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## Analysing the Scope of Coverage in the Daily Nation as Kenya's Leading Mainstream Newspaper

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyse the scope of coverage in Kenya's Daily Nation, focusing on the extent to which it addresses grassroots issues affecting ordinary citizens. Despite its national prominence, the newspaper is perceived to prioritise elite and political stories over those of the common *mwananchi*. The study employed a qualitative approach, using content analysis and semi-structured interviews, supplemented by quantitative analysis for percentages. Conducted in Nairobi City, it purposively sampled 20 respondents (10 readers, 10 non-readers) to assess coverage and audience perceptions. Data were examined through open, axial, and selective coding guided by Political-Economic Theory. Findings revealed a clear bias toward stories involving politicians, elites, and diplomacy, which dominated prominent pages. Grassroots issues, such as local businesses and community challenges, were marginalised, often appearing as brief mentions or on inside pages. Editorial decisions were found to be driven by economic motives, favouring sensational stories to boost sales. The study concludes that the Daily Nation significantly underrepresents grassroots issues, leaving a gap in coverage of ordinary citizens' concerns in Nairobi. It recommends that mainstream newspapers dedicate more space to grassroots stories and that investors consider establishing local newspapers focused on community issues. These findings highlight the need for inclusive journalism and provide a basis for further research into the viability of community newspapers in Nairobi and beyond, fostering more equitable media representation.

**Key words:** Common man/*mwananchi*, coverage, Daily Nation, mainstream, newspapers, scope.



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### INTRODUCTION

For decades, newspapers have been a primary source of print media worldwide. Apart from bringing us news and information longer than any other media form, newspapers have always been the most inexpensive way for people to get news and advertising information.

In Kenya, there are four mainstream English daily print newspapers: the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, *The Star*, and the *Business Daily* (which specialises in business-related stories). There also is the *Taifa Leo*, the only mainstream national Swahili daily newspaper in Kenya. The *Daily Nation*, whose sister weekly editions are the *Sunday Nation* and the *Saturday Nation*, remains the largest circulation newspaper in the country and the most influential (Media Council of Kenya, 2023). In 2023, its readership command was (35%). It is followed by *The Standard* at 21%, *Taifa Leo* at (14%), and *The Star* at (8%).

The *Daily Nation* is the favourite newspaper for many newspaper readers at 48%, indicating it is their primary reading choice. The *Daily Nation* is followed by *The Standard* at (18%), *Taifa Leo* (15%), and *The Star* at 7% (Media Council of Kenya (2023). The *Daily Nation*, *Business Daily*, and *Taifa Leo* are published by the Nation Media Group, which also publishes *The EastAfrican*, a leading business weekly in East and Central Africa. *The Standard* is published by the Standard Group, which also publishes *The Nairobiian* (a weekly tabloid publication that mainly targets younger readers with light news, gossip and entertainment within the Nairobi metropolitan area).

Today, coverage of events in these mainstream English daily newspapers, especially in the Nairobi metropolitan area, is almost always more likely to favour the powerful, the affluent and the elite. In other words, such newspapers tend to cover and highlight the “big guy” events or agenda. The newspapers tend to either reduce to brief stories on issues touching on the common man or common *mwananchi* and such stories to the inner pages or ignore them altogether. To such mainstream newspapers, the common man's agenda is a non-issue unless such citizens are involved in committing crimes.

This means the range of coverage of grassroots or common man's issues almost always published by such mainstream newspapers is narrow, mainly due to political-economic factors, which dictate that newspapers should carry content that would help them sell and, in turn, bring in revenue. This indicates that there is a need

for mainstream newspapers to dedicate more news pages to the coverage of events that affect the common man at the grassroots. Investors could consider establishing newspapers that specifically cover the common man's issues at the grassroots.

While the *Daily Nation* is known for its wide and in-depth coverage of national issues, scant attention has been paid to its approaches in covering issues touching on the ordinary or the common man at the grassroots. Specifically, despite the crucial role *Daily Nation* plays in informing and educating the public, as a national publication, it leaves a huge gap in the coverage of more issues that affect the ordinary person at the community level. No literature is found on research on the scope of the coverage of the common man's issues in the *Daily Nation*.

