A Comparative Content Analysis of the Daily Nation and the Standard Newspapers' Coverage of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya

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Abstract

On March 11, 2020, WHO declared Covid-19 a pandemic. By April 2020, Covid-19 had spread worldwide interrupting lives almost entirely, straining healthcare systems, and causing many human deaths. To control the spread of Covid-19 the mainstream mass media played a historic role of information sharing and sensitization. This research is a comparative content analysis of the coverage of Covid-19 by *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* newspapers in Kenya. The main objectives of the study were to examine how both newspapers covered the Covid-9 outbreak and to examine the kind of frames the two newspapers used to set their agenda. Both Framing and Agenda-setting theories were used. Via content analysis method, 180 newspapers editions published between March 13 ,2020 and June 10, 2020 were analyzed. The study found that the coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic in both newspapers was loaded with neutral frames (42.8%) mainly around adherence to public health measures as directed by the government. Another finding was that 1 in 10 stories about Covid-19 in *Daily Nation* and the *Standard newspapers* were published on pages 1,2 and 3 meaning that the Covid-19 pandemic was a major theme for mass media agenda. The study concludes that the two newspapers played a significant role in controlling the spread of Covid-19 through agenda-setting and framing of stories. It is recommended that the use of positive frames should be encouraged in the practice of communication by the mass media.

Key words: Comparative media study, Covid-19, Agenda setting, Media framing

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1. Introduction

The Kenyan state has strived to overcome development obstacles and improve its citizens' socioeconomic status, including health. The Ministry of Health therefore aspires to achieve quality health standards and reduce ill-health among citizen by shrinking deaths caused by infectious diseases (the Ministry of Health (2014). Consequently, the Kenya government has ranked diseases and epidemics among a list of disasters that disrupt Kenyans' livelihood, divert planned use of resources, interrupt economic activities, and retard development.

On March 11, 2020, WHO (2020) declared Covid-19 a pandemic. A pandemic is an infectious epidemic that spreads through the human population, affecting many people, a sizeable proportion of a state, an entire nation, a continent, or a part of the whole globe. The Spanish flu outbreak of 1918 was the most severe with an estimated 40-50 million deaths worldwide (Tognotti, 2009). As of April 10, 2020, 126 countries had introduced or adapted social protection measures against Covid-19. One hundred eighty-eight countries had also imposed countrywide closures, affecting more than 1.5 billion people. UNICEF observed that in contrast to previous disease outbreaks, school closures had been imposed pre-emptively in 27 countries. At least 58 countries and territories postponed or rescheduled exams, while 11 countries canceled exams altogether (UNICEF, 2020). Clearly, Covid-19 has had a vast social and economic impact globally. According to IMF (2020), emerging markets and developing economies would be the most affected, given their weaker health systems, more constrained macroeconomic policy space, often less-diversified economies, and in some cases, the high risk of debt distress. For instance,

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Kenya recorded a drop in revenue collection due to the closure of hotels and the global aviation sector, a decline in import value, reduced forex earnings on account of reduced exports, and job losses. Kenya also reduced budgetary allocation toward its four-year economic plan called the Big 4 Agenda (*universal healthcare, manufacturing, affordable housing, and food and nutrition security*) in the 2020/2021 national budget to US$1.28 billion from US$4.3 billion the previous year.

During the Covid-19 outbreak, the Government of Kenya imposed strict containment measures to respond to the pandemic, including closure of borders and schools, and a ban on international travel and social gatherings to control the spread of the virus (Barasa, Kazungu, and Orangi et al., 2021). The intervention was necessary because Covid-19 had become a huge burden for countries with infections rising from less than one million cases in February 2020 to more than 28 million and 900,000 deaths by September 2020 globally. Vasterman et al. (2005), Kasperson (1987) and Hooker (2010), assert that hyping coverage of pandemics creates the impression that:' there is a severe risk that needs attention' and 'puts pressure on the government and public health institutions' to address the situation (see figure 1.)

