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ABSTRACT

The print media in Kenya has been covering Kenya's Parliamentary debates for decades. Parliament, on its part, has played the role of being an important news source for both the print and electronic media. As the media continues to fulfil its core mandate of informing the public about the operations of Parliament, the latter also provides a vital news source for the media, hence, leading to a symbiotic relationship between the two institutions, with the public being the main beneficiary. This research explored factors that affect reporting of Parliament and parliamentarians in two most popular Kenyan newspapers, namely the Daily Nation and The Standard. Firstly, it investigated factors that determine parliamentary news coverage in the print media in Kenya. Secondly, it established the role of media organizations in parliamentary reporting. Thirdly, it analysed the newspaper audience's gains from reading news on Parliament activities. Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model of Manufacturing Consent, and Jurgen Habermas' Public Sphere Theory were the foundational theories used in this study. The study also employed Constructivism philosophical paradigm with mixed method approach through triangulation using structured questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and observations. The results showed most of the newspaper reporting on MPs during the period under study took a negative angle. The study concluded that Parliament will always act as a vital source of news for public consumption, and its role as a sphere for public debate is unlikely to diminish any time soon. The study recommended that a similar study needs to be carried out to investigate the foregoing phenomena in both radio and television stations. The study also found that 'Manufacturing Consent' Model by Herman and Chomsky did not feature prominently, save for situations where the Media uses profit-making as the main criteria for publishing news from Parliament.

Key words: Fourth Estate, Newsworthiness, Print Media, Propaganda, Public Sphere

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The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management. **ISSN** 2312-9492 (Online) 2414-8970 (Print). www.strategicjournals.com

INTRODUCTION

Media values inform news reporting in Parliaments all over the world. Wolfsfeld (2004) explains how media affect processes of negotiation and peacemaking. These roles are fashioned along a plethora of factors in the political and media environment, including "news values" (specifically identifying immediacy, drama, simplicity, and ethnocentrism), the level of "elite consensus" behind the process, the "number and severity of crises" that occur during the process, the level of media sensationalism, and the extent of "shared media" among the parties to the conflict. All of these factors feed into the politics-media-politics (PMP) cycle, in which "changes in the political environment lead to changes in media performance that often lead to further changes in the political environment" (Wolfsfeld, 2004, p. 31).

The 12th Kenyan Parliament had 349 seats, with 290 constituency MPs, 47 women county representatives and 12 nominated MPs. The Kenyan press can be defined in three sections: colonial era press (before 1963), the post-independence era press (stretching from 1963 to 1990) and the multi-party era press from 1991 to the present day (Ireri, 2012). This study focused on the role of the Press in parliamentary reporting in the multi-party era, zeroing in on two of Kenya's most read newspapers – the Daily Nation and the Standard.

The role of media in the safeguarding of transparency of democratic processes in modern-day politics and society cannot be underestimated. By so doing, the media plays its 'watchdog' role. The watchdog allegory confers to the media the role of being a medium for dialogue, investigators of bad behavior, an opponent to power domination and knowledge and the defenders of freedom, democracy and truth. Edmund Burke (Not Referenced) emphasized this traditional idea of a 'fourth estate' when he stated thus: "There are three estates in Parliament, but in the reporter's gallery yonder sit a fourth estate more important than they all." (Carlyle, 1841, cited in Donohue et al., 1995:118). (*Media as a Government Watchdog: Introduction, 2020*).

Gate-keeping in journalism is of vital importance in the media environment today. Gatekeepers create and determine what should be disseminated to the public and hence, decide the social reality of the public, as well as their world view (Shoemaker &Vos, 2009). However, the rise of the social media in news dissemination in recent years has blurred the line that distinguishes journalists and the media audiences (Tutheridge, 2017). Reliability of news sources is essential to enable the public access information which they can trust, as well as to protect the public from fake news. The question, then, arises: How much gate keeping of parliamentary news (if any) is practiced within the Kenyan media outlets? This study seeks to explain the dynamics involved in parliamentary media coverage.

