



**HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE BUILDING MEDIA REPORTING IN THE KENYAN
KERIO VALLEY CONFLICT: LOCAL RADIO PERSPECTIVES**

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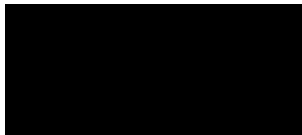
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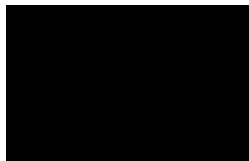


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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Francis Kiplang'at Chumo (RIP Dad) and Mum, Grace Chumo. My beloved wife, Claire and our lovely children, Shantel Cherono, Ryan Kimutai, and Shekinah Cheptoo. As well as my brothers and sisters. You are my pillars; I love you all.

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ABSTRACT

The Kerio Valley, situated in the North Rift region of Kenya, has experienced sporadic inter-ethnic conflict documented since the pre 1870s, driven by fight for land resources and cattle rustling among the Pokot, Marakwet, Tugen, and Turkana communities (Chelal 1969). Although efforts to resolve the conflict have been made by the government, non-governmental organisations and religious institutions, it continues unabated, resulting in killings and displacements of many people. The resultant humanitarian issues necessitate resolute efforts at various levels for conflict prevention and resolution. The mass media, including radio, can play an important role in this regard if they communicate news and feature stories through the Peace Journalism framework (Joseph, 2014; Maweu 2019). Although radio is a major source of information in Kenya, there is inadequate research on it, especially with respect to human rights and peacebuilding reporting (Okinda 2017). Even more scarce are studies focusing on local-language radio reporting of this conflict, which create knowledge, practical and theoretical gaps in this critical area of journalism practice. Through a qualitative design, this study addressed these gaps in media reporting of both human rights and peacebuilding by analysing 53 news and feature stories from two selected radio stations, Kass FM and Alpha Radio. The media texts were complemented with in-depth interviews with four selected journalists from the two stations. The objectives of the study were to: identify what narratives and discourses the selected news and feature stories use in reporting the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict; examine the factors that influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict; provide suggestions on how human rights and peacebuilding reporting can be framed within the peace journalism framework in Kenya and similar contexts using local language radio stations. Theoretically, the study was guided by Peace Journalism, Representation theory and the slow violence concept. Data were analysed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis, which examines how language is used to enact power and ideology in specific contexts such as the newsroom. Findings show that journalists are aware of human rights issues and peace journalism practices, but are not consistent in their use, hence the presence of derogatory, dehumanising and hate speech-promoting narratives in the selected media reports. Peace journalism reporting was hindered due to external factors that negatively impacted the safety and security of journalists. The study argues that representing the slow violence effects of the conflict works towards peace journalism principles and practice. However, while there was some evidence that the wider contextual and temporal effects were reported, it was secondary to sensationalism. Despite the practice-led limitations noted, this study explains the reason for why peace journalism remains an appropriate guide in conflict reporting. The study concludes that peace journalism is feasible in the Kerio Valley conflict and ought to be consistently applied in media reports to promote human rights, peace, and to represent its slow violence effects. Thus, this study contributed to the extant literature in radio reporting of human rights and peacebuilding in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley.

Keywords: *Kerio Valley Conflict, Kenya, Human Rights, Peace Building, Slow Violence, Media Reporting*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CA	Communications Authority of Kenya
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
FM	Frequency Modulation
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
MCA	Member of the County Assembly
MCK	Media Council of Kenya
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the study, underlining the important role that local radio can play in reporting human rights issues and peacebuilding efforts in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict through peace journalism. The chapter starts with the study background, giving a history of the conflict and its drivers. It highlights government responses and efforts to stop the conflict. It also traces the history of radio broadcasting in Kenya, showing key milestones in its development as well as the setting and context of the study. It then presents the problem statement in terms of both the broader societal problem, moving to the connected, precise academic issue, which includes showing the gaps in the study of local-language radio reporting of the conflict and the need for the study. The chapter also includes the aim, research questions and objectives that guide the study. It also discusses the significance of the study and its contribution to understanding the value of radio reporting during conflicts, drawing on a peace journalism framework and the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict.

I am influenced by my experience as a journalist and trainer in Kenya, noting the need for research in the developing human rights and peace reporting areas of journalism practice. My interest in this topic was piqued through interactions with colleagues covering the Kerio Valley conflict. Through this interaction, I saw the need to address various aspects of the coverage from an academic point of view and to draw the attention of various stakeholders to the invisible effects of the conflict on populations, working conditions of journalists and the urgent need to resolve it.

Background and Problem Statement

Kenya has experienced countless conflicts of varying magnitudes, leading to humanitarian implications necessitating resolute efforts at various levels for conflict prevention and resolution, with the mass media playing an important role in this regard (Joseph 2014). The media does this by shaping public opinion on a conflict through the dissemination of information on various programmes and, most importantly, news and feature stories. News has developed over the years to become an important media form, more so with the advancement of the broadcast media, which enables quick dissemination of important information to audiences scattered in varied locations (Branston and Stafford, 2010; Bhowmik and Fisher 2023). Journalists choose stories that fulfil the industry's basic criteria of newsworthiness,

which include conflict, proximity, impact, prominence, oddity and human interest (Irvan 2006; Tesot 2021). Scott Downman and Kasun Ubayasiri (2017) add human rights to these values, recognising the need to make the news production process more people-centred and not only conceptual. They argue that journalists can facilitate social change through their investigation and reporting of various human rights issues in society, a view with which this study aligns.

Broader Social Problem

The conflict at the Kerio Valley in Kenya, which has been evident since the pre-1870s, is a prime example of a newsworthy event that has received little international media attention (Chellal 1969). The conflict involves the Pokot, Marakwet, Tugen, and Turkana communities who reside along the valley in the present counties of West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet, Baringo, and Turkana, which share common boundaries along it at various points, mostly defined by the Kerio River. The Pokot live in the West Pokot County and East Pokot in Baringo County, which they share with the predominant Tugen. The Marakwet occupy the northern side of Elgeyo Marakwet County, while the Turkana inhabit the vast Turkana County to the north. However, the fluid nature of boundaries, migrations, trade, and intermarriage places some community members away from their supposed original county homes, creating suspicions and friction with their neighbours, especially when attacks are reported in a given area. The Marakwet, Pokot, and Tugen ethnic communities form part of the larger Kalenjin community that includes the Sabaot, Nandi, Kipsigis, Keiyo, Sengwer, Ilchamus and Ogiek. The name Kalenjin represents a constructed identity unifying the mentioned tribes due to their similar customs and language.

Geographically, Kerio Valley is situated in the North Rift region of Kenya. It is bordered by the Tugen Hills to the east and the Chereng'any Hills to the west. It is a vast, rugged and semi-arid rural area with poor infrastructure. The poor infrastructure makes movement difficult, especially for journalists who operate in the region. Figure 1.1 shows a map of the Kerio Valley region.

payment of a high bride price that is out of reach of most young men who wish to marry. Such young men engage in cattle rustling to raise the required number, creating an unending circle of violence. There are also disputes attributed to border points in places with rich soils, abundant water and pasture. Although such a view could be true, it is a form of negative stereotyping that can influence how other communities view them. Negative stereotyping can exacerbate conflicts, limiting opportunities for their peaceful resolution, more so when the media amplifies them.

The effects of the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley can result in forms of slow violence that can at times occur out of sight and may not be known to the public through failure to report on it by journalists because of its lack of spectacular nature to qualify it as a news item (Nixon 2011). Slow Violence, as described by Robin Nixon, results from long-term unseen effects of conflicts, wars and environmental pollution that affects the livelihoods of communities in a given area. The Kerio Valley conflict fits this description due to its sporadic violent episodes and a false lull in peace, with victims suffering its effects over extended periods. This seemingly incessant violence among communities within common or fluid boundaries calls for change in the way conflict is reported through the mass media and, more so, local-language radio to minimise harm and de-escalate it (Howard 2013).

The Oxford dictionary defines conflict as a serious disagreement or argument, a situation with opposing ideas or feelings, or a violent fight between groups, or countries. Hostilities between communities lead to a situation of dualistic differentiation and othering, or ‘us vs them’, which can result in conflicts with devastating consequences. Such conflicts can at times be misrepresented or underrepresented, more so those around socio-economic issues that are at times “downplayed or depoliticised as law and order or ethnic conflicts” (Joseph 2014: 232).

There is also the danger of unreliable information and censorship by government agencies through restrictions or denial of access to conflict areas to journalists (Kibet 2015; Owino and Karani 2021). This seriously hampers the media’s responsibility of highlighting possible human rights violations in its reportage. Reasons advanced for such restrictions can include the safety of journalists and purported unintended leaking of security information to bandits through news reports. Such restrictions can prevent the media from reporting on conflicts and constructing narratives around them through news selection, an activity guided by news frames that determine what is selected, included and emphasised (Joseph 2014). Peace initiatives also

become casualties of the process and end up being given less attention in the media, more so by mainstream radio stations (Bhowmik and Ferrucci 2024). Unique localised problems faced by certain communities may also be ignored by mainstream radio stations whose programming may be influenced by their commercial pursuits (Manje 2023). Local radio stations can fill this void through their reportage of localised issues that are relevant to their target audience and can gain acceptance among them.

Other times, media content on conflict can seem elitist, which is evident in their thrusting of grand narratives of privileged individuals to the limelight while obscuring the voices of ordinary members of a society (Mwaura 2021; Bhowmik and Fisher 2023). Thus, it would be important for journalists to include non-elite sources in their reporting of conflict because truth exists in local voices and not in grand narratives. Local stories would ensure that the true situation of the conflict is represented in media reports. Thus, media representation is important because audiences must believe in its quality since the media produces, carries and communicates meaning in and about society, which can create positive images or reinforce negative stereotypes about them (Fourie 2018).

How then do we use the communicative power of the broadcast media, and more so local-language radio to de-escalate this conflict? I theorise on three possible ways, whereby the easiest would be to look to the social marketing concept and attempt to “sell” peace to people in the conflict area. Secondly, the media can opt for strategic communication where messages developed are geared towards moulding appropriate and desired socio-political behaviours of various stakeholders. Thirdly, the media can use the peace journalism approach to inform and animate the public sphere discourse on the conflict. This study subscribes to the third approach that ensures that all voices around the conflict, and especially those on human rights and peacebuilding, are represented in media reports.

Radio stations broadcasting in local languages are vital in communicating peacebuilding initiatives and human rights issues in conflict areas. This stems from their connection to the communities in their broadcast areas, as was noted in the peace programming of two community radio stations, Koch FM and Pamoja FM, which broadcast from Korogocho and Kibera slums in the Kenyan capital city, Nairobi, respectively. The two stations fostered peace and reconciliation during the post-election violence of 2007/2008 in Kenya in the multi-ethnic slums (Gustafsson 2016a).

Based on the foregoing, radio can unite communities creating a link between rural and urban areas as well as the literate and illiterate populations, thereby aiding in peaceful resolution of conflicts (Heywood, Fierens and Yameogo 2024). Thus, this study is premised on the idea that an impartial and vibrant media can effectively carry out its watchdog role while fostering peace and reconciliation in conflict situations (Maweu 2019). The freedom and independence of the media is provided for under article 34 of the Kenyan constitution of 2010 promising editorial independence by discouraging governmental, political and commercial interference (KLO 2013). Hence the question, does the Kenyan media enjoy the said freedom and editorial independence in conflict reporting? This is why it was important to analyse if and how Kass FM and Alpha radio have reported on human rights and peacebuilding in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict and how government and politicians have related with the media as they carry out their duties. The importance of local radio is in its potential to be used to mitigate conflicts due to its popular programmes and accessibility (Biwott and Mberia 2019).

In the last 10-15 years, the conflict has become rampant with raids and counterraiders where firearms are used, resulting in deaths and injuries to many people as well as human rights violations (Aiyabei and Odhiambo 2020). This has led to displacement of populations, thus affecting their livelihoods, mobility, and education of school-going children. Such human rights violations and deficiencies can exacerbate the conflict and there was need to explore the lived experiences of people engaged as well as how individuals and communities see injustices and deprivations of human rights. The sporadic nature of the Kerio Valley conflict means that journalists must see the slow temporalities of violence and erosion of human rights for them to report on the same. Slow Violence relates to effects of conflicts, wars and environmental pollution. Thus, news and information gathering must be attuned to these less visible forms of violence and there is need to develop methods that visibilise them.

Precise Academic Issue

Although studies have been conducted on the Kerio Valley conflict (see Cheserek, Odenyo and Omondi 2012; Elfversson 2016; Kipchumba 2019; Aiyabei and Odhiambo 2020; Chepyegon 2023), they have concentrated on land resources as causes of the conflict but not on human rights and peacebuilding. Even more scarce are studies focusing on the local-language radio reporting of this conflict, creating knowledge, practical and theoretical gaps in this critical area of journalism practice (Miles 2017). A knowledge gap addresses the absence of studies on a

research phenomenon, which in this study relates to the reporting of human rights and peace by local-language radio stations in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict. A theoretical gap in the main theory, peace journalism, was noted, necessitating its combination with the Representation theory and complementation with the Slow Violence concept to explain the representation of narratives on the conflict and the invisible effects of violence on victims that are rarely reported. Through this combination, the study brings fresh insights on the representation of conflict from a human rights and peacebuilding perspective. A practical gap shows a disconnection between the theory and how it is implemented, possibly on a limited basis or not at all. In this sense the theory may not fit conditions in a specific context.

Human rights reporting is a developing area of journalism practice in Kenya that is key in educating the masses about human rights as well as giving voice to the voiceless. The role of journalists in a conflict situation is important as they have the responsibility of educating the public and increasing awareness on human rights issues. They achieve this by monitoring, investigating, and reporting on human rights violations in a conflict (Shaw 2011). Furthermore, news reports are not neutral texts and often promote discourses favoured by journalists, editors, media owners, the government, and other actors in conflicts through representation (Fourie 2018). This can create ‘othering’ between communities living in a given area leading to escalation of conflicts with devastating consequences as was the case in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 when Radio-Television Libres des Mille Collines (RTL) was used to broadcast hate messages against minority Tutsi’s (Hagos 2001).

There is a notable growth in studies using Peace Journalism theory (Gakunju 2017; Cheeseman, Maweu and Ouma 2019; Nzibo 2020; Owino and Karani, 2021; Doll, Moy and Beckers 2023) which will be elaborated upon in the next chapter. However, most of them overlook the human rights journalism aspect despite its contribution to the emerging field (Elega, et al. 2022). Various stakeholders such as community leaders, security personnel and political leaders (Biwot and Mberia 2019) have also ignored the intricate but critical role that the media can play in managing conflicts. This study, therefore, sought to fill the knowledge gap in media reporting of both human rights and peacebuilding by analysing news and feature stories from two selected radio stations Kass FM and Alpha Radio, complemented by in-depth interviews with selected journalists. These stations broadcast to the populace in the conflict area in local languages that are understandable to them. Kass FM and Alpha Radio are commercial secular and religious stations, respectively. There was a need to know how these local-language media

reporting on human rights and peacebuilding relate to narratives about the conflict and peacebuilding efforts in Kerio Valley through the Peace Journalism framework. Thus, by focusing on local radio perspectives, this study addressed a significant gap in extant literature.

The next section discusses how the government and its agencies have responded to the Kerio Valley conflict.

Government Responses to the Kerio Valley Conflict

As indicated earlier, cattle rustling in Kerio Valley has devastating consequences due to the use of firearms in raids resulting in killings and injuries to many people. The proliferation of firearms in the North Rift region of Kenya is attributed to their ease in availability from neighbouring countries that have experienced or continue to experience armed conflicts such as Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia (Keitany, Mwaruvie and Osamba 2024). Such weapons enter the Kenyan territory due to the porous nature of boundaries drawing constant criticism against the government from various stakeholders.

The government has also been criticised for lacking a strong presence in some regions, leaving vast ungoverned areas where lawlessness and banditry thrive (Elfvorsson 2016; Musau, Ichani, and Mulu 2023). Such areas become hiding spots for criminals due to their remoteness and inaccessibility to security personnel and journalists. Since there is difficulty in accessing most regions in Kerio Valley, the government has also received criticism for neglecting infrastructure development to improve mobility in the region, something that is critical to residents and security personnel conducting normal patrols or responding to emergencies (Musau, Ichani, and Mulu 2023; see also Thoms and Ron 2007). In most cases, the response of the government to attacks is slow, reactive and not pre-emptive. Such a reaction has created a feeling that there is no political goodwill from regional political leaders in supporting government efforts at resolving the conflict, as established by Chepyegon (2023). Instead, such politicians, according to Selly Chepyegon, create discourses of oppression and intrusion of cultural and political rights of communities, creating an apathy of support for conflict resolution measures from such communities.

