 2000; Mworira and Ndiku, 2012; Mulati, 2013) while in other cases, they are so pronounced that even property and wealth is destroyed, people get killed and others become displaced (Nnoli, 1998; Matamba, 2008; Mazrui, 2008).

Resolution of intra-ethnic conflict among the Abakuria

Although the Abakuria intra-ethnic conflicts have been reported and known to occur with such alacrity, there has not been a serious and concerted effort to foster long lasting peace amongst this ethnic group (OCHA, 2009; Kungu *et al.*, 2015). However, some of the mechanisms that have been used in managing these intra-ethnic conflicts have been found wanting due to the fact that they keep recurring. Part of the reason for this failure in achieving long lasting conflict resolution within the warring factions of the community need to be examined based on the communal, organizational and socio-cultural setup.

According to Kungu *et al.* (2015), the Abakuria have a well-established and indigenous mechanism for managing intra-ethnic conflicts buttressed by several stakeholders including: Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), members of the peace committees, civic leaders, warriors and community members or victims to previous conflicts. There are five traditionally established institutions of conflict resolution in the Kuria community. They are *Inchama*, *Avaragoli*, *Iritongo*, *Sungusungu* and *Ihama*. The *Inchama* are the community's traditionalists whose role is to protect their respective clans against evil spirits and other supernatural powers originating from their perceived adversaries. The *Avaragoli* were community seers and informed the council of elders during conflicts and cleared the raiders to go and attack a neighbouring

community and steal their animals. The *Iritongo* are elders who represent individual villages within a given clan and manage conflicts related to cattle theft. Customarily, the *Sungusungu* were the policing arm of the indigenous conflict management system and were used by the council of elders to administer punishment to offenders and culprits based on the prescription from their judicial system. The *Ihama* acted like the *Sungusungu* except that their roles differed slightly in the sense that they formed part of those who make follow ups when livestock is stolen on behalf of the community therefore displaying a special intelligence wing dealing with tracing and recovery of stolen animals on behalf of the community. These five traditional institutions were established with the aim of fostering harmony, cultivating peace and ensuring mutual coexistence amongst the clans.

Mass media and conflict resolution in Kenya

Various forms of mass media are useful as channels through which messages reach both the target and non-target audience. In most instances, the information conveyed by mass media is meant to set an agenda (Willey, 2008). The power of the mass media to focus public attention and set an agenda on key public issues, is immense and well-documented (see Shaw, 1979; Hans-Bernd and Hans, 1992; Lars and Jian-Hua, 1996; Shanto and Adam, 1997; Kepplinger, Donsbach, Brosius and Staab, 2009; Kioussis, 2010). The principal outlines of this influence were sketched by Walter Lippmann in his 1922 classic, *Public Opinion*, which began with a chapter titled “*The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads.*” He opined that the news media are a primary source of those pictures in our heads about the larger world of public affairs, a world that for most citizens is “*out of reach, out of sight, out of mind*” (Lippmann, 1922; 11). Based on assertions by Lippmann, what we know about the world is largely based on what the media decide to tell us suggesting that the elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent in the public mind.

In the current information age, the media agenda is to enable people to acquire factual information about public affairs, readers and viewers also learn how much importance to attach to a topic on the basis of the emphasis placed on it in the news (Becker, 1982; Brosius and Kepplinger, 1992; Scheufele, 2000; Brandenburg, 2004). The agenda of many news organizations are found in the pattern of coverage on public issues over some period of time, a week, a month, or even an entire year. Newspapers provide a host of cues about the salience of the topics in the daily news – lead story on page one, other front page displays, large headlines, etc. Television news also offers numerous cues about salience – the opening story on the newscast, length of time devoted to the story, etc. (Scheufele, 2000). These cues repeated day after day effectively communicate the importance of each topic. In other words, the mass media can set the agenda for the public’s attention to that small group of issues around which public opinion revolve.

In regard to the agenda setting role, it is observable that the media today from the local, national and global context plays a key role, either positive or negative in key areas that affect humanity such as: politics, conflict management, policy making and in some instance humanitarian response in conflict situations (Meyrowitz 1985; Kull, 1998; Westphal, 2004). Therefore the media may have a critical influence on whether the situation can be destructive or constructive in any given situation. In this regard, the evolution of media affects the social behavior of the audience and therefore becomes a tool in influencing the direction that issues can take.