Parliaments rely on media outlets to inform the masses about their (parliaments') roles and work. However, a climate of mistrust pervades this relationship between media and parliament (Puttnam, 2005). While journalists often cite frustrations owing to restrictions on rights to parliamentary proceedings, or restrictive laws that may hinder what they report to the masses, legislators often claim that the media has contributed to the reduction of the esteem with which legislators are held, owing to negative portrayal of parliaments, legislators and other parliamentary officials. Owing to the differences in the operations, styles and goals of the two institutions, tension between parliamentarians and the media is inevitable. However, neither institution can work effectively without the other, hence the need for collaboration and building of trust for the mutual benefit of both, with public interest being the main goal. The public is entitled to being effectively informed about what their elected representatives are doing in Parliament.

In Kenya, Parliament and the media have had a love-hate relationship. In an article headlined: "Love-hate relationship between Kenya media, MPs

play out," (*Daily Nation* 17th February 2011), about a deadlock concerning the legality of the then Kenya's President Kibaki"s nominees to Government, certain MPs accused the media of "falling prey to interests bent on derailing the Constitution." In response, a journalist stated that "the love-hate relationship between politicians and the media is unlikely to go away."

Parliamentary debates are essentially of public interest. Therefore, media houses view Parliament as a valuable news source that provides them with information that is worth reporting. To the (Kenyan) citizen's mind, the concept of Parliament has always been of that hallowed place filled with honourable members who congregate to make laws and debate the welfare of citizens. However, over time, there has developed a perception of Parliament as being a place where personal interests supersede national interests, hence the reference "MPigs" to denote greed among Members of Parliament (*Daily Nation* 4th September 2020). A trend has emerged whereby the media in Kenya reports a lot about Parliament whenever there are conflicts or controversies. But even as the Kenyan Media reports about conflicts and controversies, it must not forget that the most important duty of Parliament is to legislate laws and to scrutinize the government's actions, policies, and spending.

According to *Fondation Hirondelle* Newsletter (2020), it is vital to create a genuine relationship of trust between citizens and their representatives, not only to help prevent crises, but also between legislators and scribes who are vital in building linkages between the people and their representatives. In the exercise of democracy, serious tensions can crop up between politicians, the media and also citizens. This could result in group reactions that can poison public deliberations. Media, therefore, should uphold its rightful role of creating spaces for education, information, dialogue, analysis, and peaceful interactive debates, as well as facilitating the participation of citizens and direct contribution to parliamentary work by developing new participatory technologies. This study provided insights into the relations between the two institutions and the public perception of Parliament.

Statement of the Problem

Media practice is such that newspapers report on issues they consider newsworthy. This means that not everything that is deliberated upon in Parliament is reported. This leads to a situation where, despite the fact that parliamentary reporting has been practiced in Kenya for decades, a general opinion may be formed that Kenyan Parliament and parliamentarians are perceived negatively by the public. This study investigated the factors that determine parliamentary news coverage in the print media in Kenya. The study probed the role of media organizations in parliamentary reporting, and the gains that newspaper audiences got from reading news on Parliament's activities.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study of the study were:

- To investigate factors that determine parliamentary news coverage in the print media in Kenya.
- To establish the role of media organizations in parliamentary reporting.
- To analyze the newspaper audiences' gains from reading news on Parliament's activities

LITERATURE REVIEW

The coverage of Parliamentary news, just like coverage of any other news items, is mostly determined by news values. Beale (2016) lists the news values as impact, timeliness, surprise, contrarian elements, trendiness, conflict, human interest, and humour. In Parliamentary reporting all over the world, journalists will often ask themselves: What will be the impact of this Bill on the populace? Who stands to benefit from this Motion? What are the financial implications of these statutes, *et cetera*? In other words, the more likely the impact of the business transacted in Parliament, the more the news value. Timeliness is equally of utmost importance. Current news events

carry more news value than events that happened a long time ago. Surprise, or bizarreness, is a vital news value. Therefore, when Members of Parliament fight within the precincts of Parliament, that happening will certainly grace the front pages of newspapers. Contrarian elements refer to situations whereby long-held beliefs are proven to have been fallacious all along. For example, an MP may report to Parliament that new scientific study has revealed that increased perks do not necessarily translate to improved debates in Parliament! Trendiness refers to whether the story exemplifies an important development, or whether it goes contrary to a well-publicized trend. Conflict is a core news value. Opposing groups, sides, or arguments, often receive more news coverage than ordinary events showing concurrence. Human interest is also an important news value. When an MP enters Parliament dressed in traditional regalia, that story arouses human interest. Humour is also a news value that captures readers' attention.