However, related research has been on issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya; terrorism in general in Kenya; terrorism at Kenya's Garissa University; major government development projects, dubbed the Big Four Agenda; student protests; HIV/AIDS; drought and food security; and, disability. For instance, Fayo (2023, p. 6) observes that Kenyan print media tend to publish stories from the country's far-flung regions on the inside pages. While studying the coverage of news from far-flung counties of Marsabit, Turkana and Mandera in the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, Fayo (2023, p. 33) observed that stories from the three counties were told more from the voices of other sources and elites, with fewer instances of the local people as sources.

Ngirachu (2020, p. 65) notes that some stories in the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* are relegated to inside pages due to journalists' limited interest in the events or subjects covered. Eboi (2015, p. 140) observes that the impact, human interest, and proximity of a story significantly influence its placement and usage in these newspapers. Similarly, Kiarie and Mogambi (2017, p. 56) argue that a story's perceived prominence determines the space allocated to it, reflecting the newspaper's editorial stance on its importance.

Building on these insights into editorial priorities, this study analyses the scope of coverage in the *Daily Nation*, Kenya's leading mainstream daily newspaper (Media Council of Kenya, 2023). While researching on the coverage of drought and food security, Namaswa (2021, p. 32) found that the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* often prioritise political actors in such stories, sidelining

grassroots perspectives. This study extends that critique, advocating for mainstream English daily newspapers like the *Daily Nation* to dedicate more pages to highlighting "small or common man's" issues, ensuring greater representation of ordinary citizens' concerns.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Various researchers have attempted to carry out analyses of the content of news in the *Daily Nation*, which is the leading mainstream English daily newspaper in Kenya. Some researchers analysed the content of both the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* combined in the same paper. Researchers have done content analysis on the coverage of various issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya; terrorism in general in Kenya; terrorism at Kenya's Garissa University; major government development projects, dubbed the Big Four Agenda; student protests; HIV/AIDS; drought and food security; and, disability. However, there is no known literature available on the analysis of the scope of coverage of news touching on common man/*mwananchi* in Kenya's mainstream newspapers, in particular, the *Daily Nation*. So, in the absence of such prior research, for the purpose of this study, the researcher went through available literature closely related to this investigation.

### The Global Context

As Croteau and Hoynes (2003) observe, the media surround us, with our everyday lives being saturated by communications tools, including the radio, television, newspapers, books, the Internet, movies, recorded music, and magazines. The presence of a newspaper, as Sawisky (2010) observes, is a key component of maintaining the quality of life in a remote city, town, or village by fostering and enhancing civic engagement in the community as well as presenting readers with insights into choices that impact their community.

McQuail (2010) observes that the early newspaper was marked by its regular appearance, commercial basis (openly for sale), public character and multiple purposes. Thus, it was for information, records, advertising, diversion and gossip. Fang (1997) writes that newspapers, as the new tool of communication, replaced some measures of oral communication. That given the opportunity, people preferred to read their information than to hear about it.

Bakker (2002) writes that in 1995, in Sweden, three journalists started the *Metro*, a free newspaper or free sheet, to highlight news at the community level, mainly

ignored or downplayed by mainstream newspapers. Today, the *Metro*, which is mainly an advertising platform for local businesses and carries some news and services for local communities, is considered the leading free newspaper around the world. It is published in over 150 major cities in 23 countries across Europe, North and South America and Asia. Bakker (2002) observes that the *Metro* has a unique global reach – attracting a young, active, well-educated metropolitan audience of over 18.4 million daily readers. However, there is scant literature on the market, readership and distribution of newspapers such as *Metro* in Kenya.

In Africa, the newspaper can be traced back to the era when most countries on the continent were under colonial governments (Makali, 2003). Frank Barton argues that throughout Africa, "the Adam and Eve of Africa's newspapers were the government gazettes" (Makali, 2003). Such gazettes were introduced by the Government as vehicles for transmitting state information to citizens. The earliest private Press served the socio-political interests of the immigrant races in settled colonies, such as Kenya, where Whites had a stake in the continued subjugation of Indigenous people. The emergence of the Press in Kenya, therefore, followed the same trend as was the case in most colonies in Africa.

### Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory, developed by Donald Shaw and Maxwell Combs, is one way of examining how newspapers treat news in terms of prominence. The theory states that the media provides leads to the public and tells them where they should focus their attention (McCombs et al., 2014). The media brings to people's attention a set agenda of topics and issues to respond to and think about (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). The material presented by the Press is selective, and that selectivity stems from its limited capacity to provide surveillance, from factors imposed on those who do the gatekeeping, and the financial limitations placed on media that must survive as profit-making business enterprises.

