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Eboi, Anne

Research Foundation-India

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# A Content and Critical Discourse Analysis of the Nation Newspaper's Coverage of the Garissa University College Terrorist Attack in Kenya

Anne Eboi\*

This paper aimed at critically analyzing the coverage of the Garissa University College terrorist attack which happened on 2nd April 2015 through three objectives: to determine whether the Nation conformed to the traditional news function of informing by use of the inverted pyramid; to analyze the use of language and its possible effects on the audience; and to establish the degree to which the gatekeeping function of the media was followed. Through a content analysis and a critical discourse analysis of language use of the reporting of a total of 115 stories between 4th April, 2015 to 30th April, 2015, it was established that the paper did indeed conform to the information function of the press. The paper also conformed to acceptable gatekeeping functions where only 5% of the stories covered should have been killed. With the exception of only 5.22% of the stories, 94.78% of them were well-written according to the traditional inverted pyramid form of news writing with the study concluding that the Daily Nation reported this highly newsworthy event accurately and in line with procedure and with minimal evidence of bias.

[Keywords : Press function, Discourse analysis, terrorism, Bias, Gatekeeping, Inverted pyramid]

## 1. Introduction

In the last three years, Kenya has faced more than 50 terrorist attacks by the Al-Shabaab militant group, according to local media sources. The latest deadly

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\* Mount Kenya University, School of Social Sciences, Avenue-De-la-paix Opposite Belgium School, P.O. BOX, 5826, Kigali RWANDA (East Africa) E-mail: <[ananjao@mku.ac.ke](mailto:ananjao@mku.ac.ke)>

attack took place on 2 April, 2015 at Garissa University College where 148 people, including 142 students were killed. This was classified as the deadliest attack since the 1998 bomb blast at the US embassy in Nairobi that killed 258 people with over 5,000 injured, according to local media sources. The Garissa University College attack came a year after another deadly attack at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi on 21 September, 2013 that killed 67 people.

According to Hassan(2010) newsworthy elements ought to include stories that have conflict, proximity, weirdness, currency, prominence, timeliness and human interest. Definitely, the story of the Garissa University attack was full of conflict and was picked up not only by local media stations but globally as well. Naturally, this story would occupy front page coverage for days in the local press scene due to the element of proximity.

This study aimed at analyzing whether these stories conformed to journalistic principles by examining a total of 115 news stories that appeared in the Nation from 4 April to 30 April, 2015.

## 2. Research Objectives

This study sought to achieve the following objectives :

1. To determine whether the Nation conformed to the traditional news function of information with specific attention given to the inverted pyramid style.
2. To analyze the use of language and its possible effects on the audience.
3. To examine the gatekeeping function of the media in these stories.

## 3. Methodology

The study was largely qualitative in nature. It also employed quantitative analysis where percentages were used to make conclusions. The methods used were content analysis and/or critical discourse analysis. According to Bryman (2012), content analysis is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner. Berelson defines it as follows :

“Content Analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.”  
(Bryman, 2010 : 310).

Wodak & Meyer (2001 : 2-3) define critical discourse analysis as being :  
“Fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (Berelson, 1952 :18).

The content and language of 115 news stories (from 14 to 30 April, 2015) were analyzed using the two methods of research.

#### 4. Rationale

According to Devereux (2007) it is important to analyze media content because it is a powerful source of meaning about the social world. Take the example of representation of ethnic minorities. What the public is used to is media establishing a connection between race and crime. This coverage is significant in the shaping of public attitudes towards minority groups which in most cases is negative. In the case of Kenya, the study found out that the content and language used did not in any way exhibit discrimination against the minority Somali people from whom the terrorist group Al-Shabaab comes from. The second reason necessitating this study is that while media content does not equate with social reality, it is essential that we examine how media content represents realities involved in social, economic and political relationships. In this case, the reality of a terrorist attack was well represented as a news function.

#### 5. Literature Review

##### 5.1 News Determinants

According to Singh (2008) news determinants or news values are used for discussing news judgments as between competing stories and among elements within a given story. These include : a) timeliness; it is said that all other factors being equal, the present is more important than the past as far as the news values is concerned; b) proximity; it is said that all factors being equal, here is greater than there. The proximity or nearness of the place of action also determines the news values. c) the magnitude of news; all other factors being equal, the bigger event is given greater prominence and precedence over the little or routine event; d) significance: an event affecting a larger percentage of people is greater than an event affecting hardly a few persons.