The major sponsors and contributors of the African media invariably had no journalistic experience and some of them later became the pioneer post-independence leaders. They were all folded up upon Kenya becoming an independent state. The ownership of the mainstream Kenyan press has been largely private and foreign, with the government only owning a minority of radio and television segments and laying no claim to ownership of any print or online newspaper. *Daily Nation*, *Taiifa Leo* are published on week days, while *Sunday Nation* and *Taiifa Jumapili* published on Sundays, are owned by the Nation Media Group. The Saturday and Sunday editions contain pull outs that include children magazines, whereas the week day editions carry special sections on various issues that touch on different aspects of the nation’s economy, politics, human interest, entertainment, education and other social issues. Virtually every Kenyan can access at least one form of the readily available media.

Vernacular mass media intervention in intra-ethnic conflicts

The use of local or vernacular languages in the provision of information, knowledge and skills has gained popularity in the quest to empower communities through mass media. Marcogliese (2015) reported that the growth of vernacular mass media reflects both the improvements in information technologies and what is referred to as “cultural industries” among indigenous population and the shifting of development paradigm towards a more participatory style of information and knowledge transfer to the rural communities. Furthermore, Rennie (2006) identified vernacular mass media as an avenue for participatory as well as grassroot communication and as a relevant tool in both economic and social development in communities whose members are not “literate enough” to understand the information broadcasted by the national or international languages.

Among the vernacular mass media, radio broadcasting is the most important compared to TV and newspaper. It is the most popular and accessible medium of information with 95% of all Kenyans listening regularly to the various radio broadcasts (Howard, 2009). Synovate survey shows that nearly all Kenyans aged over 15 listen to the radio at least once every four weeks (Synovate Surveys, 2015). By June 2013 there were 105 licensed FM radio stations on air a majority of them broadcasting from the capital city, Nairobi. As has been noted elsewhere in the thesis, most of them are privately owned commercial stations that are subsidiaries of large media enterprises. The state owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation runs six stations while only nine stations are classified as being community stations that broadcast to smaller populations within a given locality. The FM mode remains the prevalent method of tuning into radio broadcasts. The AM, Shortwave and mobile phone listening methods are also used on a consistent basis. Internet and satellite radio are upcoming as well, though not very strongly and widely used (Bowen, 2010).

Community based or ethnic oriented mass media services offer communication beyond commercial and public service and thus serve “remote” geographic communities and communities’ interests. The content of broadcasting is largely popular and relevant to a local and/or specific audience but which may often be overlooked by commercial or mass-media broadcasters (Adorno and Horkheimer, 201). Vernacular based mass media serve their listeners by offering a wider variety of content that is not necessarily provided by the larger commercial mass media whose consideration of profit and audience spread form the key considerations. In exploring the importance of sharing information locally and the opening up of wider information networks, DeGrauwe (2002) found that rural or vernacular mass media is effective in improving the sharing of vital information by remote rural communities. Mass media in this regard provides a set of participatory communication techniques that support agricultural extension efforts by using local languages to communicate directly with farmers and listeners’ groups, among other social topical issues of importance to that specific community.

The use of mass broadcast media in Kenya started with the opening up of the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) radio and TV channels in Nairobi that would broadcast to the entire nation (Abuoga and Mutere, 1988; Okoth, 2015). The programs were aired in English, Kiswahili, Hindu and eleven other local ethnic languages. By 1964, KBC had established three national broadcasting services and two regional stations in Mombasa and Kisumu. It was until 1953 when the first broadcasting service was created for Africans and appropriately named African Broadcasting Services (ABC). It carried programmes in the languages of Kiswahili, Dholuo, Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Kiluhya, Kikamba and Arabic (Gathigi, 2009). It is worth taking empirical notice, that the Kuria language was not among those that found their way into the airwaves during this period. Following the liberalization of the airwaves in Kenya from the year 2003, major media houses started radio stations, with a view to target specific demographic, musical or ethnic genres. The Voice of Kenya, the only mass media broadcaster in the country by then went on to establish 19 radio stations feeding transmitters that were located in different parts of the country. The state agency offered three domestic services; the National Service in Kiswahili, the General Service in English and Vernacular Service in 14 local languages (Orao, 2009). The Vernacular services offered 184 hours every week for each language. Among the local languages which have been slotted by the national broadcaster KBC, Kikuria only has a two hour airtime which is restricted from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The broadcasts are also only allowed from Monday to Friday, excluding weekends when it would be argued that majority of the listeners are home and are therefore more predisposed to tune in to their radios. It is also noted that those hours allocated to Kikuria broadcasts too, are not prime resulting invariably into very low listenership.