Figure 1 Vasterman & Ruigrok's Analysis Model of the A/H1N1Ppandemic in 2009
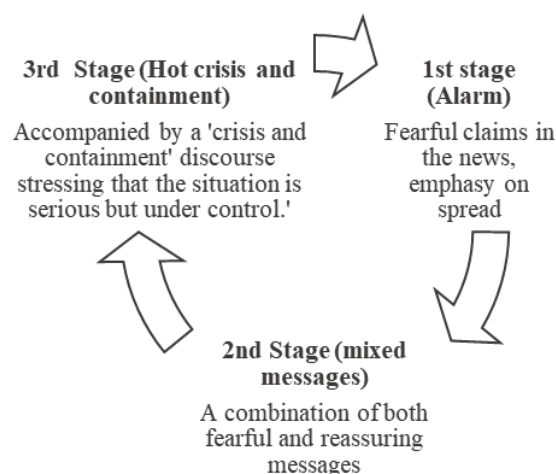
From figure 1, Vasterman & Ruigrok (2013) categorized mass media contents as alarming, reassuring, or neutral. Alarmist messages increase media devotion to cover the pandemic and pushes governments to action.

To manage the Covid-19 pandemic, the Kenyan government issued containment measures, advising the public to maintain high hygiene levels, observe social distancing in public places, and eventually ordered the closure of entertainment spots and restaurants and suspension of public gatherings. In late April 2020, the government announced a cessation of movement in and out of Nairobi and three other counties, mandatory use of facial masks, and social distancing in public places and when using public transport (Aluga, 2020). As of April 10, 2020, UNICEF (2020) reported that one hundred eighty-eight countries had also imposed countrywide closures, affecting more than 1.5 billion children and youth.

The Government of Kenya's National Disaster Management Agency (NADIMA) recognize media's role in information sharing, sensitization, advocacy, public education, and awareness creation efforts in disaster management (GoK, 2009). Consequently, the Kenya local media were expected to report Covid-19 matters, sharing information on new cases, latest health guidelines, sensitize the public on the dangers, updates on decisions and government measures, and persuade the public to help control the pandemic (Usman, 2020). In line with Lin et al. (2014) it was argued that heightened media awareness of prevention can control the spread of Covid-19 pandemic.

1.2 The Problem

Diseases and pandemics undermine Kenya's aspiration to become a middle-income economy and are among a list of disasters that disrupt Kenyans' livelihood, divert planned use of resources, interrupt economic activities, and retard development (MOH, 2014; GOK, 2009). Usman (2020) observes that the role of media in reporting Covid-19 was largely to share information on new cases, latest health guidelines, sensitize on the dangers of the pandemic, updates on decisions and government measures, and persuade the public to help control it.

Inferentially, mass media is a primary source of risk information and plays an essential role in setting agendas and determining outcomes on matters that concerns the public. The paper examined how Kenyan mainstream print media (The Standard and the Daily Nation) covered the Covid-19 pandemic during the first three months after the pandemic was declared in Kenya and analyses the kind of frames they used as well as the kinds of agenda they set in their coverage of Covid-19 pandemic.

1.3 Study objectives

The study's main objective was to examine how *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* newspapers covered the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya. Its specific objectives were:

1. To find out how much space *Daily Nation and the Standard* newspapers allocated to Covid-19 stories during the outbreak.

2. To compare and contrast the Covid-19 pandemic coverage in the *Daily Nation and Standard newspapers* in Kenya.

3. To examine how *Daily Nation and the Standard* newspapers framed Covid-19 stories during the outbreak.

4. To investigate the sources of Covid-19 stories in *Daily Nation and the Standard* newspapers during the outbreak of the pandemic in Kenya.

1.4 The research method

The research analyzed coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic using comparative content analysis. The study population included copies of all *Daily Nation and the Standard Newspapers*, published between March 13 to June 10, the first three months of the Covid-19 outbreak in Kenya. There were 180 newspaper issues -90 *Daily Nation* newspapers and 90 editions of the Standard. The key variables included issues like: Placement, which analyzed where the article was placed in terms of; the page numbers and location of article (front page, editorial page, middle pages and Back-page); space allocated for the story; type of story: nature of the article such as opinion, hard or soft news, size of articles, length of article, tone: Story direction, Theme: What the story is about and the Sources of the story.

The study was hinged on Agenda setting and framing theories. Indeed, McCombs, Shaw and Weaver (2014) and WU K (2021) note that media prompts audiences on importance of news through the size of the headings and the positioning of the news report in their publications. For instance, any coverage appearing on the first page of a newspaper is rated as very important parallel to news stories published on page five onwards. Framing is a communication process that give meaning to an event or issue and provides meaning to a story (De Vreese, 2005); Gitlin, 1980; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989. Framing also influences people's choices of how to process information. Frames can be designed to enhance understanding or are used as cognitive shortcuts to link stories to the bigger picture. Indeed, De Vreese (2005) opines that frames are specific textual and visual elements and can include issues such as: headlines, subheads, photos, photo captions, leads, source selection, quotes selection, pull quotes, logos, statistics, and charts, and concluding statements and paragraphs (See figure 2)