Firstly, confrontational debates and conflicts provide great fodder for journalists, who are fully aware that conflict sells news (Global Parliamentary Report, 2012). Then there is also the aspect of national policies. These must be reported and made public by newspapers/news media organizations. Representation of people and their interests, too, is an important factor that is considered in parliamentary reporting. Public opinion is important too, and people must have faith in their representatives, hence the need for the media to shed light on MPs and parliamentary officials.

In some Parliaments in Africa, journalists have been caught up in intra-party conflicts which are outside their control. In February 2020, *Media Foundation for West Africa* launched a complaint concerning threats by the Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana to bar journalists from covering proceedings in the Parliament House. The Speaker had issued a warning, following complaints that journalists had abandoned proceedings in the House the previous day to interact with an Opposition Member of Parliament.

In Kenya, the media has occasionally found itself in conflict with Parliament over what has been described as "negative coverage". Hall (1997) argues that the media may not altogether be innocent participants in skewed reporting. According to the scholar, though many media consumers do not see anything wrong with the media representations, there are actually a lot of misrepresentations in the media.

The Kenyan Press has not been spared from criticism in the past. Both the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* have, at different times, been victims of Government repression. In 1989, for example, the *Daily Nation* was banned for four months from covering Parliamentary proceedings, arising from a Motion moved by the then Deputy Speaker Kalonzo Musyoka (now Leader of Wiper Democratic Movement-Kenya), on claims that the newspaper was "disrespectful" to the then monolithic Kanu Government, but which action critics say was motivated by revenge against the newspaper that was then viewed by authorities as being too independent and fearless for comfort (Khamisi, 2011).

Andreas Mehler, et al (2006) describing the impact of the raid, stated that, in 2006, there were serious reports of increased intimidation and harassment of media workers and journalists by the authorities. The press freedom index of *Reporters without Borders* placed Kenya at 118 (out of 168) down from 109 (out of 167) in 2005.The foregoing actions against the Kenyan Press by the Government serve to illustrate that "flak" (in these two cases, coercion) can be a very effective tool in muzzling the media.

In his research, Ochieng" (2013) investigated parliamentary journalists in Kenya by gauging their capacity in covering the proceedings of Parliament, as well as the difficulties that the journalists undergo in their duty of parliamentary reporting. The study specifically targeted journalists working for *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers. According to the results of the study, parliamentary journalists' capacity to cover parliamentary

proceedings was unsatisfactory. Their ability, however, could be boosted through training on parliamentary reporting, procedures and Standing Orders.

According to Wandera and Mugubi (2014), deficiency of public understanding and consciousness about functions of Parliaments and their operations is a major problem encountered by many countries with developing parliamentary democracies. This state of affairs led to the conception of live parliament broadcast, they opine.

Okong'o (2016) sought to ascertain the power of live broadcast of Parliamentary deliberations on the perception, outlook, and knowledge of Nairobi-based members of civil society organizations on the 11th Parliament and its operations. According to the research, live parliamentary broadcasts raised the awareness rates amongst those members about that Parliament and its role.

Recent studies on parliaments around the globe tend to paint a rather unpleasant picture of the institutions. More often than not, they are rated as among the least popular national institutions. Only political parties rate lower in terms of popular trust (IPU Report, 2012.) Parliaments are "puzzlingly unpopular," according to an eminent parliamentary analyst. This situation is worsened by the fact that the traditional roles of Parliament are facing enormous challenges in securing public legitimacy, as they compete with new and more direct forms of representation.

With the above scenario, therefore, it is not uncommon for Parliaments and the media to "clash." This research investigates the factors that come into play and determines the role of news media in the coverage of parliamentary news in Kenya.

Media organizations play a great role in Parliamentary reporting, and the relationship between politicians and journalists is very close and mutual. According to Vliegenthart and Montes (2014), while politicians require the services of journalists to make the electorate aware of their work in Parliament, journalists need politicians as vital sources of relevant information.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) vouches for cordial relationships between Parliaments and the Press. Parliamentary proceedings should be open to the public, meaning being open to the media who act as the 'eyes and ears' of the masses. According to IPU, both the independent media and parliaments have mutual roles of ensuring that the public is well informed about parliamentary activities. In recent years, IPU notes, parliaments globally have been striving to enlighten and teach the public about their activities, while engaging their interest and attention. However, there still exists a high level of distrust between media and parliaments, according to IPU. Journalists often cite frustrations by restrictions on access to proceedings, or by contempt and defamation laws which more often than not constrain what can be reported publicly. Legislators, on the other hand, cite the media as being partly responsible for the low esteem in which they are jointly held, as a result of a one-sided portrayal of their (parliamentarians') work.

