

Media Framing of Climate Change in Kenyan Print Media: A Comparative Analysis of *Daily Nation* and *Standard* Newspapers

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Abstract

This study investigated the news coverage of climate change in Kenyan newspapers by comparing the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. The study uses a convergent mixed-methods design, which combines numerical analysis of 200 selected articles from 2018 to 2020 with information from semi-structured interviews with 10 journalists in the field and 5 experts on climate. Entman's Framing Theory forms the basis of this study, suggesting that the media's selective picking and highlighting of certain aspects of reality shape public conversations. Significant differences in frame prevalence were assessed using chi-square tests, while the collected comments were analysed by thematic analysis. The research shows that newspapers consider climate change a key issue, but each paper takes a distinct approach to its discussion. Most of the *Daily Nation's* coverage focuses on ways the government responds and on the impacts of its decisions. Whereas *Global* examines global effects, *The Standard* focuses on what happens within a community and shares personal stories. This illustrates that what gets reported about climate problems depends on the special interests of news outlets and media systems. It enriches research in environmental communication by demonstrating that the content in media shows can influence public attitudes, involvement in policy, and understanding of climate issues. It suggests that journalists in Kenya and around the world utilize scientific knowledge to help people gain a more comprehensive and responsible understanding of climate change issues.

Key words: *Framing, Climate change, Global effects*

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1. Introduction

Climate change is arguably the most characteristic and daunting problem of the 21st century, with its consequences observed in numerous ecosystems, economies, and societies worldwide. Nowadays, there is a widespread scientific consensus that the planet is warming, and human activities are a key factor contributing to this form of climate change. Therefore, there is an urgent need for joint actions to prevent further damage (IPCC, 2021). Stakes are very high in Africa. Although African states, such as Kenya, generate the smallest amount of global greenhouse gas emissions, the disproportionate impact of their contribution is manifested in increased droughts, flooding, food insecurity, and the displacement of people. With these significant weaknesses in place, the need for effective climate change communication is urgent.

Communication on climate change issues in Kenya faces two primary challenges: a lack of scientific literacy among citizens and a policy discourse dominated by a small elite. In this context, the mass media—especially print newspapers—serve as important mediators. They help the public understand climate issues, create narratives, and influence reactions from individuals and institutions. Media framing, which demonstrates how outlets can influence audience perceptions by emphasizing specific points, determines how well these issues are understood (Entman, 1993).

The paper examines how media framing influences media coverage of climate change by comparing two of Kenya's leading newspapers, namely the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. These are papers that not only have wide circulation and influence but also demonstrate divergent editorial orientations and institutional affiliations. The *Daily Nation*, which is seen as representing the interests of the government and the elite group, and *The Standard*, which boasts a more community-oriented approach, make an excellent arena in which to examine the issue of institutional positioning in climate change reporting. Through an examination of the frames employed

by these newspapers, this study aims to reveal the dynamics that underlie what we refer to as climate communication in Kenya.

Past media and climate change studies on Africa have primarily focused on the quantity of information in the media, with little attention paid to the qualitative characteristics and interpretation of climate change rhetoric. Additionally, it has been observed that very few comparative studies are available that discuss the role played by editorial policies, journalists' views, and the general socio-political environment in shaping the decisions made by the media. The study addresses this gap by employing a convergent mixed-methods design to investigate the content of the media and the experiences of practitioners and professionals. This paper is based on the Framing Theory by Entman, which leads to an inquiry into the influence of various narrative architectures on the understanding of, participation in, and acknowledged reactions to climate problems in Kenya.

Finally, the research paper contributes to the growing body of literature on environmental communication studies in the African context, focusing particularly on strategic framing related to climate action. It promotes more nuanced, regional, and science-based media coverage of climate change, which may enable a more engaged and knowledgeable citizenry. In Kenya, the media's influence on public opinion and policy discourse is a developmental emergency, not just an academic issue.

