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Abstract:

Many sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) stories have been broadcast and published in Kenyan media but there are limited studies on how the media frames SGBV. This is why the researcher undertook to study reporting of SGBV in Kenya media to understand how and why it is framed. Framing of sexual and gender-based violence was studied because SGBV is an ill that affects society and stories on gender violence and sexual violence have been in the news. Framing theory is used to define the aspects of the study and to guide the researcher on how to identify the frames media use in reporting on SGBV. The researcher used a case – Justice for Liz – to understand how media in Kenya frame SGBV. Newspaper articles on Justice for Liz were used and respondents were also interviewed to find out their views on SGBV. Purposive sampling was used to select the sample for the study. Data was interpreted using textual analysis. The study found out that media is judgemental and negatively critical in reporting on sexual and gender-based violence. The media criticises the aggressors or perpetrators and vilifies them. The media judges them even before they are given a fair hearing in court. The study also found out that media are activists. The media can come up with and support an agenda. In reporting on SGBV, the media are activists for sexual assault victims and demand prosecution of the perpetrators and justice for the victims. The media also calls for help – financial and psychological – for the victims, so they can be treated, and heal from the physical and psychological injuries of the assault. The study found out that frames such as brutality, injustice, chauvinism and feminism were present in reporting of SGBV stories in Kenya. The study recommends for more coverage of stories on rape and sexual violence by the media. It also calls for the need for accurate, fair and balanced reporting on issues of sexual violence. The study further suggests the need for other studies related to sexual violence and rape, thus making practical steps towards dealing with this problem.