In its efforts to stem banditry and resolve the conflict, the government in the past has initiated several joint security operations involving different contingents of the Kenyan security agencies, with the main goal being the disarmament of illegal firearm holders (Chepyegon

2023). Such operations reduce the number and frequency of raids that go up when the operation is downscaled. Other efforts, such as animal branding, have been unsuccessful due to resistance and possible sabotage from communities. Such efforts need to be communicated to the residents of Kerio Valley to build acceptance and support from them. In this case, governments ought to disseminate information aimed at fostering cohesion between communities and ultimately achieve nation-building by using local-language radio in recognition of language as a tool of education and governance (Sang 2015).

The next section gives a historical summary of radio broadcasting in Kenya.

Brief History of Radio Broadcasting in Kenya

Radio broadcasting in Kenya started in 1927 with the establishment of the East African Broadcasting Corporation (EABC), which relayed signals from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in England (Okoth 2015). Its development can be traced through various stages that are categorised into the colonial period ending in 1963, the independence period beginning in 1963 and the liberalisation of airwaves in the 1990s.

In 1928, EABC was renamed English Broadcasting Corporation, and local broadcasting was born, with signals transmitted through the Amplitude Modulation (AM) standard (Njeru 2005). During the colonial period, radio broadcasting targeted the white settler community, with local communities seemingly ignored. The language of broadcasting at the time was English, leaving the majority of local communities linguistically excluded because of low literacy levels. In the 1940s, the British colonialists allowed controlled broadcasting in local languages to advance their agenda and give a chance to local communities to follow war stories, especially during the Second World War (Okoth 2015). Africans had been conscripted during this period to fight alongside the British army as part of a unit called the Kings African Rifles.

The year nineteen fifty-three saw significant progress in the incorporation of broadcasting in local languages with the establishment of the African Broadcasting Services (ABS). The inclusion of African voices on radio was expanded in 1954 with the establishment of Kenya Broadcasting Services (KBS) to run regional stations, namely, *Sauti ya Mvita* in Mombasa, Mount Kenya Station in Nyeri, and Lake Station in Kisumu (Okoth 2015). These stations were to broadcast to local communities around them in their languages for four hours daily, split into two-hour time segments, either in the morning or afternoon, or for others, late in the evening.

However, this arrangement was not sufficient because of the limited, sometimes inconvenient broadcast hours, which fell during the day or late in the evening when people were busy with their daily chores. The broadcasts also targeted large communities, thus marginalising small communities and, more so, those in remote locations. In 1957, the BBC started broadcasting in Kiswahili, reaching a significant portion of the Kenyan populace and thereby expanding the reach of radio in the country.

The independence period saw a tight grip by successive regimes over radio broadcasting on the government-owned station, Voice of Kenya (VOK), which was renamed from the previous Kenya Broadcasting Services (KBS) at independence in 1963. VOK was again changed to Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) in 1989 through an Act of Parliament (Odhiambo 2002) and remains so to date. Broadcasting hours were limited to 5:00 am and 12:00 midnight, with the radio acting as a government mouthpiece. The languages of broadcast were English and Kiswahili on the KBC English Service and Radio Taifa, respectively, with vernacular broadcasting continuing in the regional stations as before. The opening and closing of broadcasting by radio stations at the stated times were formal events, with prayers and the playing of the national anthem.

The power of radio was recognised and was evident in the behaviour of the government, which exercised strict content control and even military rebels in the attempted coup of 1982 who hijacked KBC studios and forced a renowned broadcaster, Leonard Mambo Mbotela, to make a broadcast on the alleged fall of the government of the late Daniel Moi and give them legitimacy. In the same year, 1982, the first community radio in Kenya and indeed Africa, known as *Homa Bay Community Radio*, had been set up in Homa Bay (Kimani 2018), targeting communities living on the shores of Lake Victoria through a joint initiative of the government of Kenya and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The station's existence was short-lived and was closed by the jittery government in 1984, in its attempt to clamp down on growing dissent and limit the citizenry's access to information, especially after the attempted coup in 1982. It did not help matters that the alleged coup plotters were members of the Luo community who were the target audience of the radio station.

The clamour for multi-party democracy in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to the liberalisation of airwaves, paving the way for private ownership of broadcast media in Kenya

(Nyanjom 2012). This period also marks tremendous growth in radio broadcasting. The government established Metro FM in 1995 (Okoth 2015), marking the start of the era of Frequency Modulated (FM) broadcasting, which offers clear signals unlike the Amplitude Modulation (AM) and Short Wave (SW) standards used initially.

This period also saw the establishment of privately owned radio stations, notably Capital FM in 1995 by Linda Holt, and Nation FM in 1996, owned by the Nation Media Group (NMG), with the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development as the then-majority shareholder. The Aga Khan sold their entire shareholding in NMG to Tanzanian Rostam Azizi in March 2026. Linda Holt later sold Capital FM to Chris Kirubi. Metro FM, Capital FM and Nation FM were urban English-language radio stations in Nairobi, with their main programming consisting of live information and entertainment by disc jockeys (DJs), a new phenomenon and a notable departure from the rigid 15- and 30-minute pre-recorded programmes that were the staple at the government-owned KBC. Broadcast time also changed to the current 24-hour system, increasing duration, diversity and flexibility in programming. Freedom of expression also increased, with audience participation encouraged through telephone calls and text messaging, following the advent of mobile telephones in the early 2000s. Radio Citizen was established in 1999 by Samuel Kamau Macharia through his company, Royal Media Services (RMS), but its license was withdrawn a year later due to its constant criticism of the then-government of President Daniel Moi, who was serving his final term. The Kenyan court restored Radio Citizen's license in the year 2000, and RMS has since grown into a major player in local-language radio broadcasting in Kenya, operating 12 such stations targeting different audiences. Another significant milestone was realised in the same year 1999 with the establishment of two religious FM stations outside Nairobi being Baraka FM in Mombasa and SAYARE Radio [*Sauti ya Rehema*] in Eldoret. Other commercial and community FM radio stations mushroomed around the country leading to the establishment of the first 24-hour vernacular station Kameme FM by Rose Kimotho in the year 2000, broadcasting in the Kikuyu language. Rose Kimotho sold Kameme FM to Media Max Ltd in 2007, a company associated with the Kenyatta family. This development gave way for the establishment of other local-language radio stations such as Kass FM in 2005 and Alpha Radio in 2018. Radio stations are now distributed in various parts of the country close to their target audiences and limited frequencies in major cities and towns. FM radio stations both commercial and community have since grown to 303 as of December 2023 (Communications Authority of Kenya 2024).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

Aim: To understand the Kenyan experience in media reporting of human rights and peacebuilding in the Kerio Valley conflict from a peace journalism perspective using Kass FM and Alpha Radio as case studies.

The objectives of the study were:

1. To identify what narratives and discourses the selected news and feature stories use in reporting the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict;
2. To examine the factors that influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict;
3. To provide suggestions on how human rights and peacebuilding reporting can be framed within the peace journalism framework in Kenya and similar conflict contexts using local-language radio stations.

Primary Research Question:

How has radio reported human rights and peacebuilding in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict, and how can this be improved?

Key research questions that guide the primary question are as follows:

1. What narratives and discourses do the selected news and feature stories aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio use in reporting the Kenyan Kerio Valley Conflict?
2. What factors influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict?
3. How should human rights and peacebuilding reporting be framed within the peace journalism framework in Kenya and similar conflict contexts using local-language radio stations?

Analysis of radio news and feature stories, as well as in-depth interviews with purposively selected reporters and editors, revealed narratives and experiences about the reporting of the conflict at Kerio Valley. This study also investigated opportunities for peace journalism by the Kenyan media in its reporting of the Kerio Valley conflict.

Significance of the Study

The mass media's attention to and investigation of human rights issues in society are crucial for raising awareness and attracting the necessary attention and action from key stakeholders (Maier 2021). It is through such attention that human rights abuses in conflicts facing the world, such as the Israeli and Palestinian one (see Bhowmik and Fisher 2023) and the recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) violence in the United States of America, are brought to the fore. In the stated conflicts, victims have faced human rights abuses such as killings and illegal detentions, hence the need for the media to highlight them. For example, in the Sima Bhowmik and Jolene Fisher study of the 2021 Israel-Palestine conflict, they established that efforts by a senior CNN journalist to question the dominant narrative of the conflict helped subsequent reports to include more human rights stories. The initial coverage was partisan, favouring the voices of Israeli and American elites while obscuring those of Palestinians.

In Africa, such attention is crucial for radio reporting that potentially reaches a large segment of the African population (Brooke 2024). Although radio is a major source of information in Kenya (Okinda 2017), there is inadequate research on it, especially with respect to human rights and peacebuilding reporting. The sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley has been ongoing for a long time since the pre-1870s (Chelal 1969), and government interventions have been unsuccessful. Focusing on the role of radio in human rights violations and peacebuilding reporting was thus crucial. The study findings provided insights into the role of local radio stations in reporting human rights violations, advocating for these rights and peacebuilding. From the foregoing, this study sought to address significant gaps in research on human rights and peacebuilding journalism through the lens of local radio stations and the long-standing Kerio Valley conflict.

This study departs from previous research that has separately interrogated human rights and peacebuilding. The integration of these two forms of developing areas of journalism is crucial for their theoretical development and practice. The study findings are useful to communication and journalism trainers when developing and reviewing their curricula on human rights and peace journalism. To radio journalists and, indeed, other media practitioners, the findings inform best practices for covering human rights and peacebuilding initiatives in conflict situations. Integrating data from content analysis of human rights and peacebuilding radio reporting with in-depth interviews with the journalists behind the production of content yielded

comprehensive coverage of the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley. Journalists for Human Rights (JHR), on its rationale for a curriculum on human rights reporting, noted that human rights matter to everyone, and if journalists have to report on them effectively, then they must be sufficiently trained so that they do not violate human rights as they serve the public (JHR 2022).

Theoretical Approach

The study's theoretical framework is comprehensively discussed in Chapter Three. However, the summary in the following section serves to orient the reader to the study's overall theoretical approach. Johan Galtung's peace journalism (2003), which calls for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, is the main theory. Stuart Hall's (1997) constructionist theory of Representation, which views reality as multiple and constructed, supports the Peace Journalism theory. Robin Nixon's (2011) concept of slow violence complements the theoretical approach by highlighting the invisible effects of conflicts that unfold out of sight over lengthy periods.

The discussion on Peace Journalism theory showed why it is appropriate in countering the low road of conflict reporting seen through the war journalism lens that tends to glorify violence and competition among warring parties. On the other hand, the high road of peace journalism promotes the peaceful resolution of conflicts by stakeholders.

Methodological Approach

This section provides an overview of the study's methodological orientation and process that is fully explained in Chapter Four. The study is located within the philosophical assumptions and methodological operationalisation of the constructivist paradigm. It adopts a qualitative approach that provides a nuanced understanding of a research phenomenon, as was the case in this study, where data are generated through the analysis of media texts and in-depth interviews with selected journalists.

This study adopted a case study research design. The study was carried out at two selected radio stations, namely Kass FM and Alpha Radio, which broadcast to the populace in the conflict area of the Kerio Valley. The Kerio Valley lies within the Great Rift Valley, which stretches across Kenya from Turkana in the north to the south at the border with Tanzania. It is bordered by the Tugen Hills to the east and the Chereng'any Hills to the west. This region is a rural semi-arid area with rugged terrain and a poor road and mobile telephone network. The

main economic activities in this region include livestock keeping, subsistence farming (in some areas) and beekeeping.

Kass FM, with the slogan *Kimnatet Naet* (Knowledge is power), is a private radio station that was established in 2005 by businessman Joshua Chepkwony through a company called Kalee Ltd. It is a commercial local-language station that broadcasts from an urban setting in Nairobi, with interactive programming via telephone calls, text messages, and social media postings. The word 'Kass' is a word play on the Kalenjin word '*Kas*', which means listen! Kass FM broadcasts terrestrially to the entire Kalenjin-dominated Rift Valley, parts of Western, Nyanza, Nairobi and the Coast region in the Kalenjin language. It also streams its signals through the internet, reaching audiences in various locations around the world. The major programming of Kass FM is on social, economic, environmental, political and current affairs¹.

Alpha radio is a private, rural-based, commercial Christian radio station that uses the slogan "*Kilele cha Baraka*" (Peak of blessings). It broadcasts from Pemwai Township near Kabarnet at the heart of Baringo County. Alpha Radio was established in 2018 through Crystal Media Africa, a company owned by Sam Nyanchiro, a practising journalist. Its programming strategy aims to build bridges among various communities within its reach through dialogue, reconciliation, media diplomacy, and the teaching of the Word of God. It broadcasts in Kiswahili, Pokot, Ilchamus and Tugen languages to the counties of Baringo, West Pokot, Laikipia and Elgeyo Marakwet. It recently extended its coverage to Uasin Gishu, Nandi and Trans-Nzoia counties through a repeater station in Eldoret City². It also streams its signals online, increasing its reach to audiences with internet access. Pokot, Ilchamus and Tugen fall under the umbrella Kalenjin language, which I speak and write fluently.

I collected data in the form of recorded news and feature stories in the first data set. The second data set involving human participants was through in-depth interviews with sampled news reporters and editors from the two radio stations. I analysed the results using the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) method to generate themes, which were then subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to elicit power and dominance.

¹ See www.kassfm.co.ke , accessed on 13th May 2024.

² See Alpha Radio Kenya official Facebook page, accessed on 5th August 2024.

Structure of the Study

Chapter One provides the background of the study, statement of the problem and research questions, building the rationale for the study of radio reporting of human rights and peacebuilding in the Kerio Valley conflict in Kenya.

Chapter Two reviews scholarly literature on conflict reporting, representation, human rights, culture, radio and peacebuilding. By contextualising the study in previous scholarship, it highlights studies that influenced the development of this study and simultaneously extended on the research gaps and the need for the study.

Chapter Three engages the theories that guide the study, namely Peace Journalism and constructivist Representation theories, as well as the concept of Slow Violence. It discusses their applicability to the study, showing key concepts used to interpret the findings.

Chapter Four presents the methods used to generate qualitative data within the constructivist paradigm adopted for the study, which aligns with the constructedness of news and feature stories. It also explains the analytical approach.

Chapter Five presents the data and methods used in analysing data, divided into two sections. It shows the operationalisation of RTA on the two sections through its six phases. The first one deals with data generated from the radio news and feature stories aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio, while the second one deals with the face-to-face in-depth interviews with the participating journalists. It also explains how CDA is used to study radio discourses and participants' responses to human rights and peacebuilding reporting.

Chapter Six analyses themes and sub-themes generated from the news and feature stories using the CDA.

Chapter Seven analyses the views of participants, represented through excerpts from in-depth interviews, which are subjected to CDA.

Chapter Eight develops suggestions from participating reporters on how to improve human rights and peace reporting by local-language radio stations in the Kerio Valley conflict, grounded in the Peace Journalism theory.

Chapter Nine synthesises the findings and analyses generated in the previous chapter to explicate how the study contributed new knowledge on human rights and peace reporting by local-language radio stations in the Kerio Valley conflict. It concludes the study by providing a summary of the major findings on human rights and peace reporting in the Kerio Valley conflict by Kass FM and Alpha Radio. The summary therein is in direct reference to the study's key research questions.

The next chapter discusses the literature that contextualise human rights and peacebuilding thematically.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews scholarly literature that contextualises the study in terms of identifying similar areas of research in human rights and peacebuilding reporting in conflict situations, as well as the gaps that this study aimed to address. The literature is arranged thematically and includes themes on human rights, conflict and media (Shaw 2011; Thoms and Ron 2007), radio and conflict reporting (Sang 2015; Tayeebwa 2017), and journalism and news (Zelizer 2005). It also touches on radio and conflict de-escalation (Njigua and Manyengo 2017; Mwaura 2021; Owino and Karani 2021; Doll, Moy and Beckers 2023), cultural identity and land (Hall 1997; Cheserek, Odenyo and Omondi 2012), slow violence (Nixon 2011), as well as safety and security of journalists (Kibet 2015; Tejedor, Cervi, and Tusa, 2022).