Wilber & Miller (2003) add their voice to what makes news, or what would make an editor pick one story for publication and skip another. They are of the

view that a slow but persistent general decline in both the number of newspapers and their circulations pushes today's newspapers to tinker with their idea of just what the news is, which would include : a) unusual in that readers are generally not interested in normal, everyday occurrences. It is the events that depart from the norm that are interesting; b) local; c) timely; d) prominence; and e) human interest.

Hassan (2010) also comes up with more or less the same list that includes: a) weirdness with the example of famous editor Charles A. Dana who once said, "If a dog bites a man, that's not news. But if a man bites a dog, that's news." (Hassan, 2010 : 206). People are interested in : a) extra ordinary events; b) currency; related to some general topic a lot of people are already talking about; c) conflict; if it involves some kind of disagreement between two or more people; d) prominence; if it involves a famous person or public figure; e) timeliness; if it occurs within an acceptable time frame eg 24 hours in the case of a daily paper; f) human interest; if the story touches on the lives and values of people and g) proximity; if it occurs nearby, as opposed to thousands of miles away.

In this study, the element of impact/significance, human interest and proximity played a big part in the story dominating the Daily Nation's coverage of the Garissa University attack due to the huge number of casualties in the hands of extremists.

## 5.2 Inverted Pyramid

Wilbur & Miller (2003) see the inverted pyramid's strength in the fact that it lets the reader know immediately what is important and allows the reader to scan key points of each story without having to search for the news. Readers can follow along as much as they wish and get maximum news for their effort. It also serves as a standard. According to Zomick(2013) a good guideline in writing a news story is to use the 5 W's and the 1 H : Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. If a journal ist can satisfy these essentials in the open ing para graph then he/she is already using the inverted pyramid writ ing style. Just by covering these points, the journal ist has probably summarized the article as a whole in a few sen tences.

Seema Hassan (2010) says one of the most important elements of news writing is the opening paragraph or two of the story. This is the lead whose function is to summarize the story and/or to draw the reader in.

One objective of this study was to examine the stories in order to establish if they followed the journalistic style of writing, in this case, the inverted pyramid.

### 5.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

Mcquail (2010), says the term 'discourse analysis' has gradually become preferred to the expression, 'qualitative content analysis,' although there is not much specific meaning to the term that differentiates it. It may be simply that the latter expression was too closely identified with the content of mass media, while the term 'discourse' has a broader connotation and covers all 'texts', in whatever form or language they are encoded. Discourse can be analyzed by studying bodies of text of all kinds, including documents, transcripts of debates and media content. Singh(2010) sees critical discourse analysis within the field of linguistics where he says a number of authorities have studied the fact that our thinking is determined by the structure of particular languages.

A critical discourse analysis of the language used by writers of the Daily Nation with regard to the coverage of the Garissa terrorist attack reveals interesting findings discussed below.

### 5.4 The Gatekeeping Function

McQuail (2010) says gatekeepers decide which information will go forward, and which will not. In other words, a gatekeeper in a social system decides which of a certain commodity - materials, goods, and information - may enter the system. Important to realize is that gatekeepers are able to control the public's knowledge of the actual events by letting some stories pass through the system but keeping others out. Media gatekeeping showed that decision making is based on principles of news values, organizational routines, input structure and common sense.

The gatekeeper's choices are a complex web of influences, preferences, motives and common values. Gatekeeping is inevitable and in some circumstances it can be useful. Gatekeeping can also be dangerous, since it can lead to an abuse of power by deciding what information to discard and what to let pass. This study examines the gatekeeping function from the Nation's coverage because the terrorist attack was a sensitive and crucial story to Kenyans that needed careful handling at the time.

### 5.5 Critical factors to consider in news writing

#### 5.5.1 Objectivity and Bias

MacQuail (2010) says bias in news content can refer, especially, to distorting reality, giving a negative picture of minority groups of many kinds,

neglecting or misconstruing the role of women in society, or differentially favouring a particular political party or philosophy.

Professor Bill Parks(2008) , a journalism instructor at Ohlone College, says the reporter’s job is to find out the truth and tell it, regardless of who might be made uncomfortable. The reporter’s responsibility is to serve only the reader. The public needs unbiased information in order for democracy to succeed. Most reporters believe pure objectivity is impossible. When you select one word over another, your judgments enter the story. But fairness is possible, and fairness should be every reporter’s goal. Fairness requires the reporter to recognize his or her own biases in the story, and then consciously include all relevant points of view—even ones that the reporter doesn’t like, personally.

### 5.5.2 Attribution

Ingram (2008) says attribution is stating who said something. Journalists do it so that readers or listeners can know who is speaking or where the information in the story comes from, thus giving it credibility.