The vernacular mass media broadcasting landscape in Kenya has changed over the last decade under the management of the Communication Authority of Kenya (CAK) which licenses stations that broadcast in vernacular languages. *Kameme FM* that broadcasts in the Kikuyu Language was the first pure vernacular station to be set up in the year 2000, which eventually led to a proliferation of a number of commercial, state-run and community based vernacular stations. Vernacular radio stations in particular have exploded with the latest data showing that they have increased tenfold over the last decade from 10 in the year 1999 to over 120 in the year 2015 (Synovate Survey in 2015). In total, active FM radio stations in Kenya are more than 100. Some of the stations which are on air today include: Kass FM and Changei FM (Kalenjin), Coro, Kameme and Inooro FM (Gikuyu), Ramogi FM, Radio Lake Victoria, Lolwe FM, Radio Mayienga (Luo), Mulembe FM, Sulwe FM (Luhya), Musyi FM (Kamba), Egesa FM (Gusii), among others. None of the stations broadcast in the Abakuria Language.

Vernacular broadcasting is instrumental in helping developing countries such as Kenya combat economic, political, educational, health and social-cultural challenges. Ethnic tensions, human rights abuses, and corruption in government can be addressed through vernacular radio programs. Low literacy levels in rural areas, health issues such infant mortality, maternal deaths and communicable diseases are best addressed by tailor-made radio programs that are broadcast in respective vernacular languages through the radio.

The media, whether traditional (e.g. radio, television and newspapers) or contemporary (21st century)

media (e.g. Internet and mobile telephony) can be a potent tool either for fomenting and escalating conflict or for ameliorating and resolving it. This notion is fortified with the example of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 where a private radio establishment, *Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines*, was used to rally one ethnic group to commit massacres and try to wipe out another group by calling for a "final war" to "exterminate the cockroaches" (BBC News, 2003). The use of the mass media to mitigate inter-ethnic tempers during the Kenyan post-election violence in the late 2007 and early 2008 is a well-documented example of media use for conflict de-escalation and resolution.

Technology has played a role in increasing access to this channel. Radio is now more available everywhere because apart from the conventional transistor radio set, one can listen to it through the mobile phone, cars, and computers. The cost of the individual radio handsets has also reduced greatly thereby enabling many people, both the rich and poor to have access to them.

Kenya's vibrant media has been accused of having been ill-prepared for the 2007-2008 post-election violence that rocked the country as a result of the disputed presidential results of the 2007 general election. The Kenyan media has been accused variously of failing to communicate the election results and the subsequent violence without partisan flavour. Various media houses especially vernacular radio stations stood accused of stirring tensions by taking sides and providing politicians with avenues to disseminate hate speech. A radio journalist with one of the vernacular radio stations in Kenya was accused by the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands of committing crimes against humanity using his radio programme session during the post-election violence by inciting one community against another community.

Critics have argued that the prevailing peace discourse at the time of the election was the fundamental reason why the media self-censored. The general feeling was that the 2007/2008 violence was to be avoided in 2013 at all cost. The barrage of peace messages from both government and civil society via the mass media urged Kenyans to maintain the peace and accept the results of the election whichever way they went. The media was keen to salvage its image after accepting culpability for the violence that took place in 2007-08 and was determined not to be blamed for another round of violence.

It is worth observing, however, that researchers and practitioners have tended to put more attention to the negative role of media in conflicts rather than its ameliorating effect. Etyan Giboa (2009) has observed that:

Despite the critical significance of the roles played by media in conflict and conflict resolution, this area has been relatively neglected by both scholars and practitioners. Most existing studies focus on the often negative contributions of the media to the escalation and violence phases of conflict. Very few studies deal with the actual or potential media contributions to conflict resolution and reconciliation. – (p.88)

A well-grounded approach to the exposition of the actual and potential benefits of media in conflict resolution and reconciliation lies in understanding of the broad concept of media effects. Many authors (e.g. Gauntlett, 1998; Perse, 2001; Newman and Guggenheim, 2011) have sounded caution, however, about the limitations (and to some futility) inherent in focusing on the media as prime movers or cause for effects. Perse (2001) has suggested that the reason why many studies on media effects have produced minimal evidence of such effect could be that "media effects might be obscured by methodological imprecision, theoretical forces, and many personal, social, and situational constraints" - p. 14. To Perse (op. cit.), "the probe for media effects demands continued efforts, refined theories and methods, and the integration of a wide range of intervening variables into research designs". It is therefore arguable that there is need for more investigation of media effects using refined approaches and based on sound theory to establish the actual connection between media and its effects on society rather than (like the proverbial desert ostrich) hide away from the problem and assume that media effects don't exist in any significant way. This is the motivation behind this study – to establish in a contextually suited way, the enablers and inhibitors of the media in resolving a long-lasting intra-ethnic conflict among the Abakuria people of South Western Kenya.