Riddel (2002), writing about the situation in the British House of Commons, stated that the media had largely turned their back on Parliament, but then so had most leading politicians. In his latter observations, however, he acknowledges that the British Parliament, though widely misunderstood, notably in the media, has its influence being much greater than is widely assumed.

Elahi (2013), in a study on Bangladeshi journalists' opinions, practices, attitudes about ethical dilemmas, and specifically those dealing with clash of interest, emphasizes the importance of the news media in carrying out the watchdog role, among other functions. This function, he adds, permits journalists to scrutinize misconduct, monitor power, reveal dishonesty, disclose information about illegal activities, and inform the public about acts of public relevance. By exposing misdeeds by public office-holders, journalists boost public awareness about

practices that drain public coffers and impact negatively on the electorate.

Walgrave, Soroka and Nuytemans (2007), in their study on whether the media determine or co-determine media agenda in Belgium, established that the Press does, to a certain extent, establish parliamentary and government agenda, where newspapers exert more power than television. The study also found Parliament as more prone to follow the Press than the governing authority, and that media influence was more pronounced for certain issues such as law and order and environment, than for other issues such as economic matters and foreign policy.

From the foregoing, therefore, we can determine that media houses, in their role of serving public interests as well as their own, can determine the agenda of Parliament and government. This study explores the role(s) of these media organizations as far as parliamentary reporting is concerned.

The IPU (2012) emphasizes the importance of the public receiving relevant information (through the media) if they are to influence parliaments and parliamentarians. Only then will members of the public hold legislators properly to account. In performing this role, therefore, journalists, editors and media presenters become important conveyer belts of information used by parliaments to inform the public about their work.

By reading news on Parliament, audiences/readers become more informed about their representatives, the Government, and the policies and issues that are of importance to them. An informed citizenry is an enlightened citizenry, able to confront its representatives about the failure to enact laws and policies in Parliament that could benefit the populace.

Newspapers play an important role in publishing and therefore informing citizens about the work of their representatives in Parliament. Inevitably, through objective reporting of parliamentary proceedings, newspapers confer shared responsibilities to both MPs and voters, in that the former will be more exposed to the latter concerning their performance. For example, a report on best performing and worst performing MPs given prominence in *Daily Nation* or *Standard* is likely to draw the attention of the whole country and elicit varied reactions from different quarters. While the best performers will most likely be basking in glory, the report will most likely be met with anger and derision from those MPs who have been portrayed negatively.

This study investigated the gains that newspaper audiences/readers derive from reading news on Parliamentary activities.

Theoretical Framework

This research was hinged on constructivist paradigm as a concept in research. A test of theories that the researcher believed would help scholars to understand the intricacies involved in parliamentary reporting in democracies today, included Jurgen Habermas' Theory of Public Sphere and Noam Chomsky's Propaganda Model. An overview is given into the problems/issues that the researcher posited could be major hindrances for effective reporting of Parliament in Kenyan print media. The review also includes a critical look at the role of media organizations and journalists in parliamentary reporting.

Jurgen Habermas' Theory of Public Sphere

Public sphere as a concept was formulated by Jürgen Habermas in his influential work *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Habermas, 1962), translated into English *as The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (1989)*. This writing offers an exhaustive social narration of the expansion of the bourgeois public sphere since its beginnings in the 18th century salons, up to its revolution through the influence of capital-inspired Press.

Bruns and Highfield (2015) argue that, though Habermas' theory of the public sphere remains a major element for the understanding of public communiqué and deliberation, the public sphere is

a creation of its era. Habermas therefore conceptualized his *Öffentlichkeit* - the public sphere - as a space that is created and guided by the workings of the mass media (both print and broadcast), with "mediated political communication" being "passed on by an elite" (Habermas 2006) comprising journalists themselves and those public actors whom journalism affords an opportunity to speak. By contrast, ordinary folks - the public - are cast in the role of a passive audience that, for the most part, is merely able to watch the unfolding proceedings on this "virtual stage of mediated communication" (Habermas 2006).