### 5.5.3 The ABC’s of News Writing

Parks (2008) says the first and most important consideration to good news writing is accuracy—a story can be creative and compelling, but if it contains errors, it is worthless. Actually, it is worse than worthless; a false news story undercuts the public trust necessary for the survival of a free press.

Parks identifies brevity as the second most important feature of a good story. Each word in the story should do a job. Clarity, which is third, starts before writing. A journalist ought to understand their subject so completely that their story leaves it crystal-clear in the reader’s mind.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1 Information Function of the Press

In response to the first objective where the study sought to find out whether the paper conformed to traditional news functions of information including journalistic ethics of news coverage, only 5.22 % of the stories (6/115) were found to have bent the law of objectivity. Three articles incidentally were by the same author who only contributed news stories in the same subject area: namely failure by security forces to protect Kenyans. These were: Shame of slow response in 15-hour terror attack (Sunday Nation, 2015, p.1); Attack revives old rivalry between police and army (Daily Nation, 2015 p.3), and GSU Recce heroes

are not a happy lot (Daily Nation, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p.1) According to the inverted pyramid concept to which all news standards are subjected, news stories are expected to be objective and keep out personal opinion. Even though the 115 stories were both news and feature stories, they should be appropriately labeled so. However, the three stories above appeared as news stories with Shame of slow response in 15-hour terror attack appearing as the cover story. Sample the following highly opinioned language in this story:

“This was long after the killing had started and a majority of the 142 young Kenyans had been slaughtered by the extremists, who knew all along that their chances of leaving the compound alive or free were slim.

The late deployment has provoked questions among Kenyans on whether the issue may have contributed to the big number of casualties and whether our security agencies learned any lessons from the 2013 Westgate Mall attack,...” (Sunday Nation, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 1).

This story is highly biased beginning from its heading by the use of the word ‘shame.’ One would expect the story to give the What, Who, Where, When, Why and How of the response of the said security forces. Indeed the story gives details of when the security agents received the call to the point when the enemy was silenced. However, the entire story is betrayed by a highly opinioned writer. For instance, he speculates and conjectures when he says the extremist knew all along that their chances of leaving the compound alive or free were slim. Did this writer speak to the victims or extremists for him to make such a bold statement without attribution? Which Kenyans are these he is not acknowledging as sources who have been provoked into thinking that a huge casualty arose due to the slow response? In concluding that this story was not objectively written, consider the bit the writer introduces in the story :

“But it is not the delay disturbing the elite team, the officers often complain of unpaid allowances for such risky missions, just like it happened during Westgate.” (Sunday Nation, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 1)

This bit of information adds no value to the overall comprehension of the story. Its only purpose is to cement bias in a carefully crafted narrative whose original objective was not to inform but to influence the reader against Kenyan security forces.

Still another story that contained bias was titled, Monster who led Shabaab mass killers is unmasked subtitled, Ex-law student led killer squad in campus raid



(Daily Nation, 6 April, 2015, p.4). Most of the story is well told in accordance with journalistic principles apart from this statement :

“24 year old UON former law student and son to the chief of Bulla Jamhuri location in Mandera,...will likely go down in history as the mass murderer with the most innocent face.” (Daily Nation, 6 April, 2015, p. 4)

Again from the title, the words ‘monster’ and ‘unmasked’ already make the reader who has by now been exposed to these stories, cringe. Anthropologists would not quickly dismiss this ex-law student as a monster but would seek to understand what went on his mind, and environmental factors before dismissing him as a monster. Secondly, what makes this writer boldly state that this former law student has earned a place in history for being a mass murderer with the most innocent face? How does an innocent face look like and what authority is this writer citing to determine a face that is innocent?

Another story that could easily have been well-written but which defied the inverted pyramid style of writing was titled VCs say varsity should not be shut down (Sunday Nation, 5th April, 2015, p. 6). The story fails the test of the inverted pyramid because instead of starting with what the VCs said in accordance with the title, the story begins by describing the attack as an act of evil and darkness. They then call for the introduction of a course on disaster preparedness for all students when joining university. The reason they were featured in the first place according to the title comes at the end. The words ‘evil’ and ‘darkness’ automatically introduce bias when they are introduced at the beginning, making the reader feel as if they are most urgent.

The story Police boss Kaindi might pay for slow Garissa response (Daily Nation, 19 April, 2015, p. 6) totally defies journalistic principles as a news story because it is highly speculative. The writer actually presupposes that Kaindi, the police boss, might pay for the Garissa debacle just because she is in charge of the response unit and that colleagues have complained about her abrasiveness and high handedness. The writer makes no mention of his sources or whether this is the official position of the government with regard to disciplining an errant officer.