Majority of Kenya's rural population depends on the radio as the most readily available source of important information and news. The information and broadcasting industry has exponentially developed and has a great potential to provide rural population with much benefits that include access to information and educational material available in different languages and forms. Vernacular broadcasting has added opportunities to rural populations due to their proficiency in their first language more than they are in Kiswahili and English that are largely used in major radio stations. The model targets rural audiences who are mostly concentrated in particular regions and speak a given vernacular language. This makes rural areas to be the focal points for vernacular broadcasting making the radio broadcasts regional, ethnic and not national.

Rural audiences are not regarded much by traditional media economic models to be sold to advertisers due to low purchasing power and prevalence of poverty. Therefore the penetration in terms of uptake of television and traditional media is still low and slow in rural areas as compared to urban areas. Therefore the role played by vernacular broadcasting to influence development in these rural areas cannot be overstated. It addresses a large section of rural population due to its proximity of language used and the material being

broadcast. The centrality of rural population for government policy formulation, activities of non-governmental organizations that are concerned with improving the living conditions and standards of the underprivileged communities can be enhanced by the use of vernacular broadcasting.

Curiously, the real scale and magnitude of the Abakuria conflict does not get prominent coverage in the mainstream national media. What is normally reported is just some little mentions about cattle theft among the Abakuria and hardly any magnitude or impact of the so called cattle theft. It is therefore not clear how the mass media have assisted in the resolution of intra-ethnic conflicts and the potential shortfall of the vernacular mass media in the management the conflicts.

Statement of the Problem

Every ethnic community in Kenya often undergoes internal disagreements that may escalate to some level of active conflict. However, in some cases and among some of the ethnic groups, the conflict escalates beyond just disagreement and flares up into full blown violence. One of the communities where such has been reported is among the Abakuria ethnic group. This problem of intra-ethnic differences has been determined to originate from clan factions and therefore several consultation meetings, initiatives and camps have been held with the view to fact find and bring lasting peace and harmony among the Abakuria clans as has been noted elsewhere in the thesis. These initiatives have brought in governmental as well as non-governmental players such as churches, politicians, NGOs and many others. Several roadmaps have also been tabled and resolutions made in regard to peace building, creation of harmony and conflict transformation. The efficiency of these efforts have been variable as they have acted largely as a stop gap and situational efforts that need to be continuously buttressed by more sustained and broad-based approaches to ensure lasting peace among members of this community under study. The efforts have mainly been geared towards fostering coexistence and harmony. The Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHRC), The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), among others have facilitated several consultative meetings which have brought together the local administrators, civic leaders, religious leaders, and political leaders as well.

Objectives of the Study

This study stems from the desire to investigate and prescribe a contextually suitable application of the media as a “ready to go” solution in the resolution of the Abakuria intra-ethnic conflict.

- i). Identify the shortfalls in the use of existing broadcast media platform for resolving ethnic conflict among the Abakuria community
- ii). Assess the suitability of vernacular broadcast media in the resolution of intra-ethnic conflict among the Abakuria.

Research Methodology

The study used a mixture of survey and qualitative methods of research design. The choice of these methods was influenced by the perceived varying degrees of opinions, views and perception of divergent respondents sampled. Creswell (2009) argues that qualitative research design is suitable in natural settings. Since the study mostly focused on respondents’ perceptions of media and conflict management issues, qualitative approach gave more room for interpretation and understanding. Strauss and Corbin (1999) have further shown that those who use qualitative research obtain satisfactory results and appropriate answers to the central research questions being investigated. Therefore, this design was chosen because of its usefulness in obtaining an overall picture of the study.

Results and Discussion

Shortfalls in the use of existing broadcast media for resolving the ethnic conflict among the Abakuria

The first objective of the study was to determine the shortfalls in the use of existing mass media for resolving the ethnic conflict among the Abakuria ethnic. This was formulated in the form of a research question stating “*What are the shortfalls in the use of existing broadcast media and how does it affect conflict resolution among the Abakuria intra-ethnic group?*”

First the researcher inquired whether the respondents perceived the existing mass media to provide accurate information on conflict communication among the Abakuria community. About 95% of the victims of previous episodes of violence, 98% of the local community members and 80% of the members of the media practitioners indicated that the existing mass media are not up to the task of providing accurate information on conflict resolution within the community. Asked to expound on the shortcoming of the media to provide accurate information, the responses are as shown in Table 4.15. The main reason why accurate reporting of the conflict among the Abakuria was found wanting by the local community members was because the existing media focused more of their attention on other issues to the detriment of the local content, which was attested by majority of the victims of the violence, local community members and the media practitioners. The other reason

that elicited more positive response from the respondents were biasness in media coverage by the local community members and lack of local contents in the media content of the existing mass media channels that the local community members have access to.