Figure 2 Frame-Building and Frame Setting
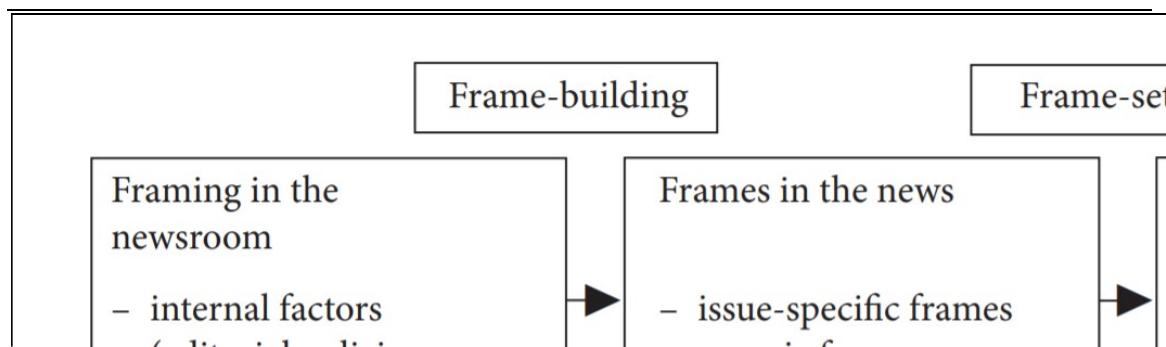
2. The Findings

2.1 Themes

All 180 publications had stories about Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the period of the study, stories on containment measures dominated news coverage in the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* newspapers with 512 articles, representing 41% of all articles published in the first three months of the pandemic. The published articles included stories about enforcement of curfew rules, social distancing, and wearing masks. This indicated that mass media sort to create awareness about the virus and how to control its spread.

Other themes were fear and panic (154 articles or 12.4%), spread and contact tracing (91 articles or 7.2%), and trade and economy (93 articles or 7.4%). Vaccine development and testing (43 articles), Covid-19 recovery and treatment (29 articles), economic stimulus package (29 articles), support to the needy (28 articles), sports (25) articles, and travel restrictions (20 articles). Minors themes were, limited Covid-19 resources and facilities in hospitals (19 articles), isolation (16 articles), new Covid-19 cases (15 articles), politics (15 articles), and quarantine (13 articles) probably because the pandemic was novel, and Kenya was still recording low infection rates.

Themes about death and culture (14 articles), health and wellbeing (12 articles), relief loans (12 articles), job cuts (11 articles), food security (8 articles), domestic violence (8 articles) also featured in coverage from both newspapers. E-commerce and technology had 9 articles as people used technology to adjust to the new normal. For example, working from home and online classes and court hearings. The dominate themes in the *Daily Nation* coverage were containment measures (52%), fear and panic (14%), contact tracing and spread of the virus (5.1%). In contrast, the *Standard* emphasized containment measures (27.3%), spread of the virus and contact tracing (9.9%), trade and economy (9.7%), fear and panic (8.5%). From this result, it can be inferred that, the two newspapers ensured the public was adequately sensitized about the pandemic (See table 2.1).

Table 2.1 The Coverage of Covid-19 **Pandemic Outbreak in the Standard Newspaper**

Theme	Standard N	%	Nation N	%	Total N	%
Containment measures	154	27.3	358	52	512	40.8
Quarantine	6	1.1	7	1	13	1.1
Isolation	12	2.1	4	0.6	16	1.3
Fear/Panic	54	9.6	100	14.6	154	12.4
New Covid-19 cases/Infection	5	0.9	10	1.5	15	1.2
Spread/Contact tracing	56	9.9	35	5.1	91	7.2
Impact of COVID on trade & economy	55	9.7	38	5.5	93	7.4
Resources for COVID facilities in hospitals	14	1.4	5	0.7	19	1.5
Covid-19 recovery/ Covid-19 treatment	8	1.4	21	3.1	29	2.3
Covid-19 vaccine development, testing and production, vaccination	20	3.5	23	3.3	43	3.4
Stimulus package for Covid-19	18	3.2	11	1.6	29	2.3
Relief loans	7	1.2	5	0.7	12	1
Support to the needy during COVID	15	2.7	13	1.9	28	2.2
Travel Restrictions	10	1.8	10	1.5	20	1.6
Health	12	2.1	0	0	12	1
Education	12	2.1	7	1	19	1.5
Job loss/unemployment/ pay cut	10	1.8	1	0.1	11	0.9
Domestic violence	3	0.5	2	0.3	5	0.4
Insecurity	8	1.4	0	0	8	0.6
Technology/E-commerce	5	0.9	4	0.6	9	0.7
Death/burial/Culture	9	1.6	5	0.7	14	1.2
Entertainment	10	1.8	2	0.3	12	1