2. Thesis

Climate change poses a significant existential threat to Kenya, affecting its sustainable growth, the health of its people, and food safety. Although there is a growing awareness worldwide about the need to act quickly and make concerted efforts to reduce its impact, there is an unprecedentedly low level of public awareness and participation in climate change in most African countries, and in Kenya in particular. Although international development organizations, scientists, and environmentalists believe they have raised an alarm about climate-related dangers such as floods, droughts, locust invasions, and increasing temperatures, these concerns are not adequately contextualized or reflected in the Kenyan mainstream media (IPCC, 2021; Mumo & Okoth, 2022). It is not merely an issue of inadequate coverage, but also the question of how the issue is framed, which aspects are emphasized, who is quoted, and how narratives are created to shape the opinion of the people and the terms of debate about policy.

Print media continues to play a major role as a channel of information for the Kenyan populace, especially in urban and literate areas. The *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* are among the newspapers with a wide readership, and they have been influential in creating a discursive space on climate change and environmental governance. Nevertheless, how such newspapers present climate change can be interpreted as reflecting global institutional interests and newsroom agendas, as well as news rituals, resulting in representation disparity and differential prioritization of issues (Wekesa & Tsuma, 2020). To illustrate, one way in which mainstream media in Kenya allegedly overemphasizes responses to climate change provided by governments and the international aspect of climate change, while overlooking geographical facts and community-based measures of adaptation (Bosire & Omwenga, 2021).

Such an imbalance can have several negative implications. First, climate change, when presented in the language of elite discourse or with the rather foreign policy interests of a particular power, can be seen at the level of the common citizen sphere. In turn, this decreases civic participation and the population's pressure on policymakers to choose strong climate adaptation and mitigation measures (Njuguna, 2019). Second, its absence in human-centred and localised framing leads to indifference among the people and their misinformed lives, making it difficult to achieve a well-informed environmental citizenry. Third, when it comes to indigenous forms of knowledge, experiences that are gendered together with rural voices are marginalized, compromising the effectiveness and inclusivity of climate change communication (Awuor et al., 2020).

Both the Kenyan media sphere and its institutions are shaped by commercial forces, political influence, and limited resources. Together, these factors set newsroom priorities and influence editorial decision-making. Journalists often lack specialization in science or environmental journalism. As a result, their coverage of complex topics, such as climate change, is sometimes trivial or technically incorrect (Onyango & Wamwere-Njoroge, 2021). These challenges are exacerbated by limited access to reliable sources, inadequate investment in investigative journalism, frequent reliance on press releases, and superficial reporting.

Although scholarly focus on environmental communication in Africa is increasing, descriptive research on the perceptions of climate change across different media outlets in the same national environment is lacking in a comparative manner. The existing literature already assumes African media as a monopoly, without considering differences in editorial philosophy, institutional affiliations, and audience segmentation. An analysis of these two Kenya-based newspapers, the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, which are among the most influential newspapers

in Kenya, offers an insightful argument through which to question the role of framing in shaping climate change discourse and societal participation.

Moreover, the assumptions of media framing extend beyond the realm of journalism practice. Media frames have been found to impact how people perceive risks, influence policy agendas, and mediate the divide between expert and lay perceptions (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007; Entman, 1993). Climate change is a complex issue that affects health, agriculture, water resources, and socio-economic inequality, making the stakes particularly high. Framing can help connect science, policy, and the public. However, bad or biased framing can worsen the situation by causing confusion, suspicion, and passivity.

The current study has thus been prompted by the persistent need to question the ways in which Kenyan print media represent the issue of climate change, as well as to evaluate the consequences of relevant representations on public discourse and policy advocacy. The study will enable us to identify patterns, biases, and narrative schemes that characterize the reporting of climate change in Kenya by integrating quantitative content analysis of news stories and constructive data on how reporters and climate scientists perceive climate coverage in Kenya. The end result is a more effective, ethical, and responsible manner of communicating about climate, in which citizens are empowered, policy is informed, and climate change and climate communication aid in the overall goal of environmental sustainability in Kenya.

3. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

3.1 Media Framing Theory

Framing theory, a formulation of media, communication, and political science, is an important theory that elucidates how media shape audience perception by organizing the display of facts. The theory is based on the earlier work of Erving Goffman (1974), who coined the term "frames," which consist of interpretive schemas that aid individuals in bringing meaning to the world. The theory was further developed by other scholars, such as Robert Entman (1993), who proposed a more specific media-oriented explanation. Framing, according to Entman (1993), refers to selecting elements of a perceived reality and rendering them more prominent in a communicating text, in an effort to establish a certain definition of a problem, causal implication, moral judgment, and/or prescription of treatment.

According to the theory, the framing of issues can significantly impact the population's understanding of an issue. The media frames are not so much about what is said, but also about what is not said, thereby informing the audience not only what to think about, but also how to think about it (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Framing thus belongs to the realm of power and choice, and the consequences of this move in determining political rhetoric, policy, and social actions are far-reaching.

The model created by Entman (1993) is particularly relevant to climate change communication. Since climate change is a highly complex, multidimensional problem and is connected with scientific uncertainty, politics, ethics, and personal, localized perceptions, the frame applied by the media can lead the population to view climate change either as an imminent local problem or as an abstract and distant threat. To illustrate, one of the frames, known as the catastrophe frame, may evoke fear and helplessness, whereas another frame, known as the solutions frame, may promote proactive behavior and policy participation (Nisbet, 2009).

Studies applying framing theory to the area of climate change have been conducted worldwide. Western literature has revealed that newspaper coverage of climate change is influenced by the perspectives of politics, economy, and science (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007). The journalistic norms, political ideologies, and economic pressures typically influence these frames, leading to the misrepresentation of the issue. When it comes to Kenya, climate change issues are often discussed in developmental terms or in ways that affect the environment, but this approach is limited by a lack of scientific expertise in framing stories and utilizing international wires (Wekesa & Tsuma, 2020).

Framing theory is also focused on the relationships between media producers and the institutional context in which they operate. The freedom possessed by journalists is not in vacuity as they report through means of newsroom routines, editorial policies, organizational constraints, audience expectations, and even political influences (Reese, 2001). Kenyan media houses find themselves in a backlash of commercial pressures and political forces, and these influences dictate the type of stories to cover and the way they are presented (Bosire & Omwenga, 2021). This can be seen in the climate change framing, where institutional affiliations may lead to the adoption of different emphases, with the *Daily Nation* emphasizing a response to climate change through state policy, while the *Standard* may focus more on community adaptation and resilience.

According to Entman's framework, there are four basic functions of media framing: defining the problem, diagnosing its cause, making an ethical evaluation, and suggesting treatment. These functions are not always present to the same extent in every frame, but together, they determine the effectiveness and ideological bias of the media message. For example, an article framing climate change mainly as a result of Western industrialization can create a sense of injustice, but this may not lead to practical actions for local populations. In contrast, framing climate change as an opportunity for innovation in renewable energy can inspire confidence and encourage policy change.

Besides content analysis, framing theory allows a qualitative look at journalists' and editors' motives and worldviews. The research demonstrates how journalists construct frames, the factors that influence their decisions, and how institutional logics shape climate change coverage (Cottle, 2009). This theory's flexibility makes it the right choice here. The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data to determine the optimal combination of methods.

Beside seminal contributions of Entman, there are other refinements of the paradigm and enlargements of the frames. Still, the concept of interpretive packages was proposed by Gamson and Modigliani (1989), and it includes the combination of metaphors, catchphrase, visual images, moral appeals, and other similar tools that grasp a coherent narrative about any issue in the community. Such packages are quite applicable in the analysis of the process of climate change being made intelligible to the audience in various cultural and socio-political contexts. As an example, local idioms, metaphors and folk wisdom have the potential to inform climate risks in media reporting in Kenya, and influence how communities perceive and respond to such risks.