On a positive note however, 94.78% (109/115) stories were found adhering to reasonable standards of journalism (with the exception of some headlines). The stories were detailed and conformed to the inverted pyramid concept. The stories cover the 5 W’s in their leads, give adequate background, attribute

sources, have ample quotations and good conclusions. They are clear and are careful to be objective in their coverage. For instance, consider the breakdown below of the story entitled :

#### 14 Forex bureaus' bank accounts frozen

In this story, the 5 Ws and H come early in the story as they should. In addition, the story gives a background, additional information, a quotation and a conclusion :

Who : 14 Forex bureaus, 63 individuals, 4 bus companies plying the Nairobi-Garissa-Mandera route and a hotel in Eastleigh

What : Accounts frozen by the government

Where : Nairobi where the said properties were located

When : yesterday

Background : in light of the Garissa terrorist attack

Additional information : given 24 hours or be blacklisted; police sent to issue the letters and ensure premises did not open. Most operate through hawalas.

Quotation : Quotes the Kenya Forex Bureaus Association Executive Antony Wachira saying the licences had been suspended without notice and without giving members an opportunity to defend themselves.

Conclusion : the quotation above by Anthony Wachira is what concludes the story

The story fulfills its traditional function of relaying information to the readers by strictly following the inverted pyramid style of writing news. The author totally leaves out opinion and conjecture.

## 6.2 Use of Language

The second objective sought to analyze specific use of language to determine its possible influence on the audience. The stories analyzed revealed usage of certain parts of speech that evoke strong emotions in readers. Strong language which had the capacity to draw out strong emotions from readers was rightly used in feature stories though some news stories also carried this strong language. The possible strong negative feelings that these articles might have evoked included, pity, anger, despair, fear, disappointment and sadness among others. The articles also display positive emotions of joy, patriotism, hope and admiration.

### 6.2.1 Negative Emotions

In the story Survivor : we played dead for several hours (Daily Nation, 4 April 2015, p.2), sympathy is evoked mainly due to the nature of the story itself, of course assisted by several key words or quotations by survivors. The terrorists apparently taunted the students before killing them. For example, they were told they pay taxes for terrorists to buy guns and that their security forces were cowardly. They then proceeded to shoot students as others watched. Some students smeared themselves with blood and played dead for 10 hours, thus surviving the ordeal. Non-muslims were asked to recite the Shahada, failure to which they were gunned down. The terrorists also taunted parents of victims on the phone saying they had killed their children. The broad headline that covered a group of stories, this one included, read : Varsity terror : Grief and pain (Daily Nation, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 1).

Another story which evokes pity is : Body lotion meal kept hunger at bay for 2 days (Sunday Nation, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 2).

“There was blood all over. The terrorists would pile three or four students and shoot them from the top, splashing blood...” (Sunday Nation, April 5, 2015, p. 2).

In Relatives recount last moments with loved ones (Sunday Nation, 5 April 2015 p. 4), one could easily sympathize with a student whose parents emptied themselves to educate her but now she lay dead due to a senseless war. Words such as ‘devastated’ ‘grief has engulfed’ ‘mother traumatized and been crying since morning,’ etc evoke pity and even pain.

The ‘sombre mood’ that engulfed Garissa town as 663 students left for their homes evoked sympathy too, captured in the story 600 students leave Garissa for their homes (Sunday Nation, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 8). This story quotes the local governor saying that it had been the only university in the region.

In GSU Recce Squad are not a happy lot (Daily Nation, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2015, p. 1), the fact that these soldiers only received Ksh 500 instead of the 3,000sh lunch allowance would evoke not only pity but anger as well since security in the hands of an angry and hungry person is no security at all.

In Registration staff, CID to lend hand in identification task (Daily Nation, 6 April, 2015, p. 5), the following quotation not only shows sympathy but deep sadness in the reader as well :

“My cousin and I viewed what must have been a hundred bodies on Saturday looking for our cousin who has been missing since Thursday. Most of the bodies are

grossly swollen and others are badly mutilated that it is difficult to identify them based on physical features. In that confusion, I saw five different families lay claim on one body” said Robert. (Daily Nation, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 5).

A similar story would be, Parents’ pain and horror at city mortuary (Daily Nation, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 4), with the following quote also full of sympathy, pain, horror and anger for the reader :

“It was the most harrowing experience, opening the mouths of all the dead bodies in the mortuary trying to establish if any of them could be that of my daughter” said the traumatized father of one of the victims. (Daily Nation, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 4).

And also :

“It is not clear why relatives are going through the horror of physically examining more than 100 bodies while DNA testing services are widely available and take only two days.” (Daily Nation, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 4).