| Sports | 20 | 3.5 | 5 | 0.7 | 25 | 2 |
Online learning/e-learning	6	1.1	5	0.7	11	0.9
Others	16	2.8	7	1	23	1.8
Politics	13	2.3	2	0.3	15	1.2
Food shortage, food security, agriculture	5	0.9	3	0.4	8	0.6
Information sharing	2	0.4	5	0.7	7	0.5
Total	565	100	688	100	1253	100

2.2 Story types

From Table 2.1, majority of the articles in both newspapers were hard news (14.3%), opinions (13.2%), commentary and analysis (11.3%), soft stories (10.1%), and international news (8%). Sports news (7.4%), business news (6%), letters to the editor (5.4%), and newspaper editorials (5%) were also common types of articles used to deliver news about the pandemic. A considerable number of articles throughout the study period in *Daily Nation newspaper* were classified as hard news 106 (15.4%), soft news or feature story 109 (15.8%) and opinion 102(14.8%). Opinion pieces on *Daily Nation* expressed views on support to medical teams, the need to keep the virus at bay, and rooted for mass testing as a measure to curb the spread of the virus. Compared to the *Standard Newspaper* which expressed called on leaders to communicate the right message, discussed the issue of national debt and government revenue loss, maternal health, and curfew hours during Ramadhan. Readers, too, penned letters with suggested measures including adopting cashless transactions. Domestic violence was also flagged. Similar to the *Daily Nation,* the dominant news type in the *Standard* were commentary & analysis (20%), hard news (13%), international news (12%), opinion (11%), and newspaper editorial (8.1%).

It also emerged that, both papers conveyed news of the pandemic in form of international news, newspaper editorial, and opinion in the first 35 editions (March 13 to April 16). Commentary & analysis articles and soft news were considerably high from 56-90 editions (May 6 to June 10) as new cases emerged and people started feeling the impact of the pandemic on their lives, work, and business. Cartoons on Covid-19 were minimal (see figure Table 2.2), and figure 2.1).

Table 2.2: Story type

	Standard		Nation		Total	
Story type	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hard news	73	12.9	106	15.4	179	14.3
Newspaper editorial	46	8.1	11	1.6	57	4.6
Commentary & Analysis	110	19.5	32	4.7	142	11.3
Opinion	62	11	102	14.8	164	13.2
Letters to the Editor	15	2.7	51	7.4	66	5.4
Soft news/Feature news (emotional stories)	27	4.8	109	15.8	136	10.1
International News	65	11.5	55	8	120	9.7
Sport news	48	8.5	43	6.3	91	7.4
Business news	32	5.7	43	6.3	75	6
Cartoons	3	0.5	5	0.7	8	0.6
Advertisements	11	1.9	15	2.2	26	2.1
Classified	4	0.7	12	1.7	16	1.3
County News	19	3.4	43	6.3	62	5
Supplement/Pullout magazines	31	5.5	43	6.3	74	5.9
Photos/Images/Illustration	19	3.4	17	2.5	36	3
Other news	0	0	1	0.1	1	0.1
Total	565	100	688	100	1253	100