Another key concept is frame sponsorship. This means that powerful actors can shape how the media presents issues. They may achieve this by issuing press releases, investing in journalism programs, or engaging in advocacy. In Kenya, international development programs often shape climate narratives. They do this by funding training for journalists and sponsoring climate-related topics in the media (Onyango & Wamwere-Njoroge, 2021). This raises important questions about the authenticity of these frames and the balance between global agendas and local priorities.

Critics citing the framing theory have suggested that it suffers from conceptual imprecision and a lack of standardization in practice. However, this flexibility is also sometimes an advantage, as is the case with exploratory studies, where emergent patterns and contextualities are investigated. Therefore, framing theory offers not only a theoretical but also a methodological architecture for this study, whereby the nature of Kenya's climate change narratives formation and dissemination can be carefully analyzed.

Overall, the theory of media framing provides a robust framework for analyzing how Kenyan print media represent climate change. This approach highlights how choices in presentation and emphasis shape public understanding, sheds light on the institutional and ideological factors that guide journalism, and clarifies the roles of the message, messenger, and audience. Using this theoretical lens, the current paper specifically examines differences between the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* in reporting on climate change, revealing what this variation suggests about the intersection of media, politics, and environmental communication in Kenya.

3.2 Climate Change Communication in Africa

In Africa, climate change communication is situated within a complex network of socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts. In contrast to most regions of the Global North, where environmental concerns tend to take center stage in publicity and political discussions, African nations are often burdened with multiple competing interests, including alleviating poverty rates, developing basic infrastructure, managing health epidemics, and addressing political unrest. These agendas tend to align with environmental issues, making climate change communication a strategic and practical concern (Otieno et al., 2020).

Underlying most of climate change communication in Africa is the problem of translating intangible, globe-sized scientific knowledge into moveable local knowledge that is useful. The issue of climate change is often described using technical terms, statistical projections, and forecasts that may lack relevance to the experiences of African people in their daily lives (Shanahan, 2009). This miscommunication creates a communication gap, which may lead to apathy or misunderstanding. As a response, communicators are increasingly challenged to localize climate science to local cultures, languages, and experiences, in order to encourage population interactions and behavioral change (Leal Filho et al., 2021).

The media plays the key role of filling this gap. Print, radio, television, and, more recently, digital media serve as vital means to ensure that knowledge about climate is passed to diverse and sometimes isolated communities. In Kenya and other parts of the continent, reporting on climate change is, however, episodic, event-based, and

usually reactive, with reports typically issued after the occurrence of such non-natural disasters as floods, droughts, or heatwaves (Wekesa & Tsuma, 2020). Such positioning not only restricts the general population's insight into the causal factors of climate change and its long-term implications but also reduces the urgency required for policies and behavioral change.

Additionally, there are structural and operational weaknesses in media institutions in Africa that hinder effective reporting on climate change. Most newsrooms operate on shoestring budgets, and in many cases, it is rare to find any dedicated environmental beats. Media practitioners reporting on climate stories often lack adequate training in the field of environmental science and fail to accurately report on the difficulties that affect or imperfectly cover them (Onyango & Wamwere-Njoroge, 2021). In other instances, the use of international wire services, such as Reuters and the Associated Press, can cause stories to be unfamiliar to the local area, further disconnecting readers from the realities of climate change in their own communities (Waisbord, 2015).

African media houses have often presented climate change as a disaster or conflict issue, emphasizing vulnerability and victimhood. While this framing effectively captures the real threats climate change poses to already vulnerable systems, it can also leave viewers feeling helpless or fatalistic (Ogunjobi, 2022). On the other hand, if the media adopt a solution-focused or resilient approach—highlighting local innovations, adaptation tactics, and indigenous knowledge—they can promote agency and encourage collective action (Nisbet, 2009).

The fourth aspect of climate change communication in Africa is the influence of non-state actors in the narration. The mainstream media often fail to fill the void in many countries. NGOs, international development organizations, and other civil society groups often occupy this space by creating their own news or by training and offering grants to journalists (Bosire & Omwenga, 2021). These actors play a crucial role in framing climate change as a developmental and environmental issue. Nevertheless, their power also raises questions about agenda setting and the localising of global narration. This is despite their goodwill. Externally motivated communication strategies may not be consistent with local realities and priorities (Bain et al., 2016).