This researcher used this theory to help find out what people think about the range of coverage of grassroots or common man's issues in the *Daily Nation* in the Nairobi metropolitan area. As paid-for newspapers mainly depend on advertising for revenue, such newspapers almost always cover and highlight events with the agenda of the wealthy readers, as well as please the advertisers. The researcher, therefore, employed this theory to explain the impact of the mainstream media, in this case,

the *Daily Nation*, on the common man's agenda. The agenda-setting theory also helped this researcher attempt to explain why mainstream newspapers should consider dedicating more pages to the coverage of news and events affecting the ordinary person or the common *mwananchi* at the grassroots. The initiative would play a crucial role in highlighting the agenda of the common man and making it a worthy issue.

### Political-Economic Theory

Political-economic theory identifies a socially critical approach that focuses primarily on the relationship between the economic structure and dynamics of media industries and the ideological content of media (McQuail, 2010). According to (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003: p. 70), while “early nineteenth-century newspaper editors were unabashed advocates for political parties, late nineteenth-century newspaper editors were advocates as well, advocates for business, for their advertisers.” The two scholars observe that class permeates media content and makes some people "more valuable than others." They add that the for-profit, advertiser-driven nature of all commercial media means that advertisers are keenly interested in the economic status of media consumers. They want to reach people with enough disposable income to buy their products (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003: p. 134). Early newspapers did not seek to offend authorities. Instead, they were sometimes produced on behalf of such authorities (McQuail, 2010).

This researcher, therefore, used the Political-Economic Theory to explain how the cover price of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, at Kenya shillings sixty (KSH 60), as well as political and economic factors determine coverage of events by the *Daily Nation* in the Nairobi metropolitan area. Political-economic theory helped to explain how political elites influence the coverage of events through the statements they issue, as well as the activities they engage in. In other words, mainstream newspapers such as the *Daily Nation* tend to highlight issues touching on high-profile political and diplomatic leaders, the wealthy and the elite, and either reduce into briefs common man's issues or even relegate them to the inner pages.

### The Local Context

No literature is found on research on the scope of the coverage of the common man's issues in Kenya's English daily newspapers, including the *Daily Nation*. The closest such related research was done in 2013, with Fayó (2023, p. 6) observing that Kenyan print media tend

to publish stories from the country's far-flung regions on the inside pages. While studying the coverage of news from far-flung counties of Marsabit, Turkana and Mandera in the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, Fayó (2023, p. 33) observed that stories from the three counties were told more from the voices of other sources and elites, with fewer instances of the local people as sources.

The study further revealed that the majority of the actors in the stories from far-flung countries were non-locals. Fayó recommends that the publishers of newspapers in Kenya explore modalities that can encourage coverage of these regions along frames and on issues that would address the economic and developmental challenges from the local perspective. Fayó analysed the prominence of issues from the three counties covered by the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. The researcher sought to determine the frames that the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* used in the coverage of issues from the three counties. Another objective was to analyse the extent to which stories from the three counties published by the two newspapers drew from local sources and realities.

Ngirachu (2020, p.65), while carrying a study on the coverage of the Kenya government projects, dubbed the Big Four Agenda, in the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, observes that some stories are published in the newspapers simply because journalists are less interested in the events or subject covered. Ngirachu's study was entitled: Coverage of the Big Four Agenda in the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers in Kenya. The scholar observed that there was a lack of priming of stories on the Big Four Agenda. The scholar observed that stories reporters or editors consider complicated were tucked in the inside pages of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* (Ngirachu, 2020, p.65). The scholar employed priming and agenda-setting theories, perhaps having considered that Political-Economic Theory could not fit the probe.

Eboi (2015, p.140) observes that elements of impact/significance, human interest, and proximity play a major role in determining the usage and placement of stories. The scholar analysed the coverage of the terrorist attack on Kenya's Garissa University College on April 2, 2015. The attack left 147 people dead and scores injured. Eboi's topic was: A Content and Critical Discourse Analysis of the Nation Newspaper's Coverage of the Garissa University College Terrorist Attack in Kenya. One of the objectives was to determine whether the *Daily*

*Nation* conformed to the traditional news function of informing by use of the inverted pyramid (Eboi, p.143). That is, highlighting the most important facts in a story as well as keeping out personal opinions. The scholar discovered that the *Daily Nation* newspaper maintained its integrity as a body charged with informing the public by keeping to the highest standards of journalism in its reasonable adherence to the inverted pyramid style of news writing (Eboi, p.156).