Figure 2.1Story types
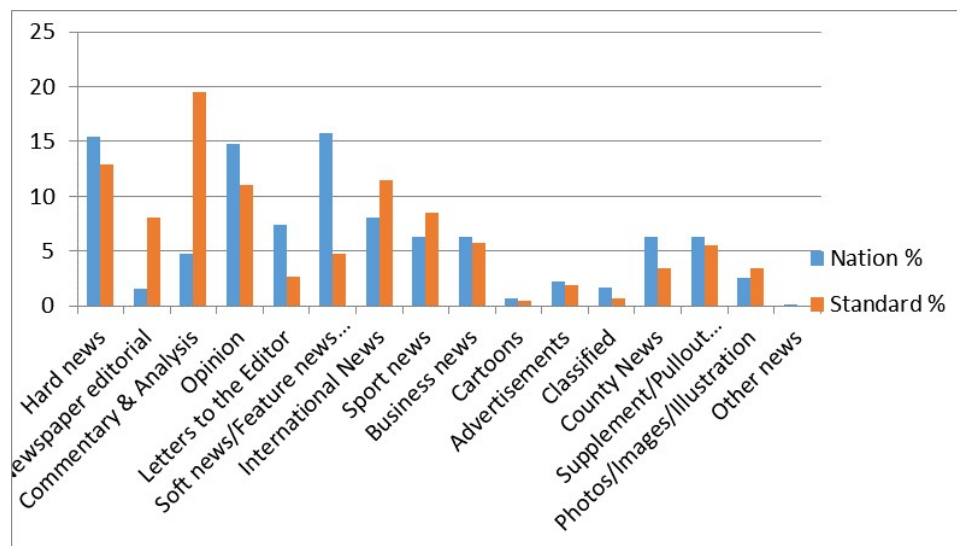
2.3 Article size

The study examined size of stories in cm^2. Generally, newspapers in Kenya are printed on A3-sized papers with a print space of 891 centimeters square (cm^2) per page. For the entire study period a combined space of 446, 160 cm^2 translating to 500 newspaper pages were published. This meant that, during the three months study period, the Covid-19 contents was large enough to take the entire newspaper space for 11days (The Standard and Nation newspapers in Kenya have an average of 45 pages per edition). If both newspapers were to charge for space, stories about COVID would have generated KShs.194, 404 million of advertising revenue. Full-page black and white advertisement cost about KShs.400, 000 inclusive of 16% value-added tax in Kenya. Clearly, the Covid -19 phenomenon was big news for the two newspapers. When clustered to sizes, the *Daily Nation* had 108 stories in the 1=200cm^2 cluster, and 42 stories with a space of above 1,201 cm^2. Seventy-seven articles measured between 801 cm^2 and 1,200 cm^2. This are full page and center spread articles. The *Standard* recorded 110 stories with space of 1-200 cm^2 and 26 articles with above 1,201 cm^2 and had the highest number of full page and center spread articles compared to Daily Nation: 87, occupying space of between 801 cm^2 and 1,200 cm^2 see table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Size (cm^2)

	1-200	201-400	401-600	601-800	801-1000	1001-1200	1201-1400	1401-1600	1601-1800	1800-2000	Above 2000
Daily Nation	108	231	178	48	79	2	1	1	13	10	17
Standard	110	132	150	60	84	3	2	4	14	0	6
Total	**218**	**363**	**328**	**108**	**163**	**5**	**3**	**5**	**27**	**10**	**23**

2.4 Story placement

Article placement reveals prominence given to Covid-19 stories by the *Daily Nation* and *the Standard*. Both newspapers placed a total of 580 (46.4%) Covid-19 stories on the early pages – 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. The early pages are important pages for the two outlets and are used to sell the newspaper and set the agenda. Mainstream media allocate critical news to prime pages for prominence. Majority of the news items were commentary and analysis (13.3%) and opinion pieces (10%) in the middle pages. There were 65 (5.2%) front page articles, 59 (5%), letters to the editor, 67 (5.1%), editorials, and 63 (5%) back page stories. Other Covid-19 stories were published on second page 43 (3.4%), page three 44 (3.5%), and as illustration (0.2%).

The *Daily Nation* placed 54% of the stories on middle pages, 15% on opinion page, 3.9% on page three, 3.8% on page two, and 5% on the front page as the cover story. Back page took 2.3% of the stories while images took

3.8% of space alongside stories. The *Standard* gave prominence to 32 articles on the front page (5.5%), 47 in the back page (8.3%), 17 on page two (3%) and 17 (3%) on page three. Similar to *Daily Nation,* majority of Covid-19 stories in the *Standard* were placed on middles pages (37.1%). Commentary and analysis, opinions, and letters to the editors were published in the early and middle pages (pages 13-18). The findings indicate that the two newspapers considered Covid-19 stories relevant, significant, and important. They published 65 front page articles about the pandemic, translating to 5.2% of the total coverage. Clearly, from this finding, the two newspapers considerable attention and awareness about Covid-19 phenomena (see Table 2.4.).