Digital media and mobile technology provide new avenues for communicating climate change in Africa. Cell phone use is rising rapidly, creating opportunities to share climate information through SMS alerts, social networks, podcasts, and mobile journalism (Mann et al., 2019). Platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp are increasingly used by environmental activists, journalists, and policymakers in Kenya to spread timely updates, organize communities, and crowdsource climate data. However, digital gaps remain, especially in rural and marginalized areas, where internet access and digital literacy are limited (Wilson & Oriahi, 2020).

Effective communication of climate change in Africa requires an understanding of the sociocultural aspects of knowledge exchange. African societies are not only rich in oral histories, narratives, proverbs, and collective dialogues, but all these can also serve as an effective springboard in mobilizing communities on environmental concerns. By incorporating these ancient forms of communication into the spectrum of scientific discourse, the epistemological gap may be bridged, and a culturally grounded reaction to climate change can be founded (Nabudere, 2004).

Climate communication in Africa is tightly linked to governance, equity, and justice. Vulnerable groups include women, rural farmers, pastoralists, and settlers in informal settlements. These populations are most impacted by climate change, yet their voices are often excluded from media coverage. Inclusive communication must prioritize marginalized worldviews. This approach is essential for equitable climate policies and effective adaptation (Tanner & Horn-Phathanothai, 2014). Gender-sensitive strategies are critical. Women face disproportionate climate impacts, but they are also primary agents of resilience and adaptation.

The Kenyan case has seen a boost in enhancing communication on climate change through collaborations among the government, research institutions, media houses, and civil society. Innovations, such as community-driven climate services run by the Kenya Meteorological Department and training programs led by the Media Council of Kenya, as well as projects between NGOs and universities, are starting to bear fruit. Still, a more systematic, long-term, and locally based strategy is needed to elevate climate language to a higher level and drive transformative action.

Kenya has improved climate change communication through collaborations between the government, research institutions, media, and civil society. Recent innovations, such as community-driven climate services and journalist training, demonstrate progress. However, Kenya still needs a coordinated, long-term local strategy to ensure clear climate messaging and transformative impact.

3.3 Print Media in Kenya

The print media in Kenya plays a pivotal role in the overall communication landscape of Kenya. Although there have been increased inroads into digital platforms and social media, print newspapers still play a significant role in determining the nation's recession, shaping the population's opinion, and agenda-setting in both government and society. Kenya is dominated by two newspapers, The *Daily Nation* and The *Standard*, which lead in terms of circulation and history. The publications continue to enjoy both respect and trust, especially among urban and semi-urban areas, and are primarily used as a source of information concerning political, social, and environmental issues (Ogola, 2011).

The *Daily Nation* has been a property of the Nation Media Group (NMG) and is regarded as the most influential newspaper in Kenya. Founded in 1960, it has developed a reputation for in-depth news reporting, investigative journalism, and editorial independence. With a diverse national reach and high digital integration, the *Daily Nation* holds one of the key positions in shaping public discourse, including fields such as climate change and environmental governance (Mugo & Kimathi, 2020).

The Standard Group is the owner of Kenya's oldest newspaper, which was founded in 1902. Even though it may have scored poorly with the right-wing family of politics in the past, The *Standard* has become a reputable national newspaper with a respectable audience around the whole country. It also tends to adopt a more human-interest and community-oriented approach to its editorial line, which, in turn, enables it to shed more light on local challenges, such as the effects of climate change (Otieno & Muli, 2021).

Structurally, both newspapers are part of corporate media. Here, commercial pressures, political influence, and changing audience tastes prevail. These processes influence editorial choices, affecting issue salience and framing. As a result, media houses can cover stories favored by influential institutions or those likely to win public interest and sponsorships. Media coverage of climate change has increased, but it still competes for attention with timely and sensational information, such as political scandals, crime stories, and economic reports (Wekesa & Tsuma, 2020).