Kiarie and Mogambi (2017, p. 56) argue that when a story is viewed to be prominent, it is allocated more space in a newspaper. The size of a story reflects the editorial viewpoint of the newspaper on its prominence. Using priming and agenda-setting theories, the scholars carried out investigations to examine how the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* cover terrorism issues in Kenya. Their research aimed to analyze how terrorism was reported in the Kenyan print media during 2015, a year marked by the tragic attack on Garissa University by terrorists, which resulted in 147 fatalities and many injuries. The two scholars concluded that story placement on issues of terrorism was tucked inside the newspaper pages. The two observed that media accorded stories on terrorism in Kenya splash pages mostly when a terror attack happened, thus making the media reactive. During months when terror attacks did not occur, the media only followed up with news articles on policies being put in place by the Kenyan Government and on what prominent individuals, such as Kenya's politicians, were saying on the topic. Kiarie & Mogambi (2017, p. 63).

In a study of coverage of student protests around the country in the *Daily Nation*, Keles-Muli (2017, p. 584) observes that the newspaper and its sister publications, *Saturday Nation* and *Sunday Nation*, tend to relegate such stories to inside pages. The scholar, who employed a quantitative approach to analyse the content, observes that such coverage was apparently negative towards the students. (Kiptinness & Kiwanuka-Tondo (2019, p.5) analysed the trends in news coverage and the prominent issue frames for HIV/AIDS-related stories in the *Daily Nation*. One of the three research questions was: What was the most prevalent frame in the coverage of HIV/AIDS by the *Daily Nation* newspaper in the years 2011–2015? The research utilized a quantitative approach to content analysis. Their study was entitled: The Prevalence of HIV/AIDS Frames in Kenya Newspapers: A summative content analysis of the *Daily Nation*. The two researchers observed that most of the stories being local were written by the *Nation*

newspapers' own reporters. It is worth noting that the scope of the research did not cover stories touching on the ordinary people at the grassroots.

While researching how the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* covered drought and food security stories, Namaswa (2021, p. 32) noted that the two newspapers tend to give considerable coverage to political actors in the articles on food security. The scholar analysed content analysis of the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* newspapers during the years 2018 and 2019. Namaswa (2021, p. 32) observes that as the framing of stories in the realm of politics has been discussed, political dimensions in stories are meant to sell the story, hinging on the prominence of news sources and newsmakers. The overall outcome is that a greater number of articles took on a political viewpoint instead of addressing the scientific or socio-economic aspects related to food security and drought.

As Abwayo (2019, p.39) notes, more coverage on an issue might be viewed as a move by the media to increase ratings rather than inform the audiences. The scholar states that media managers predetermine content, arguing that the trend may influence the important decisions that policymakers may need to take on a given subject. It is worth noting that a review of related literature revealed that none of the researchers employed the Political-Economic Theory, which mainly informed this probe. Besides, there is no prior research on the analysis of the scope of coverage of news touching on the common man in Kenya's mainstream newspapers, in particular, the *Daily Nation*. This study, therefore, was motivated more by the gap in related literature on the analysis of news content focusing on the scope of coverage of news touching on the common man in Kenya's mainstream newspapers, in particular, the *Daily Nation*.

### METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a qualitative research design to gain in-depth insights into the scope of news coverage in Kenya's *Daily Nation*, focusing on story content, space allocation, and page placement. The qualitative method was chosen because of its capacity to capture respondents' perspectives, experiences, and emotions, making it ideal for exploring underreported grassroots issues, as supported by Boeije (2010). It facilitated rich, descriptive data through thematic coding, contributing to both theoretical and practical outcomes.

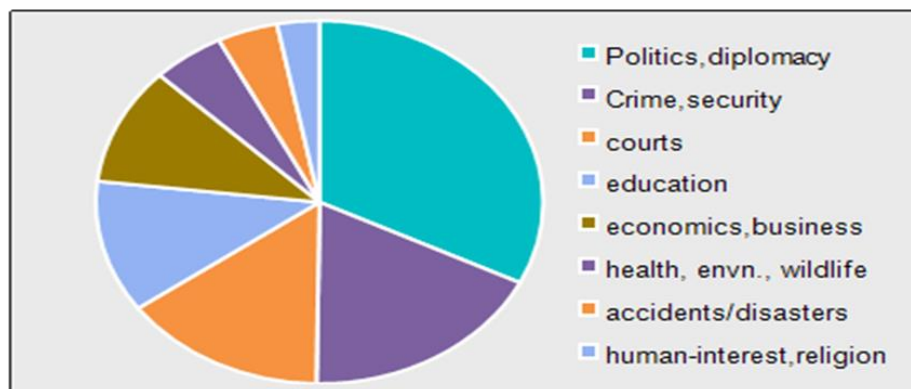


Figure 3: Distribution of News Themes in the *Daily Nation*.

Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis. The interviews, conducted in Nairobi City County in July 2013, targeted 20 purposively sampled respondents (10 readers and 10 non-readers) from diverse settings like streets, business centres, and social gatherings. These open-ended interviews explored perceptions of the *Daily Nation*'s coverage, particularly of common citizens' issues, with the researcher taking notes due to the impracticality of recording. Qualitative content analysis examined story treatment, focusing on placement and depth, comparing elite versus grassroots coverage. Quantitative content analysis supplemented this by measuring coverage size and themes.

The study purposively selected the *Daily Nation* due to its high readership and focused on July 2013 for its typical news mix, avoiding major events that could skew coverage (Lynch & Peer, 2002). A total of 229 stories from the first six pages were analysed. Data analysis involved open, axial, and selective coding to identify and connect themes, enabling a deeper understanding of editorial priorities and their impact on grassroots representation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Size of News Coverage and Themes

The news stories analysed were published in the *Daily Nation* in the month of July 2013. Only content in the first six pages was analysed. The results revealed that out of 229 stories, 74 or (32.3%) were on politics and diplomacy, followed by crime and security, which had 41 (17.9%). Courts had 34 (14.8%), education 27 (11.8%), economics and business 24 (10.5%), and health, environment and wildlife had 12 (4.4%). Accidents and disasters had 10 (5.2%), while human interest and religion had the least 7 (3.06%).

The findings tend to agree with the argument advanced by the Political-Economic Theory in the selection of stories that media content is dictated more by political and economic factors. The results revealed that of the 229 stories, 119 were briefs and were used in the inside pages of the newspaper. Using the Political-Economic Theory, it can be concluded that the stories were used mainly depending on who made the news as well as which news was most likely to make the *Daily Nation* sell and, in turn, bring in revenue for the publisher and investors.

The outcome of the study seems to agree with the fact that the agenda of news is largely influenced by the Political-Economic Theory (McQuail, 2010). For instance, in the month under study, that is, on July 26, a story was used as a brief on Page 6. It was headlined: "Woman on probation for killing her baby". The subject of the story was just an ordinary woman from Ruiru, on the outskirts of Nairobi. Had the editor, perhaps, not used arguments advanced by the Political-Economic Theory (McQuail, 2010), the story could have been given more prominence and used big, say, on Page 2 or Page 3. However, one had to consider the status of the subject in the story and whether the story would have helped sell the newspaper more if it had been used prominently, even on page one. In a local newspaper focusing on the common man's issues, such a story could have been used on page one.

The same *Daily Nation* edition carried, as the lead story on Page 5, an article headlined: "Saitoti son: Teacher files complaint". This story appeared to have been given preferential treatment as the subject of the case was Prof. George Saitoti, a former vice president of Kenya. Prof. Saitoti had been accused, posthumously, of being associated with the theft of a baby boy he reportedly adopted. A teacher and his wife had taken the matter to

court, claiming they were the biological parents of the child. The main front-page story that day was “It’s all systems go for Makueni by-election”.

The story was treated so as it was not only political but involved the filling of a vacant senatorial seat left vacant following the death of a prominent Kenyan lawyer, Mutula Kilonzo. The late senator’s son, Mutula Kilonzo Jnr, was seeking to step into his father’s shoes. The editor seemed to have employed the same Political-Economic Theory in deciding how to treat the two stories. The subjects were known high-profile politicians, and highlighting such stories would have helped the paper sell.

Another brief appearing on Page 6 on July 23, 2013, was headlined: “Relatives of couple killed in terror battle seek out child”. The story was about a couple from Githurai, an area also on the outskirts of Nairobi and mainly populated by ordinary people. It seemed the story was made brief and relegated to Page 6 as it involved the common man. The story should have been given prominence and used on earlier pages, say, on Page 3 as the page lead. However, that page was allocated to a human-interest story on women Members of Parliament (MPs) with babies.