Table 2.4 Story placement

Publica tion		F/Pg Lead	Pg 2 Lead	Pg 3	Back Pg.	Edito rial	Com mentary &Ana lysis	Opinion	Letters	Middle Pgs.	Image	Fillers
Daily Nation	No	34	26	27	16	14	26	102	45	370	26	2
	%	5	3.8	3.9	2.3	2	3.8	14.8	6.5	53.8	3.8	0.3
Standard	No	31	17	17	47	53	93	64	14	210	19	0
	%	5.5	3.0	3.0	8.3	9.4	16.5	11.3	2.5	37.1	3.4	0
Total	**No**	**65**	**43**	**44**	**63**	**67**	**119**	**166**	**59**	**580**	**45**	**2**
	%	**5.2**	**3.4**	**3.5**	**5**	**5.1**	**9.6**	**13.3**	**4.7**	**46.4**	**3.6**	**0.2**

2.5 Sources

The findings indicate stories about Covid-19 on both *Standard* and *Daily Nation* newspapers originated from journalists and the media houses, representing more than half of the pandemic articles in the period under study. *Daily Nation* journalists originated 42.8% stories about Covid-19 compared to 41.2% by journalists from the *Standard* newspaper. *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* also generated 20.7% and 21.2% of the pandemic stories respectively. The two newspapers had similar methods of news sourcing

News columnists initiated 45 (6.6%) articles in the *Daily Nation* and 14 (2.5%) in the *Standard.* In contrast, international media agency: Reuters, Xinhua, BBC, AP, and AFP were sources of 100 (18%) stories in the *Standard* and 59 (8.6%) in the *Daily Nation.* Given international media had already covered the pandemic for three months, before the first outbreak in Kenya, stories from their news agencies provided depth and scope to Covid-19 issues. It also helped guide local media about emerging issues and to some extent it set the local news agenda.

In both newspapers, a sizeable number of articles were from experts–media and communication experts, government, politicians, medical practitioners, international organizations, and lawyers, which were between one and four percent in both newspapers. Chief executive officers, chairs and managing directors from private companies and parastatals were sources of 4.3% of stories about the pandemic in both papers accounting for the highest number of articles from experts. They were followed by academicians who originated the 33 articles (5.7%).

Majority of the articles from academician was published on *Daily Nation.* These stories originated from lecturers (1.2%), universities (0.6%), professors (1.2%), and university students including PhD students (0.7%). Likewise, lecturers were sources of 0.7% of the pandemic stories in the *Standard* newspaper while professors, the universities, and university students originated 0.4%, 0.2%, and 1% of the stories respectively.

Politicians, parliamentarians, and governors were sources of only 1.1%, 0.5%, and 1.3% of Covid-19 stories respectively in both newspapers. Although majority of them preferred to pen for the *Daily Nation* as opposed to

the *Standard.* Only 0.8% of the stories came from clergy while articles sourced from WHO was 1%. This is regrettable as the public would have liked to hear more from medical experts and politicians.

The Ministry of Health stood out as it originated 3.5% of the articles during the study period- Minister of health (2.6%), chief administrative secretary (0.9%). Medics were sources of 2.4% of stories – 1.5% in the *Daily Nation* and in the *Standard.* Articles from readers were also noticeable. They originated 4.2% of the stories in the *Daily Nation* and 1.8% of those published by the *Standard.*

These findings indicated that most of the articles were produced in-house by journalists and editors in mainstream media, with few expert voices. Thus, media failed to share adequate knowledge and fact about the pandemic from experts despite dealing with a global pandemic that had a massive impact on the economy and lives and required assurance from all quotas. The government however was also the main source of information about the pandemic. Table 2.5 shows the findings of study.

Table 2.5 Sources of Covid-19 stories

Institution	Official	Frequency (%)	
		Nation	Standard
Presidency	President/statehouse	1(0.1%)	4(0.4%)
	government spokesperson	2(0.2%)	4(0.4%)
Government	Parliament	2(0.3%)	1(0.2%)
	Politician	5(0.9%)	1(0.2%)
	Governor	4(0.6%)	4(0.6%)
Ministry of Health	Minister	7(1%)	10(1.6%)
	CAS	0	5(0.9%)
	Medic	10(1.5%)	5(0.9%)
The Cabinet	Ministry of interior security	0	1(0.2%)
	Ministry of Sports	1(0.1%)	1(0.2%)
	Registrar of political parties	0	1(0.2%)
International Organization	WHO	4(0.6%)	2(0.4%)
	UN	2(0.3%)	1(0.2%)
	FAO	1(0.1%)	1(0.2%)
	US Embassy	1(0.1%)	1(0.2%)
	EU	0	2(0.4%)
Mass Media	Media house	145(21.2%)	115(20.7%)
	Journalist	293(42.8%)	229(41.2%)
	Newspaper Columnist	45(6.6%)	14(2.5%)
	International media agency	59(8.6%)	100(18%)
Corporations	NGO	1(1.3%)	2(0.4%)
	Partnerships	5(0.7%)	2(0.4%)
	Government Agency	2(0.3%)	1(0.2%)
	KNA	0	3(0.5%)
	Clergy	2(0.3%)	3(0.5%)
	KQ	1(0.1%)	2(0.4%)
Education	MoE	0	2(0.4%)
	KUPPET	1(0.1%)	3(0.5%)
	KNUT	0	1(0.2%)
	University	4(0.6%)	1(0.2%)
	Professor	8(1.2%)	2(0.4%)
	Student	5(0.7%)	1(0.2%)
	Lecturer	8(1.2%)	4(0.7%)
Public	Reader	29(4.2%)	10(1.8%)