Cultural identity and issues around land that include boundaries, ownership, and access to resources such as water and pasture can drive conflicts. Radio, and more so those broadcasting in local languages, has the potential to de-escalate conflicts by reporting on peacebuilding efforts and educating the masses on human rights issues to create awareness on them and guard against their infringement (Chibita 2016). Thus, there was a need to critically discuss scholarship on conflicts around the world, but mostly in Africa, moving towards the greater East African region, then to Kenya and specifically the Kerio Valley region. These themes are critical to understanding how local-language radio stations report on human rights and peacebuilding, specifically in the sporadic interethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley.

Human Rights, Conflict and Media

This section discusses human rights and the role of media in reporting on it potentially creating awareness, leading to their promotion and protection.

There is no universal definition of human rights but for purposes of this study I shall refer to human rights as “internationally agreed values, standards or rules regulating the conduct of states towards their own citizens and towards non-citizens” (Thoms and Ron 2007: 683). This definition not only recognises the state as a promoter and defender of human rights but that it can also be a violator of the same to all, or some, people living within its borders. Other groups outside formal governments can also be serious violators of human rights such as non-state

armed groups (Policzer 2006). Both situations appear to be at play in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley.

The Kenyan government has been accused of perpetuating human rights abuses through failure to provide adequate security and economic empowerment to the communities living in Kerio Valley. As argued by Thoms and Ron (2007), states with weaker administrative or security presence in far-flung or remote areas allow insurgencies to emerge unchecked creating lawlessness where human rights abuses are perpetuated. This can result in killings, injuries, displacements, inability to provide services like healthcare, disruption of livelihoods and learning of school children. Degradation of healthcare systems because of conflict causes more suffering to communities, which can result in deaths from preventable and treatable ailments (Thoms and Ron 2007).

According to UNESCO (2008: 8), human rights have two critical components namely tolerance and human agency. Tolerance is a recognition of difference in terms of ethnicity, gender and economic status calling for their acceptance. Human agency refers to the ability of human beings to make choices and act, as they please, which ideally should not interfere with another person's rights. All people, by virtue of their being human, are entitled to human rights which cannot be taken away or given up. In this sense, the residents of Kerio Valley already have these rights, what is being witnessed is a possible slow erosion of the same through Slow Violence (Nixon 2011) which will be discussed in detail in the upcoming sections. This slow erosion of rights needs to be foregrounded in radio news reports in order to bring it to the attention of stakeholders that include the government, political, religious and community leaders.

The goal of human rights is to promote equality and dignity of human life (UNESCO 2008). Since human rights are interlinked, infringement of one right can lead to infringement of many others. For example, infringement on the right to security may affect the right to free movement of people, the right to education of learners and the right to dignified life resulting from possible disrupted livelihoods. Ideally, promotion of human rights should not be static but progressive at an acceptable pace as awareness is created through the mass media and more importantly local-language radio stations.

Human rights violations can be caused by many factors that may include discrimination and

violation of social and economic rights (Thoms and Ron 2007). Cultural rights can also be included in this category. UNESCO (2008) explains economic, social and cultural rights as those human rights relating to the workplace, social security, family life, participation in cultural life, and access to housing, food, water, health care and education. Human rights, therefore, address multiple aspects of life and society. This study focused on how local-language radio stations have reported on human rights issues and infringements in the sporadic inter-ethnic violence in Kerio Valley. This is because infringement of such human rights can lead to discrimination, marginalisation and ‘othering’, a state of looking down on other communities or groups making them feel helpless and unwanted.

Communication has been termed the “lifeblood of human interaction and the media constituting the veins through which it flows” (Middleton and Njogu 2010: 19). Through the said communication, local-language radio can play a vital role in monitoring and informing its audiences on human rights issues. This role is manifested in holding governments accountable for human rights violations making it a crucial partner to human rights campaigners more so those from the grassroots whose voices need to be amplified (Winston and Pollock 2016). Through the media, human rights campaigners can ensure that human rights issues remain in the media agenda potentially influencing decisions of key stakeholders such as the government and political leaders (Downman and Ubayasiri 2017). Since the media is a platform where conflict is constructed and perpetuated (Miloni et al. 2015), it would be ideal for the Kenyan media to report human rights stories more robustly as part of their contribution to the betterment of society. Thus, harnessing the broadcast media’s ability to influence the attitudes of individuals towards the promotion and protection of human rights is a good starting point.

Since media influence undergoes modifications and reshaping at personal or group level, the broadcast media (James 2003) can exploit the influence of significant “others” on their audiences. Significant “others” in this context referring to people with influence in communities whose voices on human rights may be missing in media reports, yet they hold sway in them. They include elders, women leaders and the educated in various professions whose voices need to feature in radio news reports and other programmes like talk shows. Human rights issues form important components of programming to the broadcast media that are worth listing and repeating especially by the local-language radio as a way of supporting and guarding them against their abuse (James 2003). Thus, human rights reporting should be a common feature in the broadcast media and even more importantly in local-language radio

stations.

Susan Sampaio Dias (2013: 1) reflected on three ways in which the media can play a role in a conflict. First, the media can contribute to the protection, awareness and debate of human rights issues. Animating the public sphere with human rights issues would be the ideal situation that needs to be encouraged. This will help to keep human rights issues in the public domain creating the much-needed awareness that gives an ideal situation demanding for their protection. In essence, an informed population can recognise human rights violations and demand for their fulfilment from concerned authorities. It is worth noting that unreported human rights violations face the danger of being normalised perpetuating their continued infringement.

Secondly, the media can ignore, silence or misrepresent human rights issues. Any of these will encourage continued violation and minimal awareness of the true situation on the ground by stakeholders. The media can do this by failing to give due prominence to human rights stories as well as the narratives chosen to report on them, which may affect how audiences will receive such reports. Since the meaning of facts depends on context, how journalists select and emphasise news items on human rights also influences how audiences will perceive a conflict (Kempf 2017). Ignoring human rights issues in news reports could be due to cultural, political or journalistic policies that constrain them (Fourie 2018).

In patriarchal societies, like in the case of the communities in conflict at the Kerio Valley, culture plays a role in who may be allowed to speak to the media on behalf of the community. This can lead to marginalisation of women and children voices, yet they are the ones who suffer more human rights violations in conflict situations (Khamadi 2015). Thus, it is important for journalists to include all voices in news reports to ensure balance, objectivity and impartiality. Balance, objectivity and impartiality are in line with the Peace Journalism theory (Galtung 2003) that encourages a detailed account of all actors in a conflict touching on the historical and cultural causes of it (Gavilan 2011). Although this is desirable and there is need to gravitate towards it, it is good to be cognisant that journalistic policies are evident through newsgathering practices and selection; themselves practices that can affect what is chosen and emphasised (see Irvan 2006; Kempf 2017; Tesot 2021).

Thirdly, Dias reflects on a negative influence of the media where it can incite hatred, genocide

and crimes against humanity. The media has faced accusations on this point on many occasions most notably in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and in Kenya during the 2007/2008 post-election violence (see Haggos 2001; Ismail and Deane 2008). Unfortunately, this accusation continues and this time from Ethiopia where the media was accused of contributing and fuelling the inter-ethnic violence witnessed in 2019 having been deployed as a “weapon of offence and defence” (Wolde and Woldearegay 2024: 298). The Ethiopian media was found to use “annihilation and othering” narratives when reporting news stories on the conflict while neglecting issues of “ethnic communities or political groups that were perceived as enemies” (Wolde and Woldearegay 2024: 297). This goes against the peace journalism principle that requires reporting of stories from all parties in conflict to bring understanding, transformation of the image of the enemy through conflict sensitive language and building of consensus towards peaceful resolution of conflicts. This kind of reportage would also enable such communities to air out their issues enabling journalists to get the background and context of the conflict. Although Ethiopia had witnessed a remarkable growth in media, competition between state and regional media for audiences and political narratives has created polarisation in the country (Wolde and Woldearegay 2024).

When the media incites hatred in a conflict through partisan or sensational reporting, conflict escalates leading to hardening of positions by parties in conflict, which makes resolution difficult. In this case, the Kenyan media ought to be deliberate in its reporting of human rights stories that creates awareness and lead to their promotion and protection. In exploring the aim to identify the factors that influence the selection of news stories (Tesot 2021), this study is cognisant as to whether and how aspects of slow violence are reported, or if the focus is on the ‘spectacle’ of conflict which problematically becomes the norm for news selection. Thus, this study contributes new knowledge in understanding the nuances of the role of radio in positively addressing the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley. The next section discusses how radio can report conflicts.

Radio and Conflict Reporting

Radio is an important source of information in Kenya and more so, those that broadcast in local languages (Okinda 2017). Radio reaches further than newspapers and television especially in underdeveloped and far-flung regions as is the case in Kerio Valley (Kariuki 2019). This reach allows physically isolated communities to be linked virtually which enables them to share and receive relevant information across physical boundaries allowing them to remain socially

connected (Heywood, Fierens and Yameogo 2024). Because of this reach, radio attracts large audiences in rural areas due to its simplicity and access both in terms of equipment and language particularly the local ones that may be understandable to majority of people with limited literacy skills (Radoli 2011). Radio, being an oral media form that aligns with storytelling, thus resonates with most African populations that traditionally (and still today) champion oral storytelling for education. Choice of language of broadcast is key recognising that it is a critical tool of governance and education (Sang 2015), on various issues especially in the vast Kerio Valley region with minimal government presence as was explained further in the section under government response to the conflict in Chapter One.

Language plays an important role in radio communication in that people with low literacy levels can still access and contribute to information in languages that they understand making them part of the conversations around issues of importance to them. This access can potentially shift power dynamics while providing grassroots actors and communities with more information and influence (Mwaura 2021) especially in conflict situations. Power stems from empowered communities who can articulate their issues in the media, which is beneficial in human rights awareness and peacebuilding efforts. In this case, such audiences have their own lived experiences of a conflict, which offers a window to understanding the effects of conflicts in the lives of community members, hence the need for non-elite voices in news and feature stories. This allows community members to express their emotions, empower them and build consensus towards peaceful co-existence (Owino and Karani 2021). The inclusion of multiple local voices in news stories creates variety and a sense of ownership of peacebuilding processes and needs to be encouraged (Tayeebwa 2017). Journalists also have their own lived experiences of reporting on the conflict helping us to understand why stories on the Kerio Valley conflict are reported the way they are.

Radio can influence how audiences perceive a conflict and how they respond to it through its programming (Ahere 2019). The influence can happen during and after violent episodes of a conflict, hence, the need for thematic reporting. Thematic reporting as opposed to episodic reporting allows the reporting of a conflict from various angles over lengthy periods even when no violence is reported. How audiences react depends on the framing and articulation of issues around the conflict. For example, when a radio station reports a conflict as involving few individuals and not entire communities, it may diffuse tensions among members of such communities who will not feel targeted and hence they do not see the need to respond in a

retaliatory manner. In this regard, radio offers a platform where issues around a conflict are brought to the fore and articulated leading to decisions and solutions to de-escalate it that are owned by communities. The articulation happens through analysis of various issues by bringing in multiple perspectives creating more knowledge and awareness to the public on issues around a conflict (UNESCO 2008). This is why radio is the ideal medium to report on the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict at Kerio Valley in an impartial, accurate and fair manner to bolster efforts in peacebuilding. Peacebuilding reporting on local-language radio is achievable through the broadcasting of content that builds confidence of peacemakers and correct misunderstandings, which may arise, potentially leading to conflict prevention and transformation (Mensah, Boasiako and Acquah 2017).

Although impartiality, accuracy and fairness essentially form part of the tenets of good reporting, their importance in conflict reporting cannot be gainsaid. As stated by Wilhelm Kempf (2017), good journalism requires more than just goodwill and moral incentives from journalists. In this sense, journalists must make deliberate efforts needed in getting both sides of a story, which is part of the rigorous process of ensuring their accuracy, balance and fairness in news reporting. Not only does this ensure fairness and balance, but it also reduces chances of sensationalism and mistakes that can be detrimental in conflict reporting. Thus, journalists need to adopt clear and fair reporting to avoid misunderstandings and enable better understanding by audiences (Kariuki 2019). A clear understanding is possible through the work of a journalist who is strong in facts obtained from research and interviews with relevant news sources (Barker 2012). In this case, the onus is on journalists to gather detailed stories that inform and educate their audiences on a conflict by looking at its history, issues, actors and context. Usually, the meaning of facts depends on context bringing language choice to the centre stage where careful choice of words and phrases can help in resolving conflicts (see Barasa, Khasandi and Ndambuki, 2016). Indeed, a conciliatory tone is important when advocating for peace (Kariuki, 2019). Therefore, analysis of radio news and feature stories using the RTA and CDA methods reveal the presence or absence of such words and phrases and how Kass FM and Alpha Radio have used them.

However, the potential of local radio to report and influence outcomes of a conflict, to encourage peacebuilding and conflict resolution has not been fully exploited (Gakunju 2017) necessitating the need to conduct this study. There are also questions about how journalists conceptualise the idea of peace and what constitutes peace stories (Tayeebwa 2017). Hence,

the question remains, what factors influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict?

Ethics of Conflict Reporting

Successful conflict reporting adheres to ethical procedures that ensure that the said communication follows acceptable media industry considerations. Such considerations are meant to limit harm but do good at the same time (Brewer 2016). According to Brewer, such considerations include striving for truth and accuracy, maintaining balance, avoiding sensationalism, maintain human dignity and maintaining open communication. These considerations are similar to journalistic principles of news and feature reporting hence the seeming overlapping of discussions on the same in various sections of this thesis.

Local-language Radio Stations

Indigenous languages play key roles in daily communication between communities facilitating interactions through the exchange of information and maintaining culture (Orao 2009). Radio stations that broadcast in local languages can extend the said interactions increasing the reach of the communication. Local-language radio, also known as indigenous language radio, harness this role reaching populations previously marginalised in mainstream broadcasts carried out in foreign languages or a country's dominant/official language. They use languages that are linguistically accessible to the majority of the populations and more importantly, those with minimal literacy skills (Salawu 2006). Such people can then participate in initiatives such as those that champion human rights protection and promotion of peace through the media ensuring inclusivity and acceptance.

Ideally, local-language radio should enable the discourses of ordinary people to be brought to the centre stage potentially increasing the democratic space in a linguistically diverse country like Kenya through a diversity of voices (Simatei 2013). Without access to local-language radio platforms, discourses of people with limited literacy skills risk being excluded from public affairs such as peace efforts (Orao 2009). Local-language radio has had tremendous growth in Kenya since the liberalisation of the airwaves in the 1990s increasing their access and reach to various audiences around the country (Okoth 2015).

Despite the communicative importance of local-language radio in Kenya, local-language radio has been criticised for promoting ethnic animosity especially in the post-election violence

witnessed in 2007/ 2008 following disputed presidential elections (see Sobel Cohen, and McIntyre 2019; Njigua and Manyengo 2017; Nyanjom 2012). This negative consequence further substantiates the need for this study. Despite the rise of digital technology, traditional radio in local languages remains the most effective, trusted, and accessible medium for news and information for the majority of Africans (Okoth 2015) hence their choice for this study.

Journalism and News

In understanding the processes that news stories go through, a discussion on how journalism can be viewed is necessary as reflected upon by Berbie Zelizer (2005). In this sense, journalism is first seen as a container that holds the news stories of the day. In this aspect, journalists facilitate the gathering and preparation of information that can be disseminated to the public while withholding others which in their consideration may not be so important or they could be more than the available ‘news hole’ of the day. News hole is a newsroom term that refers to space or time available for news in print (newspapers) and broadcast (radio and television) respectively.

Zelizer (2005) also considers journalism as a mirror reflecting the reality in the real world where objectivity is given prominence. In this regard, a reporter covers stories from a neutral perspective, presenting facts as objectively as possible, without any undue influence on their part. Although this notion is desirable in the journalism profession, the constructive nature of news calls it into question more so in the use of peace journalism that requires a reporter or editor to make deliberate efforts in reporting a story to make the public value non-violent responses to it (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005).

The length, writing style and placement of stories signal the importance placed on them by journalists in various decision-making positions (Tesot 2021). This places journalists in constant competition with each other to write a compelling story, leading to possible fabrications and sensationalism in a bid to ensure that their story is chosen that can be detrimental in conflict reporting (Barker 2012). Journalism is also seen as a child that requires nurturing and constant supervision from journalists (Zelizer 2005). Viewing journalism as such is not to be mistaken with mentorship that experienced colleagues can carry out to young journalists but rather an over caring attitude or addiction where everything is all about a story. A journalist in this situation is a candidate for manipulation from interested parties in coverage of conflicts leading to a regrettable loss in editorial independence.