The print media is particularly important, as the climate change issue is complex and multifaceted. The importance of Framing Theory, advanced by Entman (1993), is relevant in explaining the role of print media in Kenya in selecting and highlighting certain views on climate change. Newspapers have the ability, through selective, emphatic, exclusionary, and elaborative processes, to create stories that either drive or result in apathy on the subject of climate change. To give an example, researchers have found that the Kenyan print media are prone to using crisis or disaster frames, and this tendency increases during extreme weather conditions, such as floods or droughts. Such frames are useful in capturing attention but tend to focus on short-term implications rather than long-term adaptation or policy implications (Bosire & Omwenga, 2021).

The other dominant frame is the frame of government response and discussion regarding policy. An example is the *Daily Nation* newspaper, which provides regular updates on government meetings, international climate conferences, and various government programs related to climate change. This top-down framing can help increase the visibility of national efforts, but it may also exclude the local community by alienating it due to a lack of attention to lived experiences and coping strategies.

Conversely, The *Standard* is more focused on concise, narrative-based reporting, emphasizing personal accounts, locally based responses, and the presence of non-state actors. This top-down approach is a more human and approachable way to view climate change, which may bring greater resonance with the population and foster civic engagement (Onyango & Wamwere-Njoroge, 2021).

The print newspapers in Kenya face setbacks that limit their ability to communicate climate change, despite their influence. Environmental reporting is usually understaffed. Climate change reporters often lack specialized training. As a result, they may publish inaccuracies, oversimplifications, or rely on overseas wire service copy. Some newspapers do not have specific environmental journalists on editorial desks. This results in periodic and disjointed reporting on environmental issues (Otieno et al., 2020).

Second, the future of print media is also in danger, as readership and advertising dollars are declining. As digital consumption of news increases, the pressure on newspapers to shift towards click-oriented content approaches is on the rise. This financial burden often leads to the exclusion of longer and more analytical reportage on complex matters, such as climate change, in favor of breaking and sensational news (Ogola, 2017).

There is an opportunity to increase the impact of print media on climate change. Co-productions, collaborative journalism projects, capacity-building seminars, and support from environmental NGOs are helping promote more nuanced reporting. Programs such as the Earth Journalism Network and collaborations with academic

centers have also enabled some Kenyan journalists to access scientific information and training in scientific communication (Leal Filho et al., 2021).

Also, print and digital combination carries a twofold gain. Newspapers such as the *Daily Nation* and The *Standard* have very strong online content, and this fact provides the possibility of spreading even further and being more interactive. Most of these newspapers are available in digital format with multimedia features, such as infographics, videos, and hyperlinks, which are likely to attract more attention from readers to the outer world's scientific information that would otherwise have failed to capture anyone's interest. Integration with social media also helps print journalists determine their reactions to the message and adjust their framing strategies accordingly (Wilson & Oriahi, 2020).

To sum up, the daily publications in Kenya, such as the *Daily Nation* and The *Standard*, remain influential and respected sources of information concerning climate change among the population. These aspects include their editorial orientations, framing decisions, and institutional arrangements, which determine the sense in which climate matters are perceived and acted upon by societal members. Although other issues, such as underfunding, lack of expertise, and commercial pressures, continue to undermine the output of the print media, it can be transformed into a revolutionary factor in raising climate awareness, making policy more accountable, and changing individual behavior. Any improvement in the quality and regularity of climate reports in the Kenyan print media will entail a long-term investment, a carefully considered choice of collaborators, and a concerted effort to make scientific evidence and the voices of the community the centerpieces of the reporting.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study employed a convergent mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research strategies. The logic was that numerical trends were then enhanced by the provision of data as numerical ones, with context-relevant key informant brushstrokes interpreting the trends (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

4.2 Data Collection

The study employed a convergent mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research strategies. The logic was that numerical trends were first established using quantitative data, and these trends were then explained and contextualized through key informant insights from the qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Also, 10 reporters of both newspapers and 5 environmental specialists were also asked the same questions with the help of semi-structured guides. These interviews added some meaning to the framing patterns.