	Economist/researcher	1(0.1%)	2(0.4%)
	Other (s)	8(1.2%)	2(0.4%)
Judiciary	Lawyer/Advocate	2(0.3%)	1(0.2%)
Experts	Data technology	3(0.4%)	1(0.2%)
	HR	0	2(0.4%)
	CEO/MD	18(2.6%)	10(1.7%)

2.6 Framing and articles direction

All articles in the 180 newspaper editions were analyze for tone to determine the story direction. The study categorized directionality in three parts: positive frame, neutral frame, and negative frame. This helped to determine the general mood of coverage of pandemic stories in the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard.* In general, neutral frames, especially in hard news, feature stories, opinion and commentary, and international news were dominant.

In general, *Daily Nation* newspaper had 44.2% negative frames (mostly commentary, letters to the editors and features), 37.8% neutral frames, and 18% positive frames. On the contrary, the *Standard* newspaper were neutral frames (48.7%) with 18.6% of the news reports having a positive frame, and 32.7% negative frame. Articles with neutral loaded frames in the *Daily Nation* were general news (24.2%), features (22.4%), county news (7.3%), international news (9.6%), and opinion (7.7%). In contrast, the *Standard* newspaper had 14.9% (international news), 17.5% (hard news), 9.1% (editorial), 30.4% (opinion and commentary), and business news (7.3%) neutral stories. Commentaries and opinion in the *Standard* had the highest number of neutrality (30.4%) compared to *Daily Nation* (11.5%).

The negativity was related to the impact of the pandemic on the economy, caseloads, infections, and job losses brought about by the virus. It also included adverse effects of lockdown and curfew, among other mitigation measures. Positivity focused on frontline workers, testing, closure of schools and churches to contain the spread of the virus, e-commerce and e-learning, use of cashless transactions, and the economic stimulus package. Neutral frames implied measures by the Ministry of Health in curbing the spread of the pandemic, such as social distancing, quarantine, isolation, wearing masks and sanitizing, and other containment measures and pandemic threats or consequences.

The study findings indicate that *Daily Nation* coverage was alarmist in nature, focusing on the negative effects of the pandemic perhaps to encourage adherence to public health guidelines. The *Standard* on the other hand adopted a neutral tone (see table 2.6).

Table 2.6 Directionality by Story Type

	Positive (%)		Neutral (%)		Negative (%)	
	Daily Nation	**Standard**	**Daily Nation**	**Standard**	**Daily Nation**	**Standard**
Hard news (general news)	12(9.6%)	8(7.6%)	63(24.2%)	48(17.5%)	31(10.2%)	17(9.1%)
Editorial	0(0%)	6(5.8%)	5(1.9%)	25(9.1%)	6(1.9%)	15(8%)
Commentary	8(6.5%)	25(23.8%)	10(3.8%)	57(20.6%)	14(4.6%)	28(15%)
Opinion	30(24.3%)	18(17.1%)	20(7.7%)	27(9.8%)	52(17.1%)	17(9.1%)
Letters	12(9.7%)	4(3.8%)	17(6.5%)	3(1.1%)	22(7.3%)	8(4%)
Features	16(12.9)	5(4.8%)	58(22.4%)	10(3.6%)	35(11.5%)	12(6%)
International News	7(5.6%)	8(7.6%)	25(9.6%)	41(14.9%)	23(7.6%)	16(8.5%)
Sport news	4(3.2%)	8(7.6%)	18(6.9%)	28(10.2%)	21(6.9%)	12(6%)
Business news	7(5.6%)	5(4.8%)	16(6.2%)	20(7.3%)	20(6.6%)	7(3.8%)
Cartoons	1(0.8%)	1(0.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(1.3%)	2(1%)
Advertisements	5(4.0%)	1(0.9%)	0(0%)	1(0.4%)	10(3.3%)	9(7.6%)
Classified	1(0.8%)	0(0%)	1(0.4%)	2(0.7%)	10(3.3%)	2(1.1%)
County News	6(4.8%)	3(2.9%)	19(7.3%)	4(1.5%)	18(5.9%)	12(6%)