Finally, Zelizer sees journalism as a service to the society using its communicative power to champion better living. This view calls for journalist to break their customary distance and involve themselves more in community affairs by reporting on them. Sobel Cohen and McIntyre (2025) established that when journalists advocate for citizens, public trust in media increases leading to possible maintenance of peace. Such a scenario can embolden journalists to report more on stories that influence the lives of ordinary members of the society, which would be a welcome move.

Having discussed journalism, I will now turn my attention to one of its products namely the news. The origins of the term news can be traced to the 16th century from the word ‘new’ referring to the reporting of information on current events that are of interest to the public (Zelizer 2005). This reporting is the work of journalists who give meaning to events or a phenomenon and disseminate the same to the public through a mass medium like radio.

A single definition of news is not easy to identify since the ‘newness’ of a story is relative. For example, yesterday’s events are new as reported in the newspapers today because of the time needed to publish such stories. Broadcast news is different in that they are reported within the shortest time possible more so radio news that are usually ready to be aired once a script is ready. On the other hand, a hidden event that occurred many months ago like murder is regarded as news if its details come into light today. I therefore agree with the description of news by Fourie (2018: 233) who regards it as “...the reporting or representation in the media of events, issues and trends.” News in this case is an interpretation of reality as per the understanding and choices of a reporter and editor, as I will discuss in the following section. Fourie (2018) cautions that this representation does not make news synonymous with an event and must be understood as just an interpretation of reality. Representation is an active construction of news through the various processes that I will discuss under the news reporting activities in the following section.

News reporting is a collective term used to refer to various activities, routines or procedures that take place from the conception of a story idea until a listener hears the story on air. The news reporting procedures would be meaningless without acknowledging the power that journalists in various levels have and exercise in determining what constitutes news and how they construct them through careful choice of words to communicate the intended message.

These activities include story pitching, story angle selection, story gathering and editing, story selection, story placement and reading. These steps (which may vary per media house) are governed by rules, traditions and powers exercised by various personnel among them reporters, editors, producers and managing editors who determine what is covered, omitted or emphasised (Joseph 2014). The newsroom routines and procedures that news undergoes in its construction determines what the final product will be hence the need to understand it, which aids in accounting for stories discarded or aired (Avraham and First 2010). Therefore, news reporting in its simplest understanding is a deliberate selection of certain facts by journalists to tell a story while leaving out others. Stories chosen must satisfy several requirements that may include conflict, bad news, good news, surprise, magnitude, relevance, power elite, celebrity and follow-up (Harcup and O'Neill 2017; Tesot 2021) which are known variously as news values or news criteria.

Story pitching usually happens during an editorial meeting in newsrooms between editors and reporters on what they intend to cover on a particular day or period. For reporters who work away from the station, editorial meetings take place through telephone or video calls. Here, ideas can be accepted, amended or discarded, which is a form of editorial control. This is the first form of power display. The danger here is on an editor who may not 'see' the presence of a story unless something bad is involved (Barker 2012). Such a view can be an impediment to the coverage of peace stories or forms of slow violence, which need to be reported but appear unpopular as per most of the news values discussed in the previous section.

At this level, an editor acting as a gatekeeper can encourage, hinder or alter the coverage of a particular story for their own selfish interest or that of media owners, politicians or advertisers bringing in an aspect of the political economy of the media. Since such influence from editors cannot be ignored, reporters must be aware of their impact on coverage of human rights and peacebuilding stories in conflict situations (Hyde-Clarke 2012). This is why reporters and editors need to work professionally and respect each other's work on human rights and peace reporting without unduly exercising their powers to see that a particular story is covered or rejected. Thus, how the journalists conceptualise their roles influences the choice of stories to be covered and possible impact on their audiences (Irvan 2006). This is also the stage where a story angle is determined. The choice of an angle to take gives an idea of how the story will be covered, the sources to interview and possibly its length. Therefore, it is crucial to choose an angle that captures the true magnitude of a story and not one that distorts news values for

sensationalism or propaganda purposes (Barker 2012). The powers that editors have in newsroom operations informed my choice of them as participants in this study to unpack their experience in the coverage of the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley.

In human rights and peace reporting, angles chosen could be on conflict, deaths, human interest and school closures. In terms of the actual gathering of a story, the most important thing to a reporter is the choice of news sources and the questions to be asked. This is why the task of finding sources with valuable information to the audience requires patience, hard work and networks built over time by a particular journalist (Barker 2012). It is vital that a reporter selects relevant sources who have the information needed and deliberately go for ordinary voices more so in human-interest stories in order to report on their lived experiences of the conflict. Where possible, government sources can be avoided because of their tendency to give the ‘official position’, which many times is aimed at concealing information and controlling the narrative. This situation is aptly seen during active security operations that are considered tactful and secretive (Kibet 2015) that makes journalists be fed with highly filtered information that do not reflect the true situation on the ground. On the other hand, how much information gathered is determined by the questions asked and the manner in which they are asked since “truth cannot be forcibly prised out of people who are crammed up” (Barker 2012: 117). This is the second form of power display, which places reporters in positions of influence hence their choice as participants in this study with the use of in-depth interviews to unpack factors and powers that guide their operations.

The next step is the editing stage that involves key activities to make the story ready for airing. Activities carried out during editing includes selection of key points, omissions, identifying voice clips from sources as well as clarifying issues and writing the story to fit the required timeline and house style. It is important to note that journalists do not report on everything they learn but only what they think is useful in telling the story. Thus, news is not the full reality but a version of it that is skewed by a cultural bias in the newsroom and is influenced by specifics of a situation (James 2003). Since reporters in different locations, cover various stories, there is need to select stories that in the judgement of editors fits the criteria of news worthiness (Irvan 2006). The act of selection show the powers that editors have in determining what is aired or not in what in newsroom lingo is known as ‘killing the story.’

Finally, story placement in the running order shows the importance that the editors’ place on

certain stories. Hence, a story that is placed as the first item and is read first is deemed important. Although an editor's choices may be guided by primness and audience concentrations that wane as the bulletin progresses, other factors could be in play like the influence of media owners, advertisers, politicians and personal interests. When media owners influence editorial decisions, journalists opt for self-censorship (Sobel, Cohen and McIntyre 2025), thereby affecting the amount and quality of information reported. Politicians connected to media owners have been known to influence editorial decisions even when such politicians do not hold any public office (see Ozawa et al. 2024: 855). Hence, the first few stories read have a higher chance of being heard than stories read towards the end in bulletins that last over 10 minutes. Therefore, the person making choices in these steps and the reason for their choices is of importance in understanding how human rights and peacebuilding stories are reported in conflicts. This is the third form of power display that determines the positioning of a story in the running order. Since the first stories in a bulletin are believed to have a high chance of being heard before listeners tune off or loose concentration, a story deemed important by an editor will likely be brought forward and vice versa. However, such positioning may not in any way be reflective of importance of a story to the audiences' news wise.

In view of the above, what then is good journalism? David Loyn (2007) who is a critic of peace journalism is of the view that good journalism is simply going back to the basics, that is an emphasis on truth and objectivity. In this case, truth is striving to give an account of a story without twisting the facts. An objective journalist is the one who takes a neutral stand in the gathering, processing and dissemination of news stories (Fourie 2018). In such scenarios, the expectation is that journalists will be 'removed' from news events and remain as neutral observers. Here, objectivity as a positivist ideology gets into conflict with the constructivist nature of news (Munoz-Torres 2012). However, Loyn quickly acknowledges that there is no absolute truth and objectivity is almost impossible to achieve since two reporters cannot see one story in the same way. Therefore, good journalism recognises truth as a "goal and objectivity as a tool to reach it" (Loyn, D. 2007: 4). Samuel Kazibwe (2018) is of the view that other news values such as fairness, accuracy, completeness and honesty that have always been the hallmark of good journalism can strengthen objective reporting.

Since both truth and objectivity are important tenets of good reporting that a journalist ought to follow, their attainment should be viewed as journeys and not destinations in themselves. In essence, since news is a construction of events and objectivity as conceived in positivism may

not be achievable, journalists ought to report news truthfully as advocated by the peace journalism framework chosen in this study.

News Values

News values are requirements that a story must satisfy for it to be selected as news such as the power elite, celebrity, entertainment, surprise, bad news, good news, magnitude, relevance, follow-up and newspaper (or broadcast media) agenda (Harcup, and O’neill 2017: 1471). For Ciboh, Torwel and Jev (2022: 17), conflict as a news value thrives on negativity, unusualness, impact, oddity, novelty, controversy and sensationalism which are irresistible to the media. These values, also known by other names such as news determinants or news judgement criteria are critical in news reporting. A news story must fulfil one or more of these values for it to qualify for selection. Consequently, a story that does not adequately meet the said criteria may fail in selection posing a challenge in conflict reporting. For example, in conflict situations, a focus on the power elite leads to the stifling of voices from ordinary members of society who may be affected more by the conflict.

Bad news and magnitude speaks to war journalism lenses that emphasise on the concept of “if it bleeds, it leads” focusing on high number of casualties for a story to be reported. Such emphasis may not be compatible with peace journalism that encourages the reporting of good stories as well and an avoidance of the spectacle. It is important to note that selection of stories may not be influenced by the stated values only, but also through other factors such as ownership and journalistic influences, which I discussed as part of newsroom procedures. Since news values can determine what is selected or excluded, importance is placed on the person applying the values as well as the values themselves (Harcup, and O’Neill 2017).

Peace Reporting and Conflict De-Escalation

This section discusses peace journalism as a practice by journalists covering conflicts and situating the role of media in peacebuilding. This section is different from what I will discuss in the theoretical framework chapter that will be focusing more on the tenets and development of the Peace Journalism theory (Galtung 2003).

Peace journalism reporting touches on two aspects of journalistic practice in terms of news content and the practice itself (Doll, Moy and Beckers 2023). On news content, journalists are encouraged to air content that is not inflammatory, gets to the background of the conflict and

reports on peace initiatives towards its peaceful resolution. In terms of practice, the emphasis is on giving a chance to all parties in conflict to air their views and grievances with the aim of uniting communities. There is deliberate effort to draw news sources from ordinary people at this stage to get their lived experiences of the conflict. Newsgathering also leans more on thematic reporting as opposed to episodic reporting. Thematic reporting is appropriate in reporting on various aspects of a conflict even when there is no violence or death incidences, which ensures the keeping of narratives about the conflict in the public sphere. Episodic reporting airs violent episodes of a conflict, which are often sensationalised (Galtung, 2003). Thematic reporting can help to build trust that audiences have on the media because they can see their issues raised in news reports. In this case, the goal of peace journalism is to reduce tension and work towards peaceful resolution of conflicts (Doll, Moy and Beckers 2023).

The media can divide communities through sensational reporting that does not regard conflict sensitivity whereby such practices are evident through partisan reporting and airing of raw unconsidered rhetoric from news sources commonly known as hate speech (Ahere 2019). Hate speech stems from stereotypes where there is a tendency to look down on other communities and portray them in an undignified manner. Stereotyping can be understood as a deliberate act of reducing people, communities or groups into a few and sometimes simple characterisations which are often exaggerated and represented as though they exist naturally (Hall 1997). Stereotyping can divide communities and promote ‘othering’, which tends to elevate certain communities over others. The elevated communities can then exercise “symbolic power” over others, which they use for “economic exploitation and coercion” (Hall 1997: 249) that is detrimental to human rights promotion and peacebuilding. Thus, it is worth noting that broadcast media can have immense power in constructing or reinforcing a cultural stereotype (Ghofrani 2024). Could this be the case in the radio coverage of the Kerio Valley conflict?

Peace journalism offers a framework to possibly guide the de-escalation of conflicts; by examining and reporting accurate information thus potentially preventing loss of lives and livelihoods (Owino and Karani 2021). It can also aid in correcting biases putting the spotlight on structure and cultural causes of violence (Njigua and Manyengo 2017). Part of this correction involves contestation of negative stereotypes, which brings a better understanding of other communities and help in building cohesion. Contestation may not be enough, necessitating deliberate substitution of negative stereotypes with positive stereotypes (Hall 1997). At best, this correction involves a reminder to communities of the need to form identities

that are in common with others helping to build tolerance, respect and acceptance (James 2003). Local-language radio can lead in this regard.

Peace reporting also emphasises news values that help in conflict management and peacebuilding. The news media and more so local-language radio stations offer a platform where narratives about the conflict and peacebuilding efforts are constructed and disseminated to their audiences (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Hanitzsch, and Nagar 2016). Narratives constructed around conflicts are powerful and can influence how the public perceives it. Conflict often escalates when news reports fail key values such as truth, fairness and impartiality in their construction and representation of conflicts. This could be because of the interference of the news reporting process by media owners, politicians, advertisers or the government. It could also stem from carelessness or mistakes of journalists due to inadequate training in peace reporting.

At times, there is an overrepresentation of violent episodes leading to an overemphasis on aggressive actions of some communities or groups leading to systematic neglect of peace efforts (Miloni, et al. 2015). While aggression is easy to report on due to its visibility and attractiveness, journalists need to be more considerate on peace efforts that may appear mundane with results that are not visible in the short term. The success of peace reporting is, therefore, dependent on the journalist's attitude towards the conflict (Miloni, et al. 2015). Positive attitudes by journalists guide their word choice and selection of narratives that highlight the grievances of parties in conflict (Doll, Moy and Beckers 2023) guided by the peace journalism framework.

Peace journalism through radio has been successful in de-escalating conflicts and building peace in various conflicts in Africa. For example, the Search for Common Ground's Studio Ijambo project in Burundi that was established in 1995 in response to hate propaganda messages that were being broadcast on airwaves in the region (Hagos 2001). Studio Ijambo which means 'wise words' in Kirundi produced programmes on dialogue, peace and reconciliation that were aired by local radio stations. These programmes were in form of radio drama, children programmes, round table discussions, magazine and documentaries with the most popular one being *inkingiyubuntu* (Pillars of Humanity) which encouraged cohesion among various communities (Tayeebwa 2017: 213). Thus, studio Ijambo was regarded as a source of accurate and verified information dispelling rumours and propaganda ultimately

building credibility of the local radio stations in fostering peace (see Hagos 2001; Tayeebwa 2017). That is why clear, accurate, truthful and timely communication of information about a conflict can lead to its de-escalation while denying a chance for rumours and misinformation to thrive. Although studio Ijambo is widely credited in peace reporting, William Tayeebwa (2017) acknowledges the work of other studios that include Studio Tubane established by Rwandese citizens living in Belgium and Tran-World Radio (TWR) sponsored by an American Christian non-governmental organisation. There is also *Bureau Integre des Nations Unies au Burundi* (BINUB), a locally established studio that produces content for both radio and television. According to Tayeebwa (2017), Burundi probably first practiced peace journalism in Africa in 1995.

Linda Mitchell (2014) reported another success, in her auto-ethnographic study on the role of media in peace building in Sierra Leone. Independent Radio Network (IRN), a coalition of community radio stations preached peace and unity while the state-owned Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) was accused of bias towards the government's position in the run-up to the general election of 2012, which brought divisions in the country. Sierra Leone, which had experienced civil war from 1991 to 2002, was still on the road to recovery from its effects at this time and peace reporting should have been the norm and not the exception.

Radio Okapi in the expansive Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) that broadcasts across both government and rebel held areas has been used to call for disarmament easing tensions in the area. Through its programming, Radio Okapi has fought propaganda while calling for peace and reconciliation (Maweu 2019). Radio has also been used successfully in northern Uganda to encourage defections by combatants of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) who have been fighting the Ugandan government since 1988 leading to deaths, maiming and destruction of property in northern Uganda and in parts of the DRC. Alex Armand, Paul Atwell and Joseph Gomes (2020), in their study on the reach of radio in ending civil conflict through rebel demobilisation were able to prove that over 95% of former combatants sampled, heard the messages titled "come home" directly on radio or through other LRA members.

In Kenya, Amani FM in Tana River County was used to call for peace and tolerance in the lead up to the 2013 general elections. Tana River had previously faced inter-ethnic conflicts, which were not witnessed in the said electioneering period. Eldoret based Sayare radio and Biblia

Husema Broadcasting (BHB) as well as Imani Radio in Kitale used talk shows to advocate for peace and reconciliation in the North Rift region of Kenya which bore the brunt of the post-election violence of 2007/2008 (Nyongesa 2014).