The story was about women MPs having successfully lobbied to have lawmakers with babies be given special allowances to hire babysitters. The story was used as the page lead, with the headline: “Boost for lawmakers with babies”. The editor, in deciding how to treat the story, seemed to have been informed by Political-Economic Theory together with Agenda Setting Theory. The two theories advance the argument that editors are influenced by other factors in making decisions on the use and placement of news stories in newspapers. Such factors include if a story has the possibility of making the newspaper sell.

The same Political-Economic Theory seemed to have applied in the use of the story headlined: “First woman canon in diocese”. The story was about the first woman canon in the Anglican Church in Mount Kenya South. Though an interesting story, it was “hidden” down on Page 6. In the opinion of this researcher, such a story could have been used well and on earlier pages. On the same Page 6 was another brief headlined: “Butchers protest at the rise in slaughterhouse fees”. The relatively poor treatment of the two stories could have been informed by the fact that the news subjects were only

ordinary people. The main story that day was about education, headlined: “Resume duty or be fired, teachers told”. The second main story was a human-interest story on the proposed Bill: “Jilted partners may sue over broken promises”.

On July 15, another brief on Page 6 was headlined: “Woman killed as lorry ploughs into residents”. The brief was about a 53-year-old woman who died while two others were seriously injured when a lorry ploughed into pedestrians in Embu town, in Central Kenya, far away from Nairobi. The subject of the news story was just an ordinary person, and the editor, perhaps, in line with the Political-Economic Theory, could not have treated it any better. The theory could have dictated that the story was not worth being used big and placed on earlier pages. The results of this study helped answer the question: “What is the range of issues covered in the *Daily* as the leading mainstream paid-for newspaper in Kenya?”

The findings revealed that stories on politics or those involving the powerful, the affluent and the elite enjoyed wider coverage in the *Daily Nation*, while those on ordinary people were allocated less space and used on inside pages. The findings are a clear indication that a huge gap exists in the coverage of the common man’s issues at the grassroots, hence the need for mainstream newspapers, including the *Daily Nation*, to dedicate more pages to the coverage of common man’s issues.

### **Main Issues Covered by Mainstream Newspapers and Coverage of Grassroots or Common Man’s Issues**

The study sought views from respondents on how they see the coverage of common man’s issues in mainstream newspapers, especially in the Nairobi metropolitan area. The researcher probed them further to give reasons for such a trend. The researcher purposively selected 20 respondents, 10 readers and 10 non-readers of mainstream newspapers. The respondents were of both female and male gender. They included youth aged 35 years and below as well as those aged 36 years and above.

There were respondents who said they read newspapers while others said were illiterate, and so they could not read the newspapers. However, such non-readers said they would hear people discussing the contents of newspapers and concluded that politics was the main issue covered by mainstream newspapers. On why they thought so, the majority said that politicians, the elites,

and the wealthy made news and that such news made the papers sell.

This being exploratory research, the researcher used the qualitative research method as it would help get in-depth data about the usage of stories such as content, allocation of space and their placement on newspaper pages. The research was purposively done in the month of July 2013, and 20 respondents were purposively sampled, with 10 being readers and 10 non-readers of newspapers. The study employed purposive sampling because the population of the study was both newspaper readers and non-readers. One respondent from the densely-populated Mathare area on the outskirts of eastern Nairobi stated:

R1: *“Politicians are powerful and they (publishers) think if they put politics first the rest will follow. They (publishers) put the common man’s issues inside. You cannot find them (common man’s issues) on the front page. Positive stories are rarely covered. They highlight only crime. I rarely read positive stories from Ndando (Dandora) area in the Nation. I can’t remember the last time I read a positive story from Eastlands. Local news is pushed to the edge. This is because such people do not buy newspapers and even if their stories were covered, they would not buy the newspaper.”*

Another argued that mainstream newspapers highlight politics, and more political issues tend to help sell the publications. A respondent who reported reading newspapers to follow current affairs, mainly politics, stated: R2: *“Raila makes newspapers sell.”* The respondent was referring to Raila Odinga, the former Prime Minister of Kenya and the current leader of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) party. The party was then a member of the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) during Kenya’s General Election on March 4, 2013. The respondent said:

*“It’s politics. All politics. Common man’s issues are placed inside (newspapers), and you can’t even find them easily. I think politics is always up in Kenya. If there is a lot of politics today, a lot of people would buy newspapers the following day expecting to read more of those political issues.”*

Yet another stated R3: *“Ordinary people not known, but people like Raila are well-known, and people would want to know what he is doing or happening about him,”*

Another respondent, an engineer, stated: R4: *“Politics, 90 per cent of Kenyan news is politics.”*

One respondent reported neither buying nor reading newspapers because he is illiterate, but still explained he usually heard newspaper readers discussing the main stories of the day and could tell political issues almost always made headline news.