Vernacular mass media intervention in intra-ethnic conflict resolution among the Abakuria

The second objective of the study was to assess the suitability of vernacular mass media in the resolution of intra-ethnic conflict among the Abakuria ethnic group. This was formulated in the form of a research question stating “*How suitable is the vernacular mass media in the resolution of intra-ethnic conflict among the Abakuria ethnic group?*”

The respondents who are mainly the local community members and the victims were asked if they know about the existence of vernacular mass media in Kenya. The results indicate that 100% had knowledge of the existence of vernacular mass media. Asked whether the vernacular mass media was necessary for the community the response are as shown in Figure 4.16. Most of the respondents believed that vernacular broadcast media intervention is now more important than ever before as a tool for intra-ethnic conflict resolution and also serves as a community platform for engaging in dialogue with each other.

Conclusion

Most contemporary intra-ethnic conflicts occur at the local level, and this pattern is likely to persist in decades to come. The great majority of conflicts are likely to persist in the near future. The sources of contemporary conflicts include strong cultural and socio-economic elements, and, therefore, it is difficult to resolve them. This work argues that evolutions in vernacular or locally owned communication methodology can significantly alter the media's role in conflict resolution. Regional mass media and news networks allow new actors, primarily the local community members and individuals, to actively participate in conflict resolution. New technology has brought a lot of challenges to states, but at the same time it has provided the states with new mass media approaches and formations that can reach many local community members to enable them accomplish their goals. The media's role is especially enhanced by the radio, TV, cell phones, and the other online social networks, even though the current study did not find more evidence for involvement of the latter in communication. These results are of interest to the local level, where the expected results are perceptual and the main strategy is using violence to maximize sympathetic and supportive media coverage. This study also concludes that despite the critical, growing importance of the vernacular mass media to conflict resolution and mediation, scholars and practitioners have not yet adequately addressed the effective role of the mass media in these areas. Particularly lacking is extensive research on the roles and effects of vernacular mass media in helping to resolve issues around intra ethnic conflict situations. The main reasons for the weaknesses are difficulties and deficiencies inherent in multidisciplinary research and the lack of suitable tools for analysis. This work attempts to fill the gap with a new framework for analysis based on an innovative integration of theories and models from several scholarly fields. Multidisciplinary research is the only effective way to understand the actual and potential positive and negative contributions of the media to conflict resolution and reconciliation. Looked at this way, it becomes apparent that the media can both help and hinder conflict resolution, and it is important to uncover the conditions determining the outcome. If these conditions are exposed, it would be easier to maximize the media's positive contributions and minimize negative contributions. The peace journalism approach has adopted a highly simplistic and probably unrealistic approach to the media's effects. Systematic application of the framework proposed in this thesis to case studies at different levels may promote the badly needed knowledge and understanding of the various ways in which the media influence the beginning, evolution, and termination of existing and future international conflicts.

The proposed framework is very comprehensive and requires prioritizing of research projects. Immediate attention should be given to the highly neglected areas. Thus, the first priority should be to investigate functions and dysfunctions of the local media because they directly affect people engaged in conflict and conflict resolution. The next priority should be to focus on the reconciliation phase. This stage is crucial because successful reconciliation is the best guarantee against the resurrection and reemergence of conflict and violence. The third priority should be to focus on the roles and functions of the new media. This effort is especially challenging because of the constant and rapid developments in communication technology. Research in this field must resemble research in computer science. It has to be fast, dynamic, and highly sensitive lest published research results become obsolete.

Contribution to knowledge

This study has made the following contributions to knowledge:

1. That there is a strong correlation between escalation and de-escalation of intra-ethnic conflict by the nature of mass media reportage, coverage and messaging.
2. That bearing the enormous power and influence of the mass media, particularly broadcast media, if these

attributes were harnessed and employed positively, they can certainly act as good facilitators for the conflict resolution process in Kuria land. Therefore, in times of active violent conflict, the media inevitably have an additional social responsibility regarding what to report, what not to report, when to report it and how to report it. 3. The study has equally brought out the fact that issues of protracted incidences of intra-ethnic conflicts have a very wide area of research in Kenya, Africa and other third world countries indeed. While much has been written on their causes or origins and the way forward, no serious attention is given to the study of the effects of media reportage and coverage of intra-ethnic conflicts and the implications for resolutions of such intra-ethnic conflicts.

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