Supplement	10(8.2%)	8(7.6%)	7(2.7%)	6(2.2%)	26(8.6%)	17(9.1%)
Illustration	4(3.2%)	5(4.8%)	1(0.4%)	3(1.1%)	12(3.9%)	11(5.7%)
Other News	1(0.8%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

3. Conclusion and recommendations

From the foregoing discussions, the two newspapers used different approaches, including photographs, themes, metaphors, naming, and personification, to represent issues in ways audiences can easily relate with, in line with Höijer's, (2010) observations. Negative frames 42.8% were dominant frames in the Covid-19 coverage by the two newspapers. Perhaps a mechanism of forcing compliance with Covid-19 regulations and rules. Positive frames accounted for 18.3% of coverage for the two newspapers. The *Standard newspaper* maintained a positive coverage mainly through commentaries and analysis in which experts and the public shared messages of hope and assurance including the need to adopt e-learning and e-commerce to show the country was wining the fight. On the other hand, *Daily Nation's* coverage was loaded with negative frames (24%) compared to 14.8% in the *Standard.* The *Daily Nation* emphasized the impact of the pandemic in the economy, infection rates, job cuts, and implementation of containment measures like lockdown causing panic and fear. In summary, coverage by *Daily Nation* was alarmist in nature. This finding concurs with Ogbodo et al. (2020) research on media framing of Covid-19. The authors opine that audience's perception and interpretation of the Covid-19 stem from how the media frames it. The two newspapers did a superb job in reporting Covid-19 and educating the Kenyan Masses on what the disease was all about. For example, news reports during the first two months of the pandemic focused on infection cases, containment measures, and how people were adjusting to the new normal. News reports in the third month of the pandemic focused on recovery and treatment, contact tracing and the impact of the pandemic in various sectors of the economy for instance in education, transport, and arms of the government. The dominant theme in study was containment measures, trade and economy, contact tracing and spread of the virus, and Covid-19 treatment and vaccine development, with combined coverage of 71.2%. The two papers also played the watchdog role, highlighting police brutality and calling for support for the disabled, the vulnerable, and those suffering from domestic violence and mental health in 2% of the articles. The findings indicate that the two newspapers informed the public about the pandemic and encouraged compliance to public health guidelines among other control measures. In line with Lin et al. (2014) opinion, the two newspapers supported communication behaviors, 'such as information seeking, news exposure, and perceived trust in the information sources,' by providing timely and appropriate information in a manner and in a way that is reachable and understandable to the public.

The results show that the two newspapers set public agenda through placement and repeating news about the pandemic over and over in all 180 editions published between March 13 and June 10. Manaf et.al. (2017) called this tactic a tool to ensure mass media is at the top of the audiences' mind and later prominent in public opinion. On story sourcing, *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* relied on articles originated by reporters and editors (62.7%), opinion and commentaries from columnists (4.7%), and syndicated news from international agencies (12.7%). Medics, officials from the Ministry of Health (MoH) including minister, corporate executives and academia originated 15.9% of stories on Covid-19. Articles from Politicians, parliamentarians and governors only accounted for 2.9% of news reports. In summary, coverage of the pandemic was largely local (87.3%). From the foregoing, the study makes the following recommendations:

a. Expanding Sources to Enhance Objectivity
It is recommended that the mass media expands their sourcing model to include reports and publications, agencies such as WHO and scientists to help audiences gain a deeper understanding of the issues they cover. **b.**
b. Encourage More Experts to Pen Articles
Articles authored by politicians and governors were negligible, yet they command tremendous support among the electorate. They must contribute to the debate by writing opinion pieces or commentaries on Covid-19 and other important public matters.
c. Encourage Positive Coverage
Although the two newspapers used negative coverage to warn the public of the impact of the pandemic and get them to comply with public health regulations, the study recommends positive coverage. For instance, the media could highlight stories on counties with reduced Covid-19 cases and what they are doing to reduce the spread. Such coverage will encourage behavior change without instilling fear. The study's limitation show that future research should examine the pandemic coverage by other local media outlets, including electronic media outlets.

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