R5: *“I hear people talking about politics. You know lies and propaganda are sweet, and they make newspapers sell.”*

The findings were in line with the Political-Economic Theory that argues that newspaper editors tend to highlight stories they believe would help sell the newspapers. This researcher posed the question: What is your opinion about the coverage of grassroots or common man’s issues by mainstream newspapers in Nairobi? The reasons advanced were in line with the political-economic theory, which dictates the coverage of news depending on the profile of the subject or whether the news would make newspapers sell. Such high-profile sources make news easily by holding press conferences, sending press releases to newsrooms, as well as addressing public rallies. As such, media operators do not incur costs in sourcing such stories. This translates into making a profit at minimal costs.

The researcher sought the opinion of respondents over the coverage of grassroots or common man's issues, and all the respondents agreed that such issues were poorly covered by the mainstream newspapers, in this case, the *Daily Nation*. Most respondents said they thought the common man's issues were often ignored either because such people did not make news or they had no buying power of newspapers. One respondent, a resident of Eastlands who buys the *Daily Nation* on a daily basis, stated that common man’s issues were almost always ignored by mainstream newspapers.

R1: *“They are not really covered at all. There are many news events happening at the grassroots, but they are not covered. (Mainstream) newspapers ignore them. Newspapers are interested in people who have money. They cover people whom they think can get something from them. Reporters always follow such people because they can give them something. If you have money, they (reporters) come to you always. The common man does not have money. Reporters first want to know what big issue the common man has. The poor man has no big issue! (to make it to mainstream newspapers).”*

When asked what grassroots or common man's issues they wanted to be highlighted by the mainstream newspapers, many respondents reported that they preferred business and development issues. Seven of the respondents preferred human-interest and lifestyle stories, while one of the respondents was for crime and security issues.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Conclusion:** Newspaper readers interviewed were of the view that the coverage of grassroots or common man's issues in the Nairobi metropolitan area in the *Daily Nation*, which is the leading mainstream newspaper in East and Central Africa, was poor. Many respondents would prefer a newspaper that would carry in-depth coverage of grassroots or common man's issues, especially on business and development, crime and security, education and human-interest or lifestyle issues.

The results of the study showed that it was clear the *Daily Nation*, a paid-for national English newspaper, tends to highlight more issues affecting high-profile personalities, such as politicians, diplomats, public officers, the wealthy and the elite. It can be deduced that most news events affecting the common man/*mwananchi* at the grassroots in the Nairobi metropolitan area do not make their way into the main news pages (the first six pages) of the *Daily Nation*. Instead, politics, diplomacy, as well as issues affecting the powerful, the wealthy and the elite continue to dominate major news pages of the *Daily Nation*. As such, there is a huge gap left by the newspaper as far as the coverage of grassroots or common man's issues is concerned.

The study revealed that there is a need for mainstream newspapers, including the *Daily Nation*, to dedicate more pages for the coverage of issues affecting the common man at the grassroots in the Nairobi metropolitan area. Publishing more such news would attract more readers and, in turn, draw in more sales revenue. Greater reach would attract more advertisers, who would, in turn, bring in the much-needed revenue. The findings are in line with the Political-Economic Theory, which advances the argument that news will be given prominence if it affects the powerful, the affluent and the elite, as such news could help make the newspaper sell.

**Recommendations:** The research recommends that mainstream newspapers, such as the *Daily Nation*, consider dedicating more pages to the coverage of issues touching on the common man or the common *mwananchi* at the grassroots. Investors could consider establishing community newspapers that would prioritise local or grassroots development issues. Such an initiative could bridge the gap left by major newspapers and create more inclusive, community-centred journalism. This study should also benefit media houses as well as potential investors in community newspapers. It is also recommended that further research be done on the various ways in which mainstream newspapers could increase coverage of common man's issues at the grassroots. Local media houses which publish mainstream paid-for newspapers should carry out further research and explore business opportunities that may be presented by dedicating more pages to increase coverage of common man's issues at the community level.

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