Away from the victims, stories about educationists and the university generally also evoked pity. Consider this: We were growing fast, says college principal (Daily Nation, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 11). The devastating effects of the attack touch even those who disseminate knowledge :

“When you approach the university, the first thing that attracts you is a huge green gate under a canopy of flourishing green giant Jacaranda trees that make an avenue on a gravel pavement.” (Daily Nation, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 11).

This is followed by a description of the university including the new buildings hardly a year old, and new hostels worth 430m still under construction.

“All these buildings, some magnificent, are now riddled with bullets....Blood stains are also all over the place. The hostels had bodies scattered all over the floors...” (Daily Nation, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 11).

The economy has also been affected as vendors now have no one to sell to.

Alongside this story was Journalists allowed into horrifying attack scene (Daily Nation, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 p. 4) where journalists recorded pavements that had patches of blood, buildings’ roofs riddled with bullets and windows shattered.

Still, more sympathy would be recorded on social media with the story, Sympathy floods social media (Daily Nation, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 9) . Consider this :

“Social media was on Monday bursting with messages of condolences for families of the 148 victims of the GUC attack.

Ms Ory Okolloh Mwangi suitably came up with the hashtag #147 not just a number to commemorate the victims of the terrorist attack.

By Monday morning, the hashtag was trending at number 5.

My village is mourning. One of the very few ladies who've managed to go to university now is possibly dead" tweeted Kiplang'at Arap Bett. (Daily Nation, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 9).

A cover story entitled The ones we lost (Daily Nation, 2015 p.1 & 2) which was accompanied by photos of 112 dead students crowned it all in terms of sadness, helplessness and simply anger at such senseless loss of innocent life. The editor had this comment beside the pictures :

These names were compiled by Daily Nation reporters and are accurate to the best of our knowledge. The government is yet to honor a request to make the official list public. (Daily Nation, 8th April, 2015, pp. 1 & 2).

It should be borne in mind that the narrative the Daily Nation newspaper through its editorials and opinion columns throughout this time was trying to tell was that Kenya had an insensitive and incompetent government.

Father heard his daughter being shot by terrorists (Daily Nation, 2015 p. 4) is a story that evokes not only deep sorrow and sympathy for the victims' parents but anger as well.

"Dad our lives are at the mercy of Al-Shabaab. Don't call me again. Bye" Lydia told him.

After Lydia had spoken to her father, a terrorist snatched the phone and told him it was the last time he was speaking to his daughter. According to the victim's mother, the nearly seven hours it took, from the time Lydia first informed them of the danger she was in and the moment she was shot dead, security forces would have saved her and many other students. This is where rage sets in when you consider that this mother's observations are sensible.

In Emotions run high as families bid farewell to youths gone too soon (Sunday Nation, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 4), the reader is taken through the same emotions of pity, sorrow and anger as would be expected in a funeral, only this funeral had come too soon. Words like anger, grief and outrage are used within the article to express the emotions of the mourners who were bidding farewell to some of the victims. The underlying feeling was anger at a government that had failed to protect her own.

“For how long are we going to take this? The first and foremost responsibility of any government is security” said Akaranga. (Sunday Nation, 2015, p. 4).

Again the government had to bear ridicule and embarrassment when a politician refused to read to the mourners a letter President Uhuru Kenyatta had penned to each and every affected family. To them, it was an insult that he had failed to honor them with his physical presence preferring instead to embark on impersonal missions of letter writing. This is evident in the story, Siaya Rep says no to Uhuru Condolences (Sunday Nation, April 2015, p. 6).

I am still in shock, says suspect’s mother (Daily Nation, 2015, p. 5) gives the other side of the coin too. It’s not only the dead children’s parents who suffer but the terrorists’ parents’ too. The mother to a Form 5 student arrested in connection with the Garissa attack had hoped her son would become a doctor or lawyer but the word used by the Daily Nation is ‘shattered’. The reader too can feel the pain of this mother, or at least imagine it.

In 68 bodies still at mortuary (Daily Nation, 13th April, 2015, p. 5) the author revisits an emotional scene that had done its round on social media, where a victim texts her mother :

“Mum, aki tumeshikwa na Al Shabaab (we have been taken hostage by Al Shabaab), just pray for me... I love you all very much...” (Daily Nation, 13 April, 2015, p. 5).

A final story I wish to examine on sorrow and sympathy is entitled, Dad searches for Garissa daughter (Daily Nation, July 2015, p. 8) long after the other victims had been buried. It’s the description that brings about this intense sorrow and anguish as a father, who traditionally has all the solutions, is finally stranded :

“It has not been easy going to her mother and siblings with no news about her whereabouts. It has really taken a toll on us, said Isaac Mutisya.