4.3 Data Analysis

Chi-square tests and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data and determine distribution differences among the frames. Thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data to identify common patterns, authoritative perceptions, and situational clarifications.

5. Key Findings

5.1 Dominant Frames in Climate Change Reporting

Four major frames emerged across the two newspapers:

1. **Responsibility Frame** – Emphasis on who is responsible for climate change (governments, corporations, communities).
2. **Impact Frame** – Focus on consequences such as floods, droughts, food insecurity.
3. **Action Frame** – Discussion on mitigation strategies and adaptation efforts.
4. **Scientific Frame** – Use of data, expert opinion, and research findings.

The *Daily Nation* primarily employed Responsibility and Action Frames, directing audiences to accountability and specific measures. In contrast, The *Standard* prioritized Impact and Community Frames, encouraging readers to reflect on how events influence individuals and collective vulnerability. This highlights the former's emphasis on institutional accountability and policy remedies, while the latter focuses on personal narratives and local susceptibility, leading readers to distinct interpretations of the news.

5.2 Framing Differences Between the Newspapers

Chi-square tests revealed statistically significant differences in the prevalence of frames ($\chi^2 = 23.56$, $p < 0.05$). Compared to The *Standard*, the *Daily Nation* emphasized government-led solutions and international cooperation, whereas *The Standard* focused on grassroots stories and community adaptation efforts.

5.3 Journalist and Expert Perspectives

Journalists reported that editorial policies, time constraints, and limited scientific literacy were major influences on their climate reporting. Experts expressed concern about superficial coverage and specifically recommended increased, structured collaboration between media and climate scientists—such as joint workshops or consultation—to improve reporting accuracy and depth. Stakeholders are encouraged to actively foster these collaborations to enhance the quality of climate reporting.

6. Discussion

The results of this study highlight the critical nature of media discourse in shaping the issue of climate change in Kenya. This analysis demonstrates the selectivity, omission, and emphasis methods of providing information, based on editorial decisions in the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard*, according to the Framing Theory (Entman, 1993), with the aim of shaping public attitudes to influence future policy actions. The differences in the framing strategies applied by the two newspapers cannot be stylistic or incidental, but instead portray a wider institutional logic, audience-targeting approaches, and journalistic cultures.

The *Daily Nation*'s focus on governmental measures, climate conventions, and centralized policy initiatives aligns with the institutional locus of the mainstream media house, which has strong ties to the national system of governance. This can be said to capture what Entman (1993) termed the effect of a sponsorship, which is the reflection of a predominance of an elite-produced frame that dominates news sources, as official sources often take center-stage in journalistic practices. Although this framework increases the transparency of national commitments to climate action, it inadvertently supports a technocratic discourse that could sideline the grassroots perspective and the localization of the consequences of climate change.

On the other hand, the appeal of human interest in The *Standard*'s community stories and personal experiences constitutes a human-interest frame. This makes climate change more personal and relatable to readers. It aligns with the episodic framing pattern typically favored in audience-oriented media (Iyengar, 1991). In this pattern, narratives are personalized, allowing the audience to connect emotionally with the context through localization. Nevertheless, this type of framing can be dangerous. It tends to depoliticize the problem by excluding the structural and policy aspects necessary to transform the system.

By contrast, the appeal of human interest in The *Standard*'s community stories and personal experiences constitutes a human-interest frame. While this makes climate change more personal and relatable to readers, it also carries significant risks. It aligns with the episodic framing pattern typically favored in audience-oriented media (Iyengar, 1991). In this pattern, narratives are personalized, allowing the audience to connect emotionally with the context through localization. Nevertheless, this type of framing can be dangerous, as it tends to depoliticize the problem by excluding the structural and policy aspects necessary for systemic transformation. This omission can seriously hinder efforts to address the root causes of climate change.

The research highlights a significant gap in the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems and local adaptation strategies into media coverage. This gap reveals a lack of openness to diverse perspectives on knowledge. Western-centric science often prioritizes global responses to climate change because of its communicative authority. As a result, local stories are frequently overlooked. This oversight can indirectly undermine community-based resilience strategies. It also restricts the types of knowledge that can be used in climate conversations within the broader community.