Local-language radio, therefore, has a crucial role in peacebuilding reporting by working towards mitigating identitarianism, concerned with promoting the interests of one's own cultural group, in favour of promoting mutual understanding between different communities.

Cultural Identity and Land

This section discusses on culture, identity and land by examining how local radio can attenuate identitarianism in its reporting possibly forming some of the factors that influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley.

Land and boundaries can contribute to the formation of identities of various communities linked to them but can also stimulate conflict. For example, territories named after particular communities such as West Pokot, Nandi and Elgeyo Marakwet counties can create a sense of ownership and the urge to lock out 'outsiders' from the territory. Stuart Hall (2015: 223), defines cultural identity as "one shared culture, a sort of 'one true self' hiding inside many other more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common". This is true of the communities in conflict namely the Pokot, Marakwet, Tugen and the Turkana who are classified under the Nilotic speaking communities ideally making them 'brothers.' Besides, the Pokot, Marakwet and the Tugen, form the highland Nilotic subgroup due to their shared culture and many similarities in language. Shared culture in this sense is multi-layered, seen in terms of similar language, customs, practices and even leadership structures unique to a people, and has been practiced for a considerable amount of time. However, culture is dynamic and aspects of it can be copied, discarded, changed or be modified with time. Hall (2015) also theorises culture as being viewed in two ways; the essentialist which is thought to be unchanging and non-essentialist which is thought to be dynamic. Stuart Hall subscribes to this latter idea, which informs this study.

Chris Barker (2008) supports this non-essentialist understanding of identity in his exposition that culture is not pure, authentic and locally bound. It can be influenced by interactions

between cultures where they can borrow from each other. For example, cattle raids carried out by the Pokot, Marakwet, Turkana and Tugen communities, which are now termed as cattle rustling, or banditry was practiced to fulfil cultural obligations including rites of passage, dowry payment and restocking of herds after droughts (see Chellal 1969; Cheserek, Odenyo and Omondi 2012; Elfversson 2016). However, this practice has taken on other functions in current times, with the chief concern being that of profits through sale of livestock attached to supply and demand for meat in national and international markets.

A useful definition of culture for this study is that culture is “the world made meaningful; it is socially constructed and maintained through communication” (Baran (2011: 15). From this definition one understands that culture can be both liberating, uniting and/or differentiating as it is based on the relational experience of our realities with how we think, feel and act. Thus, the role of culture in individual and communal behaviour cannot be ignored.

The creation and maintenance of culture occur through communication including mass communication, and more so the electronic media and specifically radio (Baran 2011) making the choice of broadcast language a critical undertaking to reach audiences. In this sense, language and culture cannot be separated since language forms part of the culture of a certain people (Macharia 2003). Thus, radio provides a means of communicating information about identity, history or expected behaviour of individuals in certain cultural contexts. Local-language radio stations are appropriate in this regard because they can reach communities in languages that they can understand creating a dialogue on progressive cultural behaviours by various communities. Conversely, radio can be used to encourage communities to discard cultural behaviours that are no longer beneficial in the current day and age. Through this process, the media can champion cultural coherence through the promotion of peace and intercultural coexistence (Ghofrani 2024).

Conflicts based on several factors including ethnicity, religion and resources are inherent in every society (Khamadi 2015). Land based conflicts have brought untold suffering to many people around the world. This is, more so in Kenya where conflicts have been reported in various regions. These include the Tana River conflict between the Pokomo and Oromo, in Trans Mara between the Maasai, Kipsigis and Abagusii and in Sondu between the Kipsigis and the Luo communities. Land as a means of production is important to many communities because of pastures and availability of water for domestic and animal use. Presence of minerals

worsens the situation since communities fight for dominance and control of such natural resources as recently witnessed in Ikolomani, Kakamega County that has significant gold deposits. Ownership structures of land, whether individual or communal, can result in conflict due to the unclear and fluid nature of boundaries especially in Kerio Valley where rivers that form natural boundaries can shift direction during rainy seasons. Prolonged conflicts between communities result in poverty increase and human suffering (Kariuki 2019) since people do not have favourable conditions to engage in meaningful development activities. There is also a threat to their food security (see Langat, Bartoo and Khaemba 2018), that could lead to malnutrition, hunger and possibly deaths which are aspects of slow violence, which I will discuss in the next section.

Leadership structures within communities can also influence how they relate with their neighbours and more importantly on peace and reconciliation between them. The communities in the Kerio Valley conflict namely the Pokot, Marakwet, Tugen and the Turkana were traditionally organised into hierarchies of leadership that placed elders at the top, with little or no say from women and youth in community matters. There were no single leadership figures and decisions were made through a council of elders. Though this position is still fairly maintained, politics of representation in the current governance structure has inserted some figures into positions of influence like county governors, senators, members of parliament and county assembly members. Although the degree of such influence is debatable, the extent of their influence in community matters cannot be ignored. In this sense, such leaders can use their influence to agitate animosity or foster peace and bring social change to communities living in the volatile area. Social change can be achieved through reconsidering and re-describing social order and emphasising better possibilities for the future of the various communities (Barker 2011). This will create an environment of peace where human rights are respected with various communities co-existing peacefully.

Rob Nixon's concept of Slow Violence, as the incremental, often invisible, and long-term destruction wrought by environmental degradation, is intrinsically connected to land and culture through the slow, spatial, and temporal displacement of vulnerable communities from their environment.

Slow Violence: To Report or not to Report?

This section explains the slow violence concept whose effects happen out of sight stretching

for considerable periods and the role that the media can have in foregrounding them. Such effects result from conflicts, environmental degradation, structural racial discrimination, unconsented displacements for wildlife conservations and industrial poisoning.

Slow Violence refers to “formless threats whose fatal repercussions are dispersed across space and time” (Nixon 2011: 14). Nixon sees such threats as coming from toxic materials, greenhouse gases, climate change leading to desertification, wars and mining. Their effects may not be felt immediately but in generations to come when memory of their causes has possibly been lost and the number of casualties may not be fully remembered or recorded. Marginalised people in the society mostly suffer such effects (Skotnicki 2019). This may be the case in less developed regions plagued by conflicts like the Kerio Valley in the North rift region of Kenya. Since such effects are not spectacular but slow acting and usually take place out of sight, they are difficult to grasp and report on by journalists (Skotnicki 2019).

Previously, activists such as the late Prof Wangari Maathai of the Green Belt Movement struggled to represent effects of deforestation on the environment in Kenya (see Nixon 2011; Christensen 2018). Another disaster whose effects were brought to the fore by activists was the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal, India (Skotnicki 2019). In both of these scenarios, there was a struggle to represent and gain stakeholder as well as media attention on them because of the unspectacular nature of their continued effects on populations. This was due to absence of “narratives and imagistic forms of communicating profound damage” the disaster caused to populations (Christensen 2018: 9). Victims of the Union Carbide disaster eventually benefited from media reporting of the disaster on acknowledgement of wrongdoing and compensations. Thus, there is need now for the Kenyan media and more so local radio to adopt this concept in order to report on invisible effects of slow violence from conflict situations like the one in Kerio Valley.

Slow Violence has been used to explain various issues with long-term effects on members of communities or races. A good example is its use in explaining the effects of police brutality on black people in the United States of America bordering on hate and racism. This was aptly represented in the killing of George Floyd by police officer Derek Michael Chauvin in Minneapolis leading to protests worldwide dubbed ‘Black Lives Matter’ (see Kramer and Remster 2022). In all these protests against invisible forms of violence, traction was gained once media coverage thrust them into the limelight creating the needed conversations among stakeholders.

Nevertheless, Davies (2022) questioned the supposed invisibility of slow violence asking to whom it is invisible. Thom Davies calls for the unmasking of political structures that aid in sustaining the continued violence. This also dovetails well with the cattle rustling menace in Kerio Valley that is often suspected within communities to have ‘the blessings’ of some political leaders.

Since this concept has had limited application to journalism, it needs to be researched further owing to its potential in the understanding and reporting of the invisible impacts of violence on populations in conflict situations. One such impact is the safety and security of journalists.

Safety and Security of Journalists

This section specifically discusses risks that journalists face in their day-to-day coverage of conflicts recognising how such risks influence their reportage. I therefore consider these risks both as factors causing the violence and consequences of it. However, they are not presented as separate sections as I am cognisant that the influencing factors and consequences are relational. I also consider these consequences as aspects of slow violence, which add rich nuances to this study. Thus, the understanding of these risks to journalists are critical to journalists themselves and other stakeholders in the coverage of a volatile area like Kerio Valley that faces a long-standing conflict.

Journalists face a myriad of risks in their coverage of conflicts, which affect access to conflict areas denying them the chance to cover various stories first hand thereby affecting the flow of accurate, verified, balanced and timely information. I classify these risks into human related, environmental and psychological, which I now discuss next.

Violence against journalists is now a reality especially for those reporting in conflict zones creating a problem in the current practice (Tejedor, Cervi and Tusa 2022). This problem stems from the inability of journalists to freely gather, analyse and report on the much-needed information from conflict areas to enable their audiences and stakeholders to make informed decisions on it (Adebayo, Florence and Olumide 2024). Admittedly, conflict reporting can be a daunting undertaking that puts the health and lives of journalists at risk (Kibet 2015). The risks faced by journalists can be physical or psychological such as online bullying carried over from physical spaces that compromise their safety and can possibly lead to trauma (see

Kakooza and Kazibwe 2025). Fred Kakooza and Samuel Kazibwe recognise that digital insecurity hinders the work of female journalists in Uganda. Such risks hamper the gathering and dissemination of information, a key ingredient required in transforming conflicts leading to their de-escalation and eventual stoppage.

Safety and security of journalists in the field reflects the freedom of the media, freedom of expression and democratic space of a country, which are vital components in human rights and peace reporting (Høiby, and Ottosen 2019). Without the watchful eyes of journalists, human rights violations committed by parties in conflict or governmental security apparatus can go unnoticed and unreported. In countries or regions that are plagued with crime, journalists are exposed to the risks as they go about their duties making them vulnerable to victimisation and attacks (Tejedor, Cervi, and Tusa 2022). The exposure here happens to those journalists who have reported on a particular conflict for a lengthy period and possibly create enemies from their reportage, which may be deemed unfair or biased to some quarters.

Human-Related Risks

Human related risks are associated with banditry, violence and intimidation. On banditry, the risk is enormous since one can fall victim to attacks from bandits operating in the conflict zones. Since most media houses do not have adequate resources to hire security for journalists covering conflicts in ‘hot’ zones, they have to embed with security officers in their bid to access such areas. This is where journalists accompany security personnel in their means of travel sometimes for extended period. Embedment puts journalists at enormous risk of injuries and even deaths in case of an ambush or when they are caught in crossfires since security vehicles or planes are considered as legitimate targets to bandits and other groups in conflicts (Tejedor, Cervi, and Tusa 2022). Besides, most journalists do not possess the requisite training for such encounters and lack adequate protective gear like helmets, bulletproof vests and more importantly insurance covers that are necessary for personal protection in conflict zones or treatment and compensation in case of injuries or deaths.

Journalists can also experience violence from hostile communities or security personnel in instances where they feel that media coverage paints them in bad light. Such violence can be in form of beatings, confiscation or destruction of equipment. Beatings result in trauma and injuries which can be life threatening. Journalistic equipment that typically includes video cameras, audio recorders and microphones, are expensive so their confiscation or malicious

damage hampers the work of a journalists. Such targeted violence impedes the freedom of journalists to report on human rights and peace stories to expose human rights violations or warmongers in a conflict. Intimidation mainly comes from security officers through arbitrary arrests of journalists who may be accused of fabricating stories or trespassing on active security zones. Security officers can also deny access to conflict areas affecting the gathering and reporting of human rights and peace stories. With restricted access to conflict zones, journalists are forced to rely on official statements that undermines the role of the media as a watchdog in the society (Kibet 2015). For the media to play this role effectively, it ought to balance between official sources and their own news gathering strategies.

Violence and intimidation can also come from hostile members of communities who can refuse to grant permission to journalists to cover news stories in their territory. This intimidation can be a blanket one on all journalists or on some who appear more critical in their reporting. The criticism here may not necessarily be criticism per se but exposure of some information that such communities would not want to be in the public domain.

As noted by Wolde and Woldearegay (2024: 298), highly perceived partisans in a conflict will tend to view media content as prejudiced against them since it may appear unfavourable to their own standing point despite attempts at balance and fairness from journalists. This can make a journalist wary when handling sensitive or controversial information and opt for self-censorship (Tejedor, Cervi, and Tusa 2022), leading to underreporting of peace and human rights issues. Such actions disrupt the flow of reliable information from conflict zones since members of the public depend on the media for such information to know what is going on in those regions (Nyasio 2019). When such information is not forthcoming, propaganda and misinformation take root potentially exacerbating the conflict. This is why it would be good for governments to communicate relevant information to the media in instances where they may not access hot zones themselves.

Environmental Risks

Environmental risks come from the terrain in Kerio Valley, which poses considerable risks to journalists operating there. There is difficulty in accessing the region due to impassable and sometimes non-existent roads that access remote locations. This situation has been brought about by the conflict, which has resulted in the region lagging behind in development activities (Elfversson 2016). In addition, there are areas that mobile telephone network does not cover

well making communication difficult in case of an emergency.

Kerio Valley is also dry and gets very hot during the day, which is not conducive for working outdoors. There is also the danger of encountering wild animals that includes elephants, hyenas and poisonous snakes. A bigger portion of the areas is not connected to the power grid, which hinders the undertaking of long assignments since equipment such as video cameras need charging. These risks can compel journalists to take short durations in the field forcing them to do hurried on the spot news and sometimes using secondary sources (Høiby, and Ottosen 2016). By so doing, they miss the opportunity to carry out more in-depth reporting using primary sources, which are appropriate in feature production that can best expose aspects of human-interest stories and slow violence among communities. In such a scenario, the feasibility of peace journalism is in question due to inability to report not only truthfully but also failing to get the context through interviews with various sources in the conflict zone. In addition, humanising stories may not be possible due to inaccessibility of victims possibly trapped in the conflict area.

Psychological Risks

Psychological risks come from compromised mental health of journalists. The mental wellbeing of a journalist is important for them to carry out their duties effectively. Many times this wellbeing is compromised as they cover conflicts, terrorist attacks, crime or electoral related violence. The resultant psychological effect is known as trauma that can develop into post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) over time if not treated. PTSD manifests itself through stress, lack of proper sleep due to bad dreams, irritability or alcohol and substance abuse (see Feinstein, Wanga and Owen 2015; Muindi 2023; Radoli 2024).

Trauma refers to “a mental health condition caused by exposure to potentially terrifying events” (Talabi, et al. 2024: 17915) which are common in conflict situations. Adebayo, Florence and Olumide (2024), classify trauma into two major forms, tangible and intangible trauma. Tangible trauma comes from those tragic, violent and scary events, which may be witnessed by journalists as they cover conflicts or crimes. In this case, journalists witness high number of deaths, mutilated bodies, blood and severe injuries, something that journalists covering the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict at Kerio Valley have a high chance of experiencing. Memories of such events stay in the mind of journalists, which can affect their mental health if left untreated. Intangible trauma on the other hand refers to disturbing news that audiences are exposed to

hence the need for journalists to be wary of pictures and words that they use when reporting tragic events.

Journalists by nature of their work are exposed to repeated long-term traumatic experiences that come from exposure to attacks (which can be physical and online), police brutality, intimidation, near death experiences, deaths and suffering of victims (Feinstein, Wanga, and Owen 2015). Sadly, this aspect has received minimal industry and scholarly attention more so in the Kenyan context and specifically in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley.

Studies have focused on effects of the news covered by journalists in conflict situations while ignoring their lived experiences of covering them, which in many cases are traumatic (Muindi 2023). Such studies have also focused more on terrorism and electoral related conflicts leaving minimal reportage on inter-ethnic conflicts (see Feinstein, Wanga and Owen 2015; Muindi 2023). There is also minimal reportage on the impact of trauma and its treatment among journalists, which would enable them to cope with its challenges (Talabi, et al. 2024). Therefore, this study filled this void through content from journalists who shared their lived experiences of covering the conflict during the in-depth interviews with them. The in-depth interview provided first-hand information contributing to extant literature on this subject and specifically on the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley.