Going by the Habermasian Theory of the Public Sphere, it appears obvious that, similarly, the Kenyan Parliament, its proceedings, as well as the resultant reporting of the same by journalists on the "public actors" (in this case, the parliamentarians), presents the same scenario today as was presented by Habermas during his time, with the ordinary people being presented as audience members who watch the unfolding events without the ability to talk back.

Public sphere theory was quite applicable in this research, owing to the fact that Parliament is a sphere for public debates. Eggington (2014) states that the word "Parliament" comes from the French word "parlement" meaning a conversation or a "talking." According to Eggington, Parliament is all about words, argument, and debate, with the parliamentary reporter having the special responsibility of reporting those debates to the masses. Radio and television, newspapers and magazines are the media of the public sphere, the scholar states. This research was, however, hinged more on the "political public sphere" which is, for purposes of the study, exemplified by Parliament and its proceedings.

In the Kenyan case, Parliament and the Press may be described as "enablers" of the public sphere, where the former initiates debates while the latter disseminates (some of the) deliberations, in news form, for the benefit of the public. Therefore,

Parliament and the Press become "mediators" between the state (the Executive) and society. A situation exists in the Kenyan Press today, where newspapers have sometimes been accused of "turning into agents of manipulation" through publication of "biased" news and propaganda to suit their owners' interests.

A major shortcoming of the Habermas theory is the assumption that the public is a "passive audience" with no input into the political debating arena. This is not the situation in Kenya currently, where *wananchi* (a Swahili term used to describe people who were born – and live – in Kenya) are politically enlightened and quite active in participating in political and socio-economic debates concerning the well-being of their country. This study allocated Parliament the role of "Public Sphere" where debates are conducted and policies made. Habermas' theory, therefore, was the best "anchor" for this research as it rightly cast Parliament as the right "public sphere." This aligned well with the objectives of the study: to investigate factors that determine parliamentary news coverage in the print media in Kenya; to establish the role of media organizations in parliamentary reporting, and to analyze the newspaper audiences' gains from reading news on Parliament's activities. Parliamentary debates are themselves conducted within the parliamentary "public sphere." It is, was therefore, vital that the impact of such debates be evaluated through proper research. This is what this study investigated.

The Herman and Chomsky's 'Manufacturing Consent – A Propaganda Model'

Herman & Chomsky (1988) opine that in nations where the reins of power are with state bureaucracy, the vice-like grip over the media, often augmented by official censorship, makes it obvious that the Press serves the whims of the dominant ruling political and business class.

The scholars posit that, in a world of intense wealth and key conflicts of class interests, to fulfill this role requires well organized propaganda. However, in situations where media are private and formal

censorship is absent, it is much more difficult to witness such a propaganda system at work. This is particularly the case where members of the Press are in active competition, every so often attacking and exposing commercial and governmental misdeeds, while aggressively portraying themselves as champions for free speech and the interests of the community in general.

The Herman and Chomsky theory is relevant to this research because it explains the factors at play during publication or non-publication of news items, and specifically, in this research, factors that may lead to reporting or non-reporting of news from the Kenyan Parliament. The two scholars then list what they call "the essential ingredients" of their propaganda model, or a set of news "filters" under the following headings: (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) "anticommunism as a national religion and control mechanism (this last one, however, refers specifically to the state of the media in the United States and other pro-West nations, during the Cold War).

The main flaw in this Model, according to this researcher, is that inasmuch as it explains the factors that may come into play during reportage of parliamentary news by the media, it neither explains nor weighs the impact of such news to the Public. The Model leaves a lot of questions on how

the Public is affected by what comes out of parliament through the Press. In other words, it offers no opportunity to gauge the feedback by the Public concerning what has emanated from Parliament through the Press. This research investigated the effect(s) (if any) that the Propaganda Model had on parliamentary reporting by the Kenyan print media.

Concerning advertising as the main source of income for the mass media, it is common knowledge that advertisers have huge influence on what is reported in the media. Ogola (2017) observes that national governments are the single biggest sources of revenue for news media in the African continent. Attempts to withhold official advertising from private media outlets can be construed as a disturbing move to stifle the freedom of expression, Ogola states, adding that withholding revenue from private media companies is a means of oblique State control.