“Risper’s mother is depressed. She is really disturbed. She no longer eats or sleeps. She cries day and night” adding that the family no longer enjoys the happiness it used to have (Daily Nation, July, 2015, p. 8).

The feeling of anger and annoyance against the government is easily noticeable in the articles that dealt with the response of security forces. Most noticeable is from the story Shame of 15-hour delayed response in campus terror attack

(Sunday Nation, 5 April, 2015, p. 2), where such words would definitely elicit rage :

“On arrival in Garrissa, the GSU team was briefed on the situation for two hours and when the ones that had travelled by road arrived, they launched the final assault on the terrorists at about 5pm who they are reported to have subdued within half an hour.” (Sunday Nation, 5 April, 2015, p. 2).

A briefing for 2 hours? In an emergency? Does it take two hours for a terrorist to aim and fire at a victim? This is rage. And the reader becomes more outraged when they read what this security analyst had to say in the same story :

“Security analyst Major Bashir Abdulahi had this to say, “Surely, why did we take that long to end the siege? Were we expecting Al-Shabaab terrorists to negotiate for release of hostages? These guys came prepared to die in the first place and this is something the security forces should have known and hence not given more time to continue killing.” (Sunday Nation, 5 April, 2015, p. 2).

The whole response scenario is made worse by security forces who try to justify this goof by saying they responded within reasonable time. It should be noted that they took 11 hours to respond and exterminate the threat. These statements only succeed in breeding more anger. Still feelings of disappointment and hopelessness emanate from the statement below :

“Even as critics complained about the logistical plans for elite units, Mr. Nkaissery’s description of the attack as a surprise was also contentious. The Sunday Nation established that prior to the attack, local police had received intelligence of an impending attack. The intelligence brief gave the possibilities that either the university or the medical training college in the same area would be attacked.” (Sunday Nation, 5 April, 2015, p. 2).

In Pull out of Somalia : Leaders (Sunday Nation, 5 April, 2015, p. 6), the following statement elicits anger against the government too :

“There is nowhere around the world where we have seen innocent students suffer in the hands of terrorists except in Kenya and Nigeria where Boko Haram abducted 200 girls” by opposition figure, Moses Wetangula (Sunday Nation, 5 April, 2015, p. 6).

This is definitely a demonstration of lack of faith in the government’s ability to protect her citizens.

GSU Recce heroes are not a happy lot (Daily Nation, 6 April, 2015, p. 1) portrays the government as unfeeling, unbothered and with mixed priorities.

One gets the sense that the government has not recognized the value of spending money on the one function of government that would easily secure the country.

“Some officers are deployed to areas like Liboi, Malkamari, Turkwel and other disciplinary camps where their capacity wastes away,” said the officer, adding that “some officers were even assigned to guard VIPs.”

“No officers are on standby at Ruiru Camp, since most of them are in various regions discharging duties that are not meant for them,” an officer said and urged the Inspector General of Police Joseph Boinnet to recall all Recce personnel from the field to be on standby in Ruiru (Daily Nation, 6 April, 2015, p. 1).

The story State House admits flaws in response (Daily Nation, 2015 p. 5) carries a ton of annoyance when the government’s communication expert Manoah Esipisu attempts to apologize and instead angers by justifying an obviously botched up rescue mission.

But Manoah Esipisu, Presidential Strategic Communication Unit said criticism was unwarranted as Kenyans did not know the situation at the time and the question of allowances was not a priority at that particular time. He also shared that the UK shared intelligence information.

“We expect the media to work with the government instead of focusing on the negatives alone,” said Fred Matiang’i Information and Communication CS (Daily Nation, 10 April, 2015, p. 5).

#### 6.2.2 Positive Emotions

A total of 40 stories (34.78%) carried positive emotions in them such as hope, patriotism, joy and admiration. 20 of them were purposively sampled as given below :

Body lotion meal kept hunger at bay for 2 days (Sunday Nation, 5 April, 2015, p.2) gave the nation hope that a girl had escaped what the terrorists might have thought was a water tight barricade. This young girl survived by smearing herself with blood and playing dead and also by drinking a body lotion which incredibly, didn’t harm her. In Muslims hold a demo in Eastleigh to condemn attack (Sunday Nation, 5 April, 2015, p. 5.) the nation is again showed a ray of hope where the demonstration is an indication that terrorism and religion are two separate things.

“We have lived together in peace for so long that we do not have to be separated now...The Al-Shabaab kill Muslims in Somalia, too, and coming to Kenya, they



kill Christians to inflict bitterness among ourselves” Mr. Mohammed said (Sunday Nation, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 5).