Untreated trauma faces the danger of it being ignored, silenced or normalised causing more harm to individual journalists. Ignoring of trauma in journalists comes from the mistaken belief that such experiences are part of the job and that they will be fine. Such beliefs stem from the failure of “media theorists and trainers to view a journalist as a human person with feelings” while focusing on “objective reporting devoid of emotional depictions” (Radoli 2024: 292). This view can also be extended to media managers’ chief among them editors and owners who may expect journalists to perform robotically in stressful and unsafe environments with minimal or non-existent help before, during and after encountering stressful situations. Still on training, Muindi (2015) made a notable observation on the way most journalists were ill prepared to cover conflict situations, which may affect the way in which they respond in particular contexts. To remedy this situation, journalists must be equipped with skills to navigate stressful and dangerous situations in the course of their duty. From the previous section, it can be deduced that journalistic training on trauma and responses on it are wanting and needs to be addressed with the urgency it deserves. This would assist journalists to be trauma literate with information on self-care when they are exposed to traumatic experiences

in the discharge of their duties (Adebayo, Florence and Olumide 2024).

Silencing can also come from journalists themselves who rarely talk of their traumatic experiences and choose to deal with the situation based on their culture or individual psychological coping mechanisms more so in male journalists (Radoli 2024). Such journalists suffer in silence either due to fear of losing their jobs, ridicule or the prohibitive cost of seeking treatment when they do not have sufficient medical cover or health insurance from their employers. Consequently, journalists in such situations may live with images of the traumatic triggers that accompany them and reminds them of the horror that they were witnesses of in the field (Radoli 2024). On the other hand, insufficient support from family, colleagues and their employers can worsen the situation (Markovikj and Serafimovska 2023).

Silencing can also come from a chilling effect where journalists practice self-censorship due to fear of possible attacks arising from their reporting (Ozawa et al. 2024). When this situation arises, journalists may not be willing to go the extra mile to get the story and air it playing into the hands of perpetrators of conflicts who will not want such stories to come to the limelight. Again, peace journalism is compromised due to deliberate failure to report truthfully on all sides in conflict as well as revealing information on perpetrators of violence (see Galtung 2003; Lynch and McGoldrick 2005). Consequently, the work of a journalist is hampered doing a disservice to their audiences and potentially contributing to continued human rights abuses and violence.

However, Ozawa et al. (2024: 848) argued that this chilling effect might have a direct opposite outcome, which they termed as “catalysing effect”. The catalysing effect is a situation where attacks on journalists motivate them to report on conflicts with more zeal, which would be a welcome development. On the other hand, journalists at times are expected to restrain themselves when reporting on matters touching on national security (Syallow 2021: see also Kibet 2015). Although this is a controversial issue touching on freedom of the press, media reports ideally should not create fear or aid an enemy through propaganda or unintended exposure of security strategies. In this case, peace reporting blows both hot and cold on truth. Shamira and Kabanda (2023) in their study on human rights in Uganda found out that media could fail to report on them depending on the understanding of journalists. This is why awareness of human rights by journalists is critical for them to include it in news reports and more importantly its slow violence effects. Tayeebwa (2017) found out that journalists in

Uganda and Burundi are still guided by violence and conflict in their news selection and reporting practices that favour war journalism reporting.

Despite the dangers posed by the factors in the previous section, journalists remain important players in reporting human rights and peacebuilding in conflict situations. They also have a story to tell based on their own lived experiences of the safety concerns they have faced in the line of duty hence their choice as participants for the in-depth interviews in this study. Consequently, their safety and security is paramount as they discharge their noble duty in the society.

Conclusion

This chapter analysed literature on human rights, conflict and media, radio and conflict reporting, as well as journalism and news. It also included a discussion on radio and conflict de-escalation, cultural identity and land, slow violence as well safety and security of journalists. The literature shows the potential of local-language radio in reporting human rights, which is important for their promotion and protection in conflict situations. It also touched on the media and conflict reporting in general zeroing in on the role of radio and more specifically local-language radio on the same. The advantage of local radio is on the use of languages that are understandable to their audiences more so those with minimal literacy skills.

The analysis of news values helped to bring an understanding of why stories are reported the way they are or not by the media, which are influenced by decisions of journalists at various levels. It also delved into the emerging issue of slow violence of conflicts that need to be reported by journalists to make it visible to stakeholders. With this understanding, the media can then report on the slow temporalities of violence that are less visible than the spectacle showing the true effect that conflicts have on communities over time. It concluded by highlighting the safety and security of journalists that is crucial in their reporting of conflicts. Journalists play a crucial role in informing the society and their security is of utmost importance. By extension, their safety can show the level of press freedom in a country, a crucial ingredient in governance and democracy. Safety of journalists challenge the orientation of the peace journalism on truth and people that are important in conflict reporting. More importantly, the analysis of existing scholarship demonstrates the need to resolve conflicts peacefully as advocated through peace journalism as well as the need to foreground human rights issues in radio news reports.

The next chapter discusses the theories that guided the study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explains the theoretical framework that guided this study, namely Peace Journalism (Galtung 2003), which this study examined in relation to the concept of Slow Violence (Nixon 2011) and Representation Theory (Hall 1997). It traces their application in different contexts and the primary principles relevant to the study. It also notes their criticism and limitations in addressing human rights and peace reporting, necessitating their combinations to utilise their unique conceptual strengths. It highlights their applicability to the study and the key concepts used to both guide it and interpret the findings.

The combination of these theories was unique, guiding the creation of new knowledge on human rights and peace reporting by local-language radio in the Kenyan Kerio Valley context. As stated in the previous section, the slow violence concept complements the peace journalism theory, helping to consider invisible effects of violence on populations, while the representation theory showed narratives on it that are rooted in knowledge systems seen through secular and religious perspectives.

The chapter is structured, starting with an explanation of peace journalism theory, as it is the primary theory. The discussion contextualises peace journalism alongside issues of war journalism. Consideration of war journalism is important to show its limitations in peacebuilding in conflict situations, necessitating the need to advocate for peace journalism reporting. A significant portion explains peace journalism pillars that are later then expanded on and problematised in relation to the concept of slow violence. It is then threaded with discussions of war journalism, the low road and high road, theoretical expansion of peace journalism, perceived misunderstandings, criticism and hindrances to peace journalism practice in newsrooms.

This first part of the chapter thus addressed the study's first research question on the narratives that the selected news and feature stories aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio used in the reporting of the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict. Specifically, it provided a foundation against which to later identify the factors that influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict. Also, how human rights and peacebuilding reporting can be framed within peace journalism using local-language radio

stations. The slow violence concept complemented peace journalism in the analysis of such discourses especially the presence or absence of those addressing the effects of the violence on populations in the analysed news and feature stories.

The second part argues for the relevance of representation theory (Hall 1997), which guided research questions one and two, as it assisted in understanding the narratives journalists use in reporting the Kerio Valley conflict and the factors that influence the selection of discourses on it.

Peace Journalism Theory

Johan Galtung was a Norwegian sociologist credited as one of the founders of peace studies as an academic discipline (Galtung 2010). His interest in peace was piqued by the absence of peace studies books in libraries during his student days, with no shortage of war literature, making him decide on studying the concept of peace himself. This led him to establish the world's first peace research institute in 1959 located in Oslo. In 1964, he founded the Journal of Peace Research that published emerging literature on peace studies. Galtung coined the term “peace journalism” in the 1960s to counter war journalism that was dominant in media reporting at the time and continues to date. Since then, various scholars have improved on this concept, including Galtung himself (1990, 1996, and 2003); Wilhelm Kempf (1996, 2007, and 2017); Matt Mogeckwu (2011) and its seminal promoters, including Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick (2005).

Its successful implementation is dependent on a thorough understanding of the term ‘peace’ among key stakeholders, including journalists and especially those who cover conflicts (Tayeebwa 2017). It is also dependent on an understanding of the communicative power of news in a conflict that can influence its representation and understanding by audiences, creating opportunities for its transformation (Nzibo 2020).

War Journalism: What Is It?

The following section expands on war journalism to elucidate the principles against which peace journalism is based on.

War journalism understands and reports conflict as though it is a contest between two parties creating an urge to win against a rival party (Galtung 2003). The contest inevitably creates a

‘winner versus loser’ dynamic that is not conducive to peacebuilding and arguably adopts a sports narrative that celebrates winning at all costs. In this case, winning is everything with zero chance of building consensus towards a peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Galtung (2003) views war journalism as characterised by four orientations: violence, propaganda, elite, and victory, as discussed in the following section.

A violence orientation results in reporting that focuses on two parties in a conflict, where one ‘wins’ against the ‘loser’, which makes it difficult to build consensus for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Such reporting could result in a representation of conflicts as secretive, with coverage focusing on the spectacle seen through the number of casualties and injuries. As established by Nzibo (2020), the Kenyan media reporting of terror, for example, takes a war journalism angle that focuses on violence, giving rise to violent discourses in their reportage that place prominence on the number of casualties, injuries and destruction. In this case, media coverage through a war lens can be destructive (Tawanda and Mbwirire 2021) and hampers peace efforts, thereby undermining the peace journalism framework, more so when the media employs language that dehumanises a group or community (Hyde-Clarke 2012). In this kind of orientation, episodic reporting that is event-driven is given preference (Doll, Moy and Beckers 2023). In other instances, the media takes sides with powerful actors in a conflict, hoping to be in a pivotal position to reap financial and political benefits (Bhowmik and Fisher 2023). Such partisan alignment inevitably influences the way the media reports on the conflict.

Propaganda orientation involves disseminating false information with the aim of manipulating audiences to take a particular stand in situations where the media sides with one party in a conflict (Hagos 2001; Ismail and Deane 2008). In this case, the expectation is on the media to expose supposed ‘untruths’ from a rival party while covering up any shortcomings of the favoured party. As such, elites can spread propaganda through the media for their own selfish interests (Wolde and Woldearegay 2024). In such an unfortunate event, the media becomes a platform for hate and untruths, sacrificing its lofty position as a fourth estate, crucial to holding to account those in authority on peace and human rights issues. Airing untruthful information compromises the truth pillar of peace journalism. The truth pillar requires airing only truthful information, which should undergo rigorous journalistic processes to verify its accuracy, as elaborated in the following section.

Working from an elite orientation, media content in war journalism focuses on grand narratives of privileged individuals in society while obscuring the voices of ordinary members (Mwaura 2021). Such elites tend to have privileged access to media platforms, enabling them to influence narratives on the conflict to drive their favoured agenda. It also tends to highlight the suffering of a favoured party in conflict while stressing the evil of the rival party, thereby promoting ‘othering’, as will be elaborated later in the Representation theory section. This goes against the people pillar of peace journalism that calls for the inclusion of ordinary people working for peace (Galtung 2003).

A victory orientation sees peace as a combination of victory and ceasefire. There is also a concealment of peace efforts until victory is achieved, agreeing with the views of Kibet (2015) that tactics for handling conflicts are secretive and sensitive. Once a ceasefire is signed, media coverage of it stops until it recurs, which is not appropriate in monitoring reconciliation and showing slow violence effects (Nixon 2011), as will be explained in the following section.

In view of the above, war journalism is thought to escalate conflicts, necessitating peace journalism to counter it. The next section discusses peace journalism.

Peace Journalism: What Is It?

Lynch and McGoldrick (2005:5) describe peace journalism as the process related to “when editors and reporters make choices [also known as editorial decisions] of what to report and how to report it that creates opportunities for society at large to value and consider non-violent responses to conflict.” This followed their transnational research in 2004 that aimed to identify psychological responses to sampled war and peace journalism stories. They established that war stories were harmful to their consumers, while peace journalism stories were psychologically beneficial to them.

The editorial decisions made by journalists as described in the previous section are deliberate and geared towards peacebuilding in various programmes such as news and feature stories, interviews, drama, and talk shows. The decisions are made in consideration of newsroom policy and procedures established over time (Tesot 2021). This is why transcribed radio news and feature stories were chosen as units of analysis in this study. This aspect was important in identifying and analysing the ways in which human rights issues and peacebuilding efforts have been included in the news and feature stories, as well as the narratives and discourses

constructed in the reporting of the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict at Kerio Valley by Kass FM and Alpha Radio. The study examined reporters and editors' power displays that determine which stories are covered or ignored, thus revealing the hidden forces or interests behind their decisions. Such influences that could be both internal and external are a hindrance to editorial independence that is necessary for the media to play its role in human rights and peace reporting of conflicts (Tesot 2021).

Peace Journalism as a normative theory calls on the media to play an active role in promoting peace through responsible journalism, thereby encouraging journalists to be attached to actual and potential victims of violent conflicts (Galtung 2003). The attachment comes from coverage of stories about the said victims, reported thematically through their lived experiences, which is appropriate for exposing the less visible effects of conflict on them, as proposed through the slow violence concept by Robin Nixon (2011). It also involves reporting on the work of peace proponents while diminishing the voices of warmongers, thus creating understanding in news reports (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005; Rahmani and Jawad 2025), thereby ensuring that the media space does not become a platform imbued with incitement and hate. This is why it is critical to take into consideration the activities of a journalist through the newsroom procedures in the coverage of a story in conflict situations. Hence, what they do in their reporting, how they do it and why, which (ideally) contributes to the proper function of the media (İrvan 2006), must be analysed and understood to show power dynamics behind them.

Peace journalism has been applied with success in various contexts around the world, in the African continent and specifically in Kenya. For example, Rahmani and Jawad (2025) found a significant reduction in direct violence in Afghanistan when peace journalism is applied, considering its history of prolonged conflicts. In Nigeria, Hassan et al. (2024) advocated for a peace reporting that prioritises accuracy, fairness and dialogue over sensationalism despite the physical threats and political pressures that journalists face when reporting on conflicts. In Kenya, Gustafsson (2016 b) established that Koch FM and Pamoja FM, both broadcasting in slum areas in Nairobi, used conflict-sensitive reporting in the 2007 and 2013 general elections, reducing ethnic tensions in their multi-ethnic catchment areas in Korogocho and Kibera slums, respectively. Through their broadcasts, they were able to combat tribalism thereby creating harmony between communities.

While successful, there are questions that can be asked of the theory's uniform applicability in

all contexts, which will be elaborated on below. Scholars like Nzibo (2020) have called for a context-specific type of peace journalism. This was informed by notable limited access to information by journalists and the need for role specification of the news media generally in conflict situations in Kenya. Role specification would reduce tensions and frictions between the media and government security agencies. This study seeks to establish if and how peace journalism is appropriate in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley that has gone on for a long time and risks reporters' normalised acceptance of it.

Peace Journalism Theory Pillars

The Peace Journalism theory hinges on four orientations, namely peace, truth, people and solutions. The orientations are to counter war journalism, that is violence-oriented, propaganda-oriented, elite-oriented and victory-oriented (Galtung 2006) as discussed in the previous section. I will now discuss the pillars of peace journalism.

Peace Orientation

From the perspective of peace orientation, news stories foreground voices calling for peace and reconciliation as well as strategies being undertaken for peacebuilding, more so those at the community level. Such efforts offer a chance to correct biases brought about by war journalism (Doll, Moy and Beckers 2023). Their coverage shows the importance placed on such efforts by the media while building acceptance, support and ownership by communities on them. In this aspect, journalists take an interpretative approach by reporting on stories that promote peace while toning down on ethnic differences (Gavilan 2011). Interpretations involve the use of multiple voices with a bias towards non-elite ones that ideally represent the views of their communities through their lived experiences of a conflict. While such reporting helps to get to the background of the conflict, bringing to the fore causes and unresolved issues on it, it also encourages communities to resolve their differences in a peaceful manner through the platform offered by the media to air their views and explore possible ways to resolve it. Moreover, this builds on two other pillars, namely people and solutions orientation, showing the linkage between them.

A peace orientation can also be appropriate in reporting the metamorphosis of conflicts in terms of violence intensity and shifting practices like targeted killing of those working for peace or perceived government informants. Therefore, the goal of this reporting is the promotion and ultimate achievement of peace and protection of human rights. Such reporting would avoid

what Abraham Kisang (2014) established in that the Kenyan media gave terrorism sympathisers a platform to present their ideologies while ignoring their role in building peaceful relationships among various communities and religious groups. In so doing, they unwittingly represented security personnel as incompetent, thereby delegitimising them in the eyes of the public.

Therefore, the analysis of the news and feature stories using the peace pillar showed the presence or absence of voices calling for peace and more so those from ordinary members of the communities in conflict. It also showed stories calling for peace and how words were used by both news sources and journalists in the reporting of the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley. The people pillar also showed how the media represents the voices of community elites in their reportage.