This researcher believed the Habermas theory and the Propaganda Model were the best theories/standpoints for this study as they encompassed all the three facets of this research, that is, Media, Parliament, and Public. They help to meet the objectives as stated, which are: to investigate factors that determine parliamentary news coverage in the print media in Kenya; to establish the role of media organizations in parliamentary reporting; and to analyze the newspaper audiences" gains from reading news on Parliament's activities.

Consequently, the researcher opted to use the theory to construct the Conceptual Framework believed relevant to this research.
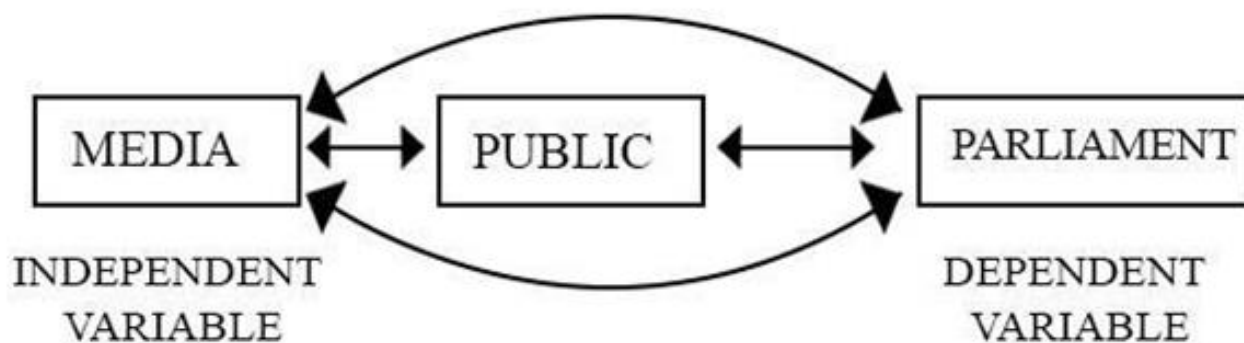
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

This Model is adapted from Jurgen Habermas' Theory of Public Sphere.

Parliament debates matters of public interest. It, therefore, becomes a "Public Sphere." The Media, on its part, publishes issues of public interest, hence forming another "Public Sphere." Both play the role of purveyors of information to the Public. Parliament is the arena of debates that culminate in the making of laws and policies, whereas Media is the amphitheater where parliamentary news are further "distilled" and relayed to the public. Parliament, then, depends on the Media to disseminate its debates to the public. It therefore becomes the dependent variable. It depends on the media to publicize its proceedings. The Media, on its part, selects what is to be reported to the Public from the proceedings in Parliament, hence, becoming the independent variable. On its part, Public consumes the "news products" from both the Media and Parliament. Public views on socio-economic and political issues influence parliamentary debates. Equally, public views influence media reporting of issues.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed method approach and used triangulation under the constructivism philosophical paradigm. Mixed research method included the mixing of qualitative and quantitative data, methods, methodologies, or paradigms in a research study. The main instruments used in the mixed research method consisted of closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and observations.

The Qualitative Research Method used purposive sampling. Palinkas et al. (2013) opine that purposive sampling is used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. Cresswell (2007) talks about phenomenology in qualitative research. After collection of data, phenomenologists depict what participants have in common as they go through an experience, such as anger and grief. By using the approach in research, researchers focus more on the respondents' specific comments and experiences, rather than abstracting from their statements to build up a model from the researcher's interpretations as in grounded theory. Levy (2008) seems to favour the process tracing methodology as vouched by George (1979). This process, which requires a rigorous scrutiny of progression of a series of events over a period of time, is appropriate for revealing intervening causal mechanisms and exploring reciprocal causation and endogeneity effects.

DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

During the secondary (desk research) phase of the research, it was observed that most of the newspaper reporting on MPs during the period under study took a negative angle. The researchers then set out to investigate reasons for such negative reporting. The analysis is as follows:

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The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management. **ISSN** 2312-9492 (Online) 2414-8970 (Print). www.strategicjournals.com

From the responses provided by the Key Informants, we found out that parliamentary news reportage was determined by an array of factors. These ranged from news values, to the decisions made by reporters, media editors, parliamentary officials/politicians, as well as stories arising from public interest. News values such as the prominence of a parliamentarian, the impact a Bill was likely to have in the public sphere, conflict between Members of Parliament themselves (or between the legislators and other bodies), as well as the timeliness of what was being debated, greatly impact on parliamentary reportage. Other news values included bizarreness (such as when MPs fight in Parliament), proximity, currency and human interest, also impacted on what was reported about, or from, Parliament.

Responses from parliamentary reporters, editors (who represented media owners in this research) and parliamentary officials/politicians, tended to reflect unanimity of opinion about the influence of each group in parliamentary reporting. Parliamentary reporters, as gatekeepers and agenda setters, are particularly influential in determining what is reported from the House. They determine what gets out from Parliament for public consumption. Editors, too, have a great impact on gatekeeping and agenda setting, particularly in defining the amount of space allocated for parliamentary reports.

Politicians, too, controlled what went to the Press from Parliament through lobbying or inducement. Though not expressly stated in the responses, it was common knowledge that certain politicians bribed reporters with money and other inducements so that they could be prominently promoted through stories (news items) emanating from their speeches or Bills, or Motions they had great interest in.

Public interest determines what is reported from Parliament because both Parliament and media houses have great interest in matters that draw public interest. For a politician, public anger, or negative perception, can destroy one's career, so it behooves such actors to strive to ensure that they have a positive public image from the public, even if it means playing to the gallery. For reporters and editors, a story that draws massive public interest means massive sales and good profits, which ensures job security and promotions. Journalists, therefore, are often in the front line to ensure that they publish stories with great public interest, if for nothing else, for their own survival.

The Role of Media Organizations in Parliamentary Reporting

To paraphrase Vliegenthart & Montes (2014), the relationship between media organizations and politicians is very close. While politicians depend on journalists for publicity, journalists depend on politicians as news sources. This study revealed that leaders/politicians use journalists (through media houses) as conduits through which to communicate their ideas, thoughts and aspirations with the public, while journalists use politicians to get material which is published for public consumption. Similarly, the public come to know what legislations and key decision have been made in Parliament and how they impact on them. Key issues such as budgetary proposals are digested in media houses for consumption by the public. Journalists also play the role of a watchdog, keeping the leadership at all levels on their toes, bringing them to account of issues of public affairs and fiscal matters. As first witnesses to parliamentary affairs, journalists are the first samplers of news before the same is served to the public.

A key observation from the results of the secondary (desk) research was that the reporting of Parliament has been generally negative. Issues such as MPs fighting for higher perks have often portrayed Parliament as a house of greed, with the legislators at one time earning the unenviable title of "MPigs".

Most times, despite the blames it places on the Press, it is actually Parliament that has given itself a bad name through its misdeeds and failures.

A high level of dissonance, however, was observed after three of the four senior editors returned a

"Positive" rating. Among the five reporters from the two media houses, none of them returned a "Negative" score. Four reporters gave a "Neutral" evaluation, while one gave a "Positive" score. Among the Parliamentary Leadership, only one Key Informant (Leader of Majority, Senate), gave a "Negative" score against three who rated the reporting as "Neutral", while two rated it as "Positive".

From the foregoing findings, it would appear that the three "facets" of Key Informants – media editors, reporters, and Parliamentary Leadership – preferred "playing it safe" to "returning a Negative vote", and this, for a number of reasons. Firstly, media owners (represented by the senior editors), as well as the parliamentary reporters, would, under normal circumstances, be extremely wary of incriminating themselves" by passing a negative judgement on how they report/publish parliamentary news, as doing so would most likely antagonize their clients (parliamentarians) who are vital news sources. Parliamentary leadership, on its part, would, similarly, not be keen to portray media houses and parliamentary reporters as people who are hellbent on fighting the House, since this would most likely sour the relations between the publicity-hungry politicians and the media houses and/or parliamentary reporters.

The foregoing observations, then, take our attention back to the symbiotic relationship between journalists and politicians that was highlighted earlier in this research. This relationship of dependency is, arguably, what has kept the relationship between media and Parliament in good shape for decades in Kenya and elsewhere in the world.