President Barack Obama gives Kenya hope in his message contained in the story, US stands with Kenya at this difficult moment (Sunday Nation, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 6.).

“This much is clear : the future of Kenya will not be defined by violence and terror; it will be shaped by young people like those at Garissa University College-by their talents, their hopes and their achievements.” (Sunday Nation, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 6).

The story Woman seized over church bomb scare (Daily Nation, 2015 p. 5.) can be seen in two lights : fear driving the citizens or citizens starting to gain awareness of their surroundings.

Ms. Martha Wanjiru, a worshipper, said “The woman’s hair was covered with a veil. We became suspicious when she kept on calling and sending text messages.” (Daily Nation, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 5).

Kenyans generally are not sensitive to the presence of terror threats hence the huge number of casualties when attacked. This story offers hope that citizens are no longer taking their security for granted.

Health Staff vow to stay put despite attack (Daily Nation, 2015, p. 4) is a story that inspires patriotism and admiration. Under normal circumstances, people flee from danger but here are nurses and health workers at Garissa Hospital who chose to stay to attend to the wounded. More positive energy emerges in the story Big-hearted citizens who counseled, fed relatives. (Daily Nation, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 6).

“It has been an outpouring of generosity since Al Shabaab terrorists killed 148 people at GUC,...

Public-spirited Kenyans from all walks of life brought foods and drinks to feed hundreds of people who have been camping at Chiromo from Saturday.” (Daily Nation, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 6).

The message was clear : you can take a few of us out but you will never take out our spirit as Kenyans who care and love one another.

Families of survivors, despite the tension and feelings of empathy directed at victims’ relatives, also could not fail to celebrate what life had offered them: their children in one piece, as demonstrated in the story, Tears of joy, prayers of thanksgiving as survivors arrive home, recount ordeal. (Daily Nation, 2015, p. 2)

“After reality dawned on them that the young man was indeed alive, the brothers and sisters followed suit and one by one, they gave him emotional hugs as tears flowed freely for nearly 15 minutes.” (Daily Nation, 2015, p. 2).

Perhaps a fact that inspires patriotism, togetherness and love cannot be found in any other scenario than in the following words from the same story above :

Emmanuel Murambi escaped by jumping over the fence to come face to face with a Somali man who helped him by taking him to his home, offering him clothes and taking him to hospital. (Daily Nation, 2015, p. 2).

Families’ joy as two students are discharged (Daily Nation, 2015, p. 9) is another story that gives the reader hope when two students are discharged from hospital and reunited with their families.

In Plan to vet Islamic teachers proposed (Daily Nation, 2015, p. 9) the reader feels hope that at last something is being done albeit little.

“Yesterday, Attorney General Githu Muigai told the Nation that his office will continue meeting religious leaders to finalize regulations that will tame religious centres used by rogue preachers.” (Daily Nation, 2015, p. 9).

Five to be detained for a month (Daily Nation, 2015, p. 6) and Undercover police to help thwart terror raids (Daily Nation, 2015, p. 6) also give the reader optimism when it’s revealed that more undercover police as well as uniformed patrol police have been deployed to soft target areas and quick response units have been put on a 24-hour alert. Moreover, the Recce company was given 2 helicopters to be used to transport personnel in the event of an attack. In addition :

“We also want the public to know that we are not in the usual mood, we are at war,” said Mr. Kibui, city police chief.” (Daily Nation, 2015, p. 6).

They laid down their lives for their country (Daily Nation, 2015 p. 6) would give the reader the feeling of admiration and patriotism as it honors Solomon Oludo, KDF soldier who was felled when he ran out of bullets. He was among the first ones to arrive at the scene when the distress call was sent out. In addition, Peter Masinde had been deployed to the university barely three weeks before while Bernard Tonui of Recce Squad was leading a team of the Recce unit in the onslaught against Al-Shabaab at the university when they too were felled.

In Church wants halt to killing of Christians (Daily Nation, April, 2015 p.5) most readers would be gratified to note citizens are beginning to wake up to the fact that they could do something about their security when they declare that they would not remain silent as they continue being massacred. The shooting dead of two suspects in Kwale County is an indication that security forces may finally be waking up to their responsibility. This is captured in the story Police shoot dead two Al-Shabaab suspects (Daily Nation April, 2015 p. 5) and in Airwing chiefs grilled over corruption claims (Daily Nation, April, 2015 p. 5) the reader can derive feelings of satisfaction that at last something is being done in the area of accountability. The Airwing's director and deputy were quizzed after it emerged that the plane that should have been dispatched to Garissa had instead been sent on the deputy director's personal mission, thus occasioning the delay in rescuing the students.