Truth Orientation

The second orientation is on truth in media reporting, which is relative and can mean different things to different audiences. Milioni et al. (2015) consider truthful reporting as a journalistic practice that is anchored on truthful, unbiased and full disclosure of information in their reportage. On their part, Ryzhova and Toepfl (2025: 328) recognised truth in two ways: as a type that is “grounded in factual evidence” and as a “non-evidence-based category grounded in values, emotions or identities”. Factual evidence-based reporting comes from well-researched stories and interviews carried out by journalists with various relevant news sources. On the issue of values, emotions or identities, truth is dependent on the individual values of a journalist, which can vary from one to another. Truth based on emotions may not be reliable because of the fluidity of emotional stability of a journalist, especially those exposed to potentially traumatic experiences, as previously discussed on the safety and security of journalists. With fact-based reporting, stakeholders can trace relationships of journalists and their sources as well as the effects of their stories on the audiences (Adebayo and Makwambeni 2019).

On the value and identity-based notion of truth, a journalist is expected to report truthfully based on how they have been shaped by a conflict. This aspect may be problematic due to the possible introduction of personal biases into news reporting. Thus, it can be concluded that this truth appears to have deontological leanings informed by individual ethical standing that may vary from one journalist to another and may not be reliable in promoting truthful reporting in

conflict situations. Nevertheless, journalists ought to report their stories in a way that does not escalate conflicts regardless of their truth orientation (Adebayo and Makwambeni 2019).

In view of the above, this thesis supports the truth based on factual evidence which can be proven if the need arises. Besides, this practice guards against the possibility of false, malicious, unverified and possibly exaggerated information that may be aired through the media, leading to conflict escalation.

That peace journalism calls for conflict sensitivity in its reporting does not mean that truth in news must be compromised, concealed or manipulated for fear of escalating violence. On the contrary, reporting truthfully helps audiences decipher lies and propaganda peddled by protagonists who may want the conflict to escalate for their own selfish interests. As Ryzhova and Toepfl (2025) argued, truth is an essential component that influences how audiences negotiate trust or distrust in the news and the media in general. Olusegun Adebayo and Blessing Makwambeni (2019) consider the act of concealing some information in a news story as a form of violence in itself, which ought to be avoided by journalists. Therefore, a journalist who mobilises peace journalism ought to report truthfully on all sides and issues in a conflict, helping to build credibility and trust in themselves and the media by extension. As posited by Barker (2012: 90), honest reporting forms the core of a journalist's value to the public. Indeed, truthful reporting is an obligation and not a choice. Therefore, when audiences trust media content, peace journalism has a better chance of succeeding. In view of this, the media ought to build and maintain this trust at the earliest opportunity, thereby strengthening the truth pillar (Doll, Moy and Beckers 2023). I used the truth pillar to show how journalists have used various news sources to establish truth while attempting to refute possible lies and exaggerations, which can misrepresent the conflict. I also showed how denial of access to conflict areas can jeopardise this pillar and, by extension, peace journalism practice.

People Orientation

In terms of people orientation, the Peace Journalism theory encourages coverage of stories that involve human subjects or humanise conflicts. This is best done by interviewing sources who have been affected by the conflict, more so those who are ordinary members of society, thereby drawing on their lived experiences of the conflict. The approach also gives voice to the voiceless who are especially victims of violence (Ottosen and Ovrebo 2016; Bhowmik and Fisher 2023) and more so those who may have been previously ignored in media reports. Such victims include women and children who may be intentionally or unintentionally ignored or

underrepresented in media reports, influencing how they are viewed in society (Jjuuko, Omland, and Dralega 2025).

Humanising stories also helps to reveal slow violence effects that occur out of sight over a lengthy period (Nixon 2011). Through the people orientation, the media can promote inter-ethnic dialogue by working closely with groups advocating for peace, such as religious organisations and NGOs (see Maweu 2019; Murang'ai 2022). This pillar was key in my analysis that showed how the conflict has been humanised through the voices of various sources, and especially the presence of those from ordinary community members. Such reporting also shows the effects of the conflict on them and, more so, the slow violence ones (Nixon 2011).

Solution Orientation

The goal for a solution's orientation is to offer possible ways and strategies of conflict transformation leading to its eventual stoppage, achievement of reconciliation and maintenance of peace among communities in conflict. The media, in this case, offers a platform for the debate on the same, giving an opportunity for stakeholders to adopt the most effective strategies in a given conflict.

For a solution to be adopted, it needs to be communicated in a relatable way. Scholars have argued that one way is to use local-language radio stations. This stems from the recognition that the media and, more so, local-language radio stations have the capacity to highlight issues of importance to communities while influencing their perception and actions on them (Tayeebwa 2017). Broadcasting in local-language radio stations also makes media reportage relevant to audiences, enabling them to participate in discourses on important issues affecting them (Chibita 2016). The use of local-language radio is beneficial to those with minimal literacy skills thus increasing inclusivity in media spaces.

The media can also initiate and sustain dialogue between communities through a multiplicity of voices as they work towards the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Such voices can help to reduce mistrust and tensions between communities (Biwott and Mberia 2019). For example, Pharis Murang'ai (2022) established that conflicts and suspicions were reduced among communities in the Njoro area in Kenya when dialogue was initiated between them through religious-led interventions. Although the reduction in conflict was notable, such efforts fizzle

out once violent conflict stops necessitating the need for continuous interventions by government, religious institutions and the media. Such initiatives can form part of media thematic programming, potentially reaching a wider population, gaining recognition and acceptance. Nevertheless, peace journalism can only succeed when journalists appreciate and apply its principles fully in their work (Ahere 2019).

Cognisant of the solution pillar, this study examined the presence or absence of possible solutions to the Kerio Valley conflict and who led such efforts. My analysis also showed media follow-ups of peace initiatives meant to de-escalate the conflict or alleviate the suffering of the people. It also showed successes or failures of such efforts, whether government or citizen-driven.

The next section discusses the low and high roads of peace journalism.

Conflict Reporting: The Low Road and the High Road

According to Galtung (2003), peace journalism can be viewed in two ways, the low road and the high road. Galtung explains the low road which is also known as war journalism as when the media sees a conflict as a contest between two parties with a clear ‘winner’ and ‘loser’ as per the discussion in the previous section. In such reporting, peace is likely unachievable since the media reports in a partisan manner that dehumanises a perceived enemy (Hyde-Clarke 2012). The high road relates to peace journalism that focuses on conflict transformation. To achieve the high road, the media must be deliberate in its reporting by choosing words or frames that promote understanding of conflicts through background and context, potentially reducing tensions and ideally promoting peace.

Indeed, journalists covering peace stories are encouraged to be careful in their choice of words and phrases to use that do not amplify disagreements (Peleg 2006). Inflammatory words in media reports from sources or journalists cut deeper than a sword into the human fabric, creating enmity between previously peacefully co-existing communities while promoting ‘othering’, which are ingredients that encourage flare-ups and escalation of tensions leading to conflicts. Othering here refers to stereotyping, racialisation or negative ethnicisation of communities, groups or individuals in conflict situations (Thomas-Olalade and Velho 2011). However, this does not mean that the media should fail to report fully on the conflict, especially on violence in active conflicts (Galtung 2003). In essence, they should do so from a peace

journalism perspective that encourages peaceful resolution of conflicts by emphasising the truth, which is one of its key pillars as already discussed. Typical mainstream media coverage of conflicts has failed in this aspect owing to its reduction of conflict to force and violence with little knowledge of the context and the dynamics of a conflict (Kempf 2007). In this case, journalists fail to dig for background information to determine underlying issues that cause the conflict symptomised by violence. At times, the media may be denied access to conflict areas, hindering the dissemination of accurate and verified information that is only possible through first-hand journalistic interviews with local sources.

The process of peace-making requires research into the views and positions of the parties in a conflict, as well as the underlying issues driving the conflict, which is relevant to the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley that has been evident since the pre-1870s (Chellal 1969). However, this conflict is considered historical and may have existed way before the said date. The media, and especially local radio, contribute to the process of peace by playing the role of a mediator, while improving communication between parties, reducing suspicions, enemy images and bigotries, which help conflicting parties to appreciate the other side's interest and thereby (ideally) develop empathy (Kempf 2017).

Based on a Freirean perspective, Linje Manyozo (2016) describes empathy as an action that comes from careful thoughtfulness of others. Through empathy, one can understand issues better and tends to identify with those who are oppressed in society. Thus, the media can help this cause further by reporting in a way that reduces ethnic differences while giving prominence to peace drivers that lead to conflict de-escalation (Rahmani and Jawad 2025). Local-language radio can also de-escalate conflicts by bringing diverse communities together through their programming, thereby encouraging them to embrace diversity (Biwott and Mberia 2019). The goal of peace journalism is to bring all issues to the fore, facilitate robust debate on them and find a solution, thus fulfilling its fourth pillar on solution orientation. Although peace journalism encourages the reporting of invisible effects of conflicts, this may be compromised when journalists are unable to access conflict areas to gather accurate and verified information. In such cases, visibilisation of slow violence effects is not tenable raising questions about the viability of peace journalism in such circumstances.

Conflict reporting, whether peace journalism or war journalism, is summarised in Table 3.1, adapted from Galtung (2003: 178). Table 3.1 collates a comparison between peace journalism

and war journalism and how each can be applied in conflict coverage. It is based on the pillars and orientations of both forms (Galtung 2003) but also includes input that I have added to align the theory with specific aspects of this study. The characteristics of each lend credence to the need to adopt peace journalism, as it is the most appropriate approach for de-escalating conflicts such as the sporadic inter-ethnic ones in Kerio Valley, situated in the North Rift region of Kenya.

Table 3. 1: Peace Journalism vs War Journalism

Peace/conflict journalism	War/violence journalism
1. Peace-orientation: Exploration of conflict formation by looking at parties involved, issues raised and their goals. There are efforts that can be agreed upon by both parties to avert confrontations. Such efforts need to be highlighted by local-language radio, showing the possibility of a win-win orientation.	1. War-orientation: The focus is on the conflict arena between the two parties. The outcome is a ‘win’ for one.
There is open space and time allowing exploration of causes and outcomes in history and culture.	There is a closed space and time in which one party must achieve victory. Causes and exits in the arena are given prominence with a focus on who struck the first blow.
Conflicts are transparent. Audiences can make informed decisions on it.	Wars are opaque and secretive in nature, raising the possibility of propaganda and misinformation.
Giving voice to all parties, resulting in empathy and understanding. Through empathy, media reports stand with the oppressed in society.	“Us vs them” journalism, propaganda, voice for us only. Othering narratives divide communities into race, nationality or ethnic groupings through stereotypes, creating perfect conditions to vilify them.
Humanising all sides. Media reports ought to reflect this aspect.	Dehumanising of “them”
Proactive reporting before any violence occurs. Media plays its watchdog role.	Reactive reporting, waiting for violence to occur. Episodic reporting is given prominence.
Focus on invisible effects or slow violence (trauma and glory), damage to structure and culture. Thematic reporting is encouraged.	Focus on visible effects only (those killed, wounded and material damage). Such a focus does not show the invisible effects of violence.
2. Truth-orientation Expose untruths on all sides.	2. Propaganda-orientation Expose “their” untruths.
Uncover all cover-ups. Journalists can achieve this by covering stories based on	Help “our” cover-ups and conceal lies. The media is working for the benefit of elites or

factual evidence.	selfish individuals in a conflict.
3. People-orientation: Focus on those who are suffering, especially the elderly, women, and children, giving voice to the voiceless	3. Elite-orientation: Focus on “our suffering” (able-bodied males act as their mouthpieces). Women's and children's voices are marginalised.
Focus on ordinary people (peacemakers). Focusing on local people builds ownership and support for their peace efforts.	Focus on elite ‘peacemakers’. Elite peacemakers show dominance and may face resistance from communities.
Name all ‘evil doers’ on all sides. It builds on the truth pillar.	Name “their” evil doers. This encourages artisan reporting.
4. Solution-orientation: Peace = non-violence + creativity for solutions. Creativity comes from programmes and varied news sources. News features are best suited to communicate them.	4. Victory-orientation: Peace = victory + ceasefire. Parties may be coerced into signing peace agreements, making a relapse into violence a possibility.
Highlight peace initiatives and activities that bring people together.	Conceal peace initiatives before victory is at hand. There is a high chance of concealing grievances of various groups or communities, leading to future flare-ups of conflict.
Focus on structure (e.g. institutional and religious), culture and a peaceful society.	Focus on the treaty, the institution of the controlled society.
Aftermath: Media reportage focuses on resolution, reconstruction, and reconciliation (lasting peace is probable). Thematic reporting is supported in this orientation helping to guard against relapse into violence.	Leaving for another war, return if the old one flares up. The news coverage focuses on the spectacle only.

Source: Adapted from Galtung (2003: 178)

Theoretical Expansion of Peace Journalism

Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch are former journalists turned academics with over 30 years’ experience working for major television stations in the United Kingdom and Australia. They formed a partnership enabling them to research, publish and expand on the Peace Journalism theory as proposed by Galtung (2003). Their previous careers in journalism could have had a hand in the success of their understanding of media reporting on conflicts. McGoldrick and Lynch (2006: 30) built on Galtung’s (2003) theorisation by developing 17 points to guide peace journalism practice. This was an attempt to add nuances of conflict reporting owing to the changing nature of conflicts. Also, the need for contextual reporting of the same, a relevant consideration of which this study is keenly aware in the sporadic inter-

ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley.

McGoldrick and Lynch's (2006) first call to journalists is to avoid portraying a conflict as though affecting two parties only, which will likely result in a dichotomy of a winner versus a loser. To counter this possibility in their representation of news events, journalists are encouraged to be cautious not to escalate conflicts arising from their portrayal of parties involved (Adebayo and Makwambeni 2019). Secondly, journalists are cautioned against accepting distinctions of 'self and other', which can promote violence through 'othering' narratives, which will be elaborated on in terms of representation theory presented below. In this case, journalists should treat all individuals, groups or communities equally, thereby promoting intercultural co-existence and coherence (Ghofrani 2024). Additionally, journalists ought to take an interpretative approach in their reporting on stories that promote peace while toning down on ethnic differences (Teresa 2011).

Thirdly, journalists should avoid viewing a conflict as though taking place only *where* violence occurs, but also *when* it occurs [my emphasis], thus aiding in noting its patterns (McGoldrick and Lynch, 2006). Such reporting limits the lens of reporting to war journalism that focuses on the spectacle only, thereby failing to capture the ripple effects of violence on communities that occur cumulatively over lengthy periods. It would be better for journalists to report continuously in a proactive manner, thereby providing an early warning system on conflicts and, more importantly, controlling the flow of accurate information. Fourthly, journalists are discouraged from assessing the merits of a conflict solely on visible effects. For example, evidence or reporting of killings, bombings and injuries. Since victims suffer slow violence effects that may not be visible over time, the onus is on journalists to visibilise these effects through their reportage, an idea that is also raised by Nixon (2011), as will be discussed below. Such reporting ensures comprehensive coverage of conflict, potentially leading to its transformation and eventual stoppage.

News sources can often try to define themselves through a repetition of what their leaders say or demand. In such situations, as their fifth recommendation, McGoldrick and Lynch (2006) caution journalists against allowing such repetitions and instead, counter it by questioning the source of the message and exploring alternative voices (Kibet 2015). Journalists, working to the principles of war journalism concentrate on the differences between parties. Instead, McGoldric and Lynch (2006) call for journalists to look for similarities and shared values by

reporting in a way that reduces ethnic differences while giving prominence to shared values and peace drivers that lead to conflict de-escalation (Rahmani and Jawad 2025).

Their seventh caution is for journalists to avoid reporting violent acts only while describing the ‘horror’ of it. This creates sensationalism and whipping up of emotions, going against sensitivity when reporting on conflicts as proposed by Howard (2013), thereby compromising peace efforts. Although journalists ought to humanise stories by interviewing victims showing frustrations and deprivations of everyday normal living, such reporting should not exacerbate conflicts. In their reportage of conflicts, journalists should not blame someone or certain communities for starting it. On the contrary, they ought to practice critical awareness in their reporting by questioning their sources and verifying information independently (Hyde-Clarke 2012), which is a hallmark of good journalism. This gives them an opportunity to report on underlying issues behind it, which could fuel the violence (Bhowmic and Ferrucci 2024). The ninth point deals with instances where the media practices one-sided reporting that focuses solely on the grievances and suffering of one party. Such partisan reporting can elevate one community or group above another, which can be exploited by elites through victim narratives to escalate the conflict for their selfish gains, ultimately compromising peace efforts (Wolde and Woldearegay 2024). On the contrary, journalists should engage multiple voices and perspectives, ensuring that all sides in active and latent conflicts receive equal coverage (Hyde-Clarke 2012).