All in all, the study provides a solid contribution to the academic knowledge on the topic of environmental communication in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, as it provides empirical data on how framing decisions report on and reinforce power structures in the media system. It is also worth mentioning how inclusive and

scientifically based journalism can transform and bring about change in public discussions, responsibility, and participatory governance in climate action. With climate risks looming high on the continent, there is a strong need for the Kenyan media to move beyond episodic reporting and adopt a more strategic, informed, and equity-based approach to framing climate risks. This will involve both editorial changes and training of journalists to build their capacity, as well as active collaborations with climate scientists and continued funding of environmental journalism.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper aimed to explore the framing of climate change in the two most influential newspapers in Kenya, namely *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. Through the use of a convergent mixed-methods research design, which combines the quantitative data set of 200 articles that have been examined with a qualitative data set of semi-structured interviews of journalists and climate experts, the study has revealed a fundamental difference in the way each of the publications frames climate narratives. As the research was conducted using the Framing Theory proposed by Entman (1993), it is definite that despite both newspapers recognizing climate change as a pressing issue, they remain substantially different in terms of their framing style, topics, and story framing.

The policy-oriented frame, or instrumental frame conceptualized as top-down, is predominant in the *Daily Nation*, focusing on government initiatives, international conferences, and institutional responses. By contrast, *The Standard* adopts a bottom-up approach to framing issues, prioritizing local stories, their effects on communities, and lived experiences. These variations underscore the gatekeeping role of the media and its impact on discourse and civic engagement regarding climate change. These have a dual implication: that whatever kind of framing is used, it can either lead to informed student debate and participatory democracy or to passivity, misdirection, and alienation.

The key issue that emerges from this study is the shallow nature and frequency of reporting on climate change due to the lack of specialized training, editorial under emphasis, and commercial interests that prioritize sensational news over scientific journalism. The findings further reveal that, although journalists understand the emergency regarding climate change, there are structural and institutional barriers to achieving uniform, evidence-based climate coverage.

Based on these conclusions, several actionable recommendations are proposed:

1. **Capacity Building for Journalists:** Media houses, in collaboration with academic institutions and non-governmental organizations, should invest in regular training programs for journalists on environmental and science communication. This will enhance the effectiveness of interpreting, translating, and presenting complex climate data to the general audience by reporters.
2. **Establishment of Dedicated Environmental Desks:** Additional newspapers should establish or reinforce specialized environmental journalism desks with sufficient resources and editorial freedom. Such expertise enables consistent climate reporting by experts.
3. **Strategic Partnerships with Scientific Communities:** It is crucial for environmental scientists and media professionals to collaborate. These teams can help create climate news based on real data, better inform the public, and combat misinformation.
4. **Adoption of Hybrid Media Strategies:** Traditional print media reporting should leverage digital platforms to expand reach. Infographics, videos, and data visualizations can make climate stories more engaging and accessible, particularly for tech-savvy younger audiences.
5. **Policy and Advocacy Engagement:** Journalists and editors must be empowered and actively supported to play a robust watchdog role, holding governments and industries accountable for environmental stewardship. Investigative journalism should expose policy gaps, corruption, and the socio-economic impacts of climate inaction, making this oversight an urgent priority.
6. **Promotion of Localized Storytelling:** Since lived experience is crucial in enhancing climate literacy, newspapers should prioritize community narratives. This anthropocentric orientation has the potential to instill empathy, relevance, and urgency in climate discussions.

Despite institutional, economic, and structural limitations that affect the Kenyan print media, these media have a special capability to influence the national discourse on climate change. The key to this potential is indeed direct investment in journalism skills, editorial dedication to environmental matters, and long-term cooperation across boundaries. What will happen in climate communication in Kenya will not only lie in what is reported, but also how it is framed, as is brought out clearly by this study in terms of empirical importance and sense of imperative urgency.

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