In Ruto assures Kenyans of their security (Daily Nation, April, 2015, p. 6) the reader would naturally derive comfort from the fact that the assurance is coming from none other than the Vice President of the country who says that the government would recruit more police officers to deal with insecurity. Perhaps the greatest comfort comes from the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, when he reveals that the government is working on various strategies to tackle terrorism threats. He also promises to fight corruption and calls on Kenyans to unite. This is contained in a story entitled, We'll defeat terrorists, says Uhuru. (Daily Nation, 15 April, 2015, p. 3).

Kenya safe to visit, says US senator (Daily Nation, April, 2015, p. 16) is also a story that provides relief to the people when US senator Craig Tieszen criticizes travel advisories. In a show of solidarity too, Artistes eulogize Garissa terrorist victims in songs (Daily Nation April, 2015 p.3) records an event that hosted hundreds of people among them artists who had gathered at Freedom Corner to honor victims.

### 6.3 Gatekeeping Function

The third objective of this paper was to examine the extent to which the gatekeeping function of the media guided the newspaper in appropriate selection of the stories that made it for publication. Because a high percentage of stories, i.e 94.78% were objectively written and adhered to acceptable standards of journalism, it can safely be concluded that gate keepers did a good job insofar as story selection is concerned. However, after a careful analysis, the following stories should have been killed :

### 6.3.1 Stories that took a Political Undertone

While it's true that prominence is one of the criteria used to determine a newsworthy story, in this case, it was obvious certain politicians were using this platform either to settle political scores or to gain mileage ahead of the 2017 presidential elections. Such stories include: Pull out of Somalia : Leaders (Sunday Nation, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 5) In this story, the statement by opposition figure Moses Wetangula (There is nowhere around the world where we have seen innocent students suffer in the hands of terrorists except in Kenya and Nigeria where Boko Haram abducted 200 girls) does little to comfort a heavily bruised nation, except to aggravate the pain and mock the government of the day. Another story was Dismantle Dadaab Camp (Daily Nation, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 6) where another politician, Wycliffe Mudavadi, engages in a debate largely seen as diverting Kenya's attention from a perceived incompetent security force. Similarly, Leaders want refugee camps closed down (Daily Nation, 2015, p. 9) falls in the same category while Senators back Uhuru's police recruits order (Daily Nation, 6 2015, p. 9) adds no value to an anxious and jittery nation since it only displays the troop mentality of Jubilee(ruling party) members. The story Politicians behind attack, says lawyer (Daily Nation, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, p. 5) once more has no significant value addition other than give an individual a political platform to engage in speculation. Raila asks US to help Kenya out of Somalia (Daily Nation, 12 2015, p. 1) is a story that should not have made it past the gate because other than the lead being about opposition figure Raila Odinga and Kalonzo Musyoka asking the US to help move Kenyan soldiers out of Somalia, the chunk of the story is on Vice President William Ruto's war with the United Nations Commission for Human Rights (UNHCR) over his roadside declaration that the government would close the camp.

### 6.3.2 Stories that suggested Victory for the Terrorists

Indeed the duty of any journalist fundamentally remains to inform. However, the gate keeping function allows a journalist to kill a story which in his judgment may not add much informative value. One reading all these stories in one sitting would be overwhelmed with painful emotions that also borders on helplessness. There was excessive coverage of stories dealing with either the victim or their relatives which were full of sadness, for instance in relatives identifying bodies, missing children, burials etc.

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Given that a journalist's primary responsibility is to inform in the most unbiased manner, this study concludes that the 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. 94.78% of stories were acceptable news stories devoid of bias and opinion. Only 5.22% of stories contained bias and opinion, and also did not adhere to the inverted pyramid style. It can also be concluded that the language used captured the emotions of the moment without prejudicing the nation against members of the Somali community. Most emotions were to do with the pain and sorrow of losing so many young lives and also anger towards the government of the day. The final conclusion is that the Nation conformed to standard gatekeeping practices by selecting a majority of stories that were deemed relevant for public consumption with the exception of a few stories discussed above that should never have been featured.

This study recommends that media practitioners continue to observe the tenets of journalism at all times especially in covering sensitive stories that cover terrorist attacks. At that point in time, the public usually feels helpless and vulnerable hence the need for solid reporting. Too many stories that drain a nation's emotions should also be avoided. Finally, stories that give the terrorist due advantage should also be killed.

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D-59, Shastri Nagar, Meerut—250 004 (India)

<e-mail : [managingeditor@jndmeerut.org](mailto:managingeditor@jndmeerut.org)>

<[sanjeevmahajan@jndmeerut.org](mailto:sanjeevmahajan@jndmeerut.org)>