Newspaper Audiences' Gains from Reading News on Parliament Activities

Feedback received from the sub-counties revealed that newspaper news about Parliament help to create awareness among readers about the activities of Parliament. Specifically, such news makes the populace to be enlightened about the process of law making.

Media organizations got an overwhelming seal of approval from the respondents, with 61.9 per cent of the respondents lauding them for playing their reporting role well. Conversely, those who opined that the media had failed in its role of parliamentary reporting were almost in tandem with those who were not sure.

Habermas' Public Sphere and Chomsky's 'Manufacturing Consent' Model

The study established that there is a close relationship between Parliament, the Press and the Public. This symbiotic relationship between the three facets exists espoused by Jurgen Habermas. Parliamentary proceedings are highlighted by the Press to the Public (public sphere), where *wananchi* *a*re informed about the happenings in the August House. In the arrangement, *wananchi* rely on the Media to highlight about Parliament, and specifically, on the activities of their representatives in the August House. Parliament is itself also a Public Sphere, since it is an avenue for debating matters of public interest. The Media, on its part, highlights issues of public interest from Parliament, hence forming another "Public Sphere", with both playing the role of purveyors of information to the Public.

The study found that 'Manufacturing Consent' Model by Herman and Chomsky did not feature prominently, save for situations where the Media uses profit-making as the main criteria for publishing news from Parliament. This was not strange, given that the two media houses are in private -- as opposed to Government – ownership, hence, least likely to be used as tools for propaganda by the Government. However, since they exist as business entities, the media entities may sometimes venture into the business of delving into stories that sway public opinion in their favour with the aim of making profits and/or for their own survival. For instance, a newspaper can decide to cover up a scandal if the risks involve massive loss of advertisements from the "culprit(s). However, this research did not come across a single case of such cover-ups.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study established that various factors are at play when it comes to reporting of Parliament by the Media. These factors are as varied as they are complex. They include key roles played by gatekeepers and agenda setters in the media, as well as overriding public interests. The study has also laid bare the vital role played by consumers of parliamentary news, who also exert great impact on what is published for their consumption. According to the findings of the research, contrary to the Habermasian theory of Public Sphere which classifies the public as just people waiting to be fed with news, Kenyans are not just passive consumers of parliamentary news. Instead, they question -- and even react to – news that are likely to have great impact on their lives. For instance, reports about corruption in Parliament will not go unnoticed and the culprits forgiven, since most Kenyans know about the implications of corruption on their livelihoods. MPs who risk finding themselves in negative limelight often face the wrath of the electorate, and are most likely than not to be rejected by voters during subsequent elections.

The close relationship between Parliament, the Media, and the Public, will, no doubt, continue to thrive for a long time to come, despite the occasional "clashes" between Parliament and the Media, which inevitably impacts on the Public. These "clashes" often occur whenever parliamentary officials feel they have been negatively portrayed by the Media. In such scenarios, Media becomes the punching bag. In the past, reporters and even media houses have been banned from reporting on Parliament on the whims of senior politicians or parliamentary officials. Though such an incident has not been reported in the past couple of years, there is no guarantee that a media house will not fall prey to claims of unfair

or biased coverage in the near future, leading to it being shut out from parliamentary proceedings.

This study made a number of recommendations, most of them arising from feedback received from informants from the field.

A good number of respondents felt there was a need to establish a daily newspaper aimed at specializing on parliamentary reporting. This would ensure that Parliament gets exclusively reported, instead of the current situation where the House competes for news attention with other interests.

Proposals were also made that more pages be allocated for Parliamentary news in the dailies. This will ensure that more stories about Parliament find their way in the newspapers.

There was also a recommendation that vernacular newspapers be set up to specifically report on Parliament, so as to enable more people, especially those not conversant with either English or Kiswahili, to understand about what happens in Parliament.

The need to switch from hard copy newspapers to social media publications also came out strongly. It was observed that people are moving from buying newspapers from newsstands to reading them online. This is an area that needs keen consideration from stakeholders.

Parliamentary journalists need more training about coverage of the House. This training should ideally be done by media houses in liaison with Parliament. Where possible, parliamentary reporters should be given international exposure through study tours to other world Parliaments.

Further research is recommended, particularly in the field of electronic media. A similar study needs to be carried out to investigate the foregoing phenomena in both radio and television stations.

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