The language used to report a conflict influences how audiences and victims perceive it. Therefore, journalists should not use specific words and discourses that encourage victimisation by avoiding words such as “devastated” or “defenceless”, which can demoralise communities, compromising peacebuilding efforts. The use of such emotive words can lead to an escalation of tensions among communities and other groups in conflict (Bhowmik and Fisher 2023). Positive attitudes by journalists guide their word choice and selection of narratives that highlight the grievances of parties in conflict (Doll, Moy and Beckers 2023). In this case, journalists are encouraged to report positively on the work of those working for peace and more importantly the local ones even if it happens in a small scale. In addition, journalists should avoid using emotive words like “genocide” or “massacre” that can stir emotions. By adopting conflict sensitive language, journalists can choose specific words and discourses that do not exaggerate conflicts potentially leading to their de-escalation and eventual stoppage.

McGoldrick and Lynch (2006), in their twelfth consideration calls for journalists to avoid an overrepresentation of violent episodes which can lead to an overemphasis on aggressive actions of some communities or groups leading to systematic neglect of peace efforts (see Milioni et al. 2015; Bhowmik and Ferrucci 2024). The thirteenth one speaks to language choice where journalists are to avoid demonising adjectives like “barbaric”, “brutal” or “vicious” which could be exaggerations from a rival group or community creating or sustaining stereotypes. There are also labels that ought to be avoided, like “terrorist” or “fanatic”, which can promote othering tendencies. Therefore, the media ought to contest or substitute such stereotypes in their representations (Hall 1997). The use of negative labels for communities in conflict needs to be questioned, and the ones that are neutral adopted. Additionally, journalists need to adopt clear and fair reporting that enables better understanding among audiences (Kariuki 2019). Clarity and fairness can be achieved using simple and accessible language, an advantage that local-language radio has more to those with limited literacy skills (Salawu 2006). Since the immediate four points above all deal with aspects of language use, they can be combined and dealt as one for clarity and ease of understanding.

Human rights reporting forms a core journalistic task in conflict reporting, which contributes to the protection, awareness and debate on them (Dias 2013). However, caution is also given to journalists not to focus on human rights abuses or other negative undertakings from one side only. The ideal is to name all perpetrators on all sides, making the media a crucial partner to human rights campaigners (Winston and Pollock 2016; see also Bhowmik and Fisher 2023). The fifteenth call to journalists is to avoid making claims or giving opinions as if they were established facts. This requirement has existed as a characteristic of good journalism (Harcup and O’neill 2017) where opinion is separated from facts to avoid confusion that audiences can have when both are presented together. Thus, news reports ought to be strong in facts obtained from research and interviews by journalists (Barker 2012).

As the sixteenth recommendation, journalists should also be cautious about how they treat ceasefire signings as though they create peace on their own. Instead, they are encouraged to ask what is being done to resolve a conflict non-violently and thereby track the progress of such efforts. This tracking can be equated with thematic reporting that encourages continuity, even after peace is achieved, to monitor the implementation of agreed issues and avoid a possible relapse into violence. Thematic reporting stems from the communicative power of news in a conflict that can influence its representation and understanding, creating

opportunities for its transformation (Nzibo 2020).

Expanding on the solution orientation of peace journalism, journalists are called upon to avoid waiting for leaders on ‘our side’ to offer solutions. Instead, journalists, through their radio programming, for example, can offer solutions by facilitating discourse with previously marginalised voices from groups or communities with possible divergent views (Bhowmik and Ferrucci 2024). By bringing various communities together in their reportage, they can encourage them to talk about their concerns and embrace diversity, potentially leading to conflict de-escalation (see Biwott and Mberia, 2019; Doll 2025). In addition, public trust in radio and broadcast media, by extension, increases when they advocate for issues concerning the citizenry (Sobel and McIntyre 2025).

Perceived Misunderstandings, Criticisms and Hindrances of Peace Journalism

Peace journalism is a valuable approach for the reasons just discussed, but it also has its misunderstandings, criticisms, and hindrances, of which this study is cognisant in its application to interpret the data. The following discussions are part of attempts at the theoretical expansion of peace journalism.

Peace journalism faces a myriad of misunderstandings of its intended objectives, as well as of its perceived departure from traditional news values, such as objectivity, truth, balance or immediacy. One of the major contentions is what David Loyn (2007) calls artificial prescriptions by peace advocates, which require journalists to seek out peacemakers. On the contrary, peace journalism does not do that; instead, it calls for foregrounding the efforts of those working for peace, especially local ones that can gain acceptance easily from communities or groups in conflict. Peace reporting may not be attractive to reporters because it lacks the spectacle of war reporting; hence, the need for deliberate efforts by journalists to cover it.

There is also a misunderstanding that peace journalism advocates for non-reporting of war or violence, which is not the case (see Adebayo and Makwambeni 2019; Doll and Beckers 2023). As discussed above, one of the pillars of peace journalism is truth that requires journalists to report falsehoods and propaganda from either side in a conflict, which clearly refutes this misunderstanding. It is also important for journalists to educate their audiences on unclear issues around conflicts to enable them to make informed decisions. For example, Galtung

(2003: 177) advises on the distinction of two confusing terms, namely conflict and violence, by stakeholders, including the media itself.

Conflict, in this case, is a disagreement between two or more parties, communities or groups, but may not necessarily be violent and is termed as latent (Hyde-Clarke 2012). Violence, on the other hand, is an expression of a conflict with the intention of harming the other party that comes when a latent conflict becomes active. However, violent conflicts do not erupt out of nowhere; hence the importance of understanding the history and structure when reporting such stories, as advocated for by the peace journalism theory through its solutions-oriented approach. This is only achievable after knowing the simmering issues below the surface that can cause the eruption of a conflict (see Hassan et al. 2024). Hence, journalists need to distinguish between latent and active conflicts and report on them using thematic and not episodic reporting that is also appropriate in exposing slow violence effects on communities.

In my understanding, the line separating the two terms conflict and violence is blurred, thereby one cannot be separated from the other. Again, a lull in violence is not a ticket to stop reporting on it in the belief that peace has been achieved. On the contrary, reporting on such situations needs to continue to monitor implementation of ceasefires, treaties, reconciliation and rebuilding of damaged infrastructure to ensure that normal living is restored and violence does not recur. Since peace journalism calls for the reporting of all conflicts, whether latent or active, it would be important for journalists to use it in their reporting that is advantageous to peace efforts, which may be ignored in war-oriented reporting. Peace journalism provides an opportunity to correct mistakes while bridging the gap between violent conflicts and peace which in turn promotes human rights (Radoli 2011).

To some, peace journalism acts like a form of advocacy reporting that seeks to promote a certain cause (Loyn 2007, see also Adebayo and Makwambeni 2019). However, this notion has its weaknesses since advocacy fronts a specific issue over a period, while on the other hand, peace journalism seeks contextual reporting and non-violent responses to conflicts (see Doll 2025; Lawton and Wawa 2025). Reporting in context requires research into the historical background of the conflict, unresolved issues driving it, giving voice to the voiceless, especially the marginalised, while highlighting grassroots peace efforts.

An explicit criticism of peace journalism stems from the attempt of peace journalism to

challenge news values that are used in selecting and constructing news narratives. For example, immediacy as a value that requires the reporting of events within the shortest time possible, denying journalists the opportunity to do meaningful contextual reporting bolstered through adequate research (Abdul-Nabi 2017). In such circumstances, the main concern is beating deadlines, leading them to gloss over important issues. Follow-up stories that are good in reporting slow violence effects are hard to carry out because of time and resource constraints (Bekidusa 2024). On the other hand, inadequate finances lead to reductions in editorial staff and equipment required for reporting human-interest stories, affecting the implementation of the tenets of peace journalism in newsrooms, such as truth, people, and solution (Abdul-Nabi 2017).

Peace journalism has also been termed as “meaningless, uniquely unhelpful and a misleading prescription for journalists in general” and more so broadcast journalists (Loyn 2007: 2). Peace journalism practice is thus sometimes judged as inconsequential, being equated to ‘shouting against a thunderstorm’. Those who subscribe to this view appear to surrender to the inevitability of conflict escalation with minimal or non-existent results in its de-escalation from journalistic reporting. In this case, journalists have been called upon to preserve their neutral positions in conflict as observers and not players (Loyn 2007).

However, a neutral position is not conceivable since news reports are constructions of reality as per the understanding of a particular reporter and editor, who are not mere spectators in a conflict. As cautioned by Lawton and Wawa (2025), reporters or editors who see themselves as neutral observers may unwittingly enable the underreporting of the experiences of marginalised groups or early warning signs before conflict explodes or escalates. In such cases, the truth pillar of peace journalism is compromised. Besides, Peace Journalism offers more potential for mitigating conflicts by including a diversity of voices and viewpoints during times of conflicts, whether latent or active, giving a chance to audiences to make informed conclusions on it (Hyde-Clarke 2012). Additionally, peace journalism answers key journalistic questions of who, what, where, when, why and how, which guide the reporting of any story and are applicable to human rights and peace reporting (Lynch 2007).

The next section discusses impediments to the implementation of peace journalism as a practice by journalists.

Hindrances to Peace Journalism Practice

Suleyman Irvan (2006: 36) identified hindrances to the realisation of peace journalism, which he classified into three levels: the individual, the media institution and ideological. On the individual level, professional and news values combined with how the journalists view their role themselves determine what is covered and emphasised in peace stories. This is more evident among journalists who wish to remain neutral and objective in their reporting, a position that is untenable in the social construction of news, as pointed out in the previous section.

Objectivity in news attracts both support and rejection at varying levels (see Loyn 2007). On the media institution itself, the obstacle stems from its ownership structures, such as private, commercial, community, religious or public and the goal for its establishment (see Nyanjom 2012). Commercial media will likely select for stories that have spectacle, are attractive to their audiences and consequently lead to their improved popularity, culminating in more revenue through advertising (see Nyanjom 2012; Hassan et al. 2024). Such media houses may not wish to antagonise advertisers due to fear of losing revenue. Government-owned media would likely carry the official line geared towards concealing information that may paint the government in a bad light. Religion-based media will likely opt for peace and reconciliation, as various religions advocate and hence the choice of Alpha Radio, a Christian religious station as a case in this study. Christian-based interventions are helpful in resolving inter-ethnic conflicts, thereby aligning with the solution pillar of peace journalism, which encourages local solutions to conflicts (Murang'ai 2022).

On ideology, the media leans to nationalistic tendencies, which favour the official line. In the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley, this could involve seeing the bandits practising cattle rustling as savages who are a blot in the otherwise 'clean' national human fabric. In India, for example, Joseph (2024) points out that the state tends to exercise authoritarian power on media houses that do not support government interests. Thus, media houses leaning into nationalistic tendencies face minimal and sometimes non-existent criticism from the government and its agencies. Although those who encourage or carry out acts of lawlessness are undesirable in any progressive society, there are victims of their violence in communities whose stories need to be told through their ordinary voices (Doll 2025).

As pointed above, peace journalism struggles in its attempt to gain prominence in profit-driven

media environments that are more concerned with the bottom line since it challenges the conventional reporting philosophy of “if it bleeds, it leads” (Lawton and Wawa 2025). In this philosophy, journalists cover stories that have spectacle and will surely attract audiences, which ultimately improves their rating, a key aspect in marketing purposes. In this case, peace journalism may not be attractive, especially when reporting on peace-building stories whose impact may not be visible at that very moment, which links into a discussion on slow violence as a guiding concept in this study.

Slow Violence

Rob Nixon (2011) is a South African living in the United States of America. He was an apartheid critic and is now a major voice in environmental advocacy. Nixon coined the term ‘slow violence’ to explain the effects that environmental pollution and wars have on populations over time. According to Nixon, these effects are slow-acting and usually occur out of sight, making them difficult to report on. Since then, this concept has been used to show forms of violence in other contexts, such as police brutality against black people in the United States of America (see Krammer and Remster 2022). It has also been used to explore the impact of artificial intelligence on human rights, such as privacy and freedom of expression (see Teo 2025). As such, this concept can be applied by the media to explain the effects that conflicts such as the one in Kerio Valley have on populations. In such reporting, the media does not focus on the spectacle but on the invisible effects that happen over time, out of sight, on the general population and on journalists who cover them. Through this reporting, experiences of those who are affected are captured and highlighted (Skotnicki 2019). Krzysztof Skotnicki sees slow violence as mostly affecting the poor and the marginalised in society, bringing in questions of power and marginality, which could be both physical and cultural, that could be at play in Kerio Valley.

Despite the difficulty of representing such invisible effects, Davies (2022) calls on all stakeholders to expand their imaginations on what they consider harmful while emphasising the need to visibilise effects that have since been detached from their original causes. For the media, this is a call for contextual reporting that explores backgrounds thereby showing hidden causes of conflicts and their effects over lengthy periods. Slow Violence reporting relates to people and truth pillars of peace journalism (Galtung 2003) that are key in visibilising the effects of violence on communities. Herein, the media needs to find ways of representing such effects, which helps in confirming that they are indeed real (Skotnicki 2019). Slow violence

(Nixon 2011) operates on loops of influence where physical violence can cause slow violence, and this slow violence may then perpetuate the dissatisfaction felt by groups or communities, perhaps leading to more conflict and violence. By adopting the Slow Violence framework, the invisible effects of the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley can be brought to the fore through local-language radio reporting.

For a slow violence framework to succeed, journalistic reporting of conflicts needs to change. Achievement of the desired change requires a shift from the usual episodic reporting, which does not adequately show the invisible effects, to the more appropriate thematic reporting that does not focus on the spectacle only seen through the number of casualties and injuries. Thus, the application of peace journalism's focus of reporting to conventional journalism that tends to focus on the spectacle, into the more invisible slow violence effects, while humanising all parties in conflict with a possibility of creating a discussion on positive solutions to it would be appropriate (Ciboh, Torwel and Jev 2022).

Since peace journalism and the concept of slow violence would not adequately address all the research data collected as per the research questions, I complement them with the Representation theory as proposed by Stuart Hall (1997). The four previously discussed orientations of Peace Journalism, namely peace-oriented, truth-oriented, people-oriented and solutions-oriented can be considered with the aid of Representation theory as they are aligned through the idea of discourse. Discourses on peace, truth, people and solutions are rooted in knowledge systems, which can be categorised into religious and secular perspectives that are sustained through systems of power that are evident through particular media ownership structures, their political affiliations, funders, advertisers and regulations. This dovetails well with the choice of the two radio stations, Kass FM and Alpha Radio, as case studies that are secular and religious, respectively. Therefore, this study considered peace journalism in relation to Stuart Hall's Representation theory to explore how journalists have incorporated these discourses in the media since news reports are constructions and representations of events (Fourie 2018).

Representation Theory

Stuart Hall was a Jamaican-born British sociologist and cultural theorist who sought to open a dialogue on cultural identity and representation. He was a co-founder of British cultural studies at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University.

Stuart Hall's constructivist theory of representation challenges the favoured interpretation of media texts, recognising that they can have several meanings, which aligns with the constructivist paradigm in which this study is embedded. Representation means, "using language, signs and images to say something meaningful about, or to represent the world meaningfully to other people" (Hall 1997: 15). Language in this case acts as a representation system and is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between people with similar linguistic access to the language. In this case, representation enables us to study how communities, groups or individuals are often represented in the media, building familiarity and acceptance or rejection from the audiences. Hall's Representation theory informs this study's analysis of discourses in the radio content and narratives shared by the interviewed journalists that have been used to represent various issues around the conflict in news and feature stories.

Representation is built into the news reports that act as an arena where narratives about conflict or peace are constructed and communicated to audiences in a radio station's catchment area (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Hanitzsch and Nagar 2016). Reporters and editors, who try to represent an event as realistically as possible, guided by news values, newsroom procedures and personal biases, do the construction referred to here. Nevertheless, Branston and Stafford (2010) note that, however realistic media images may appear to audiences, they do not present the world directly as it is but are always a construction that provides ways of visualising particular groups, identities and situations.

This constructivist understanding is important when I analyse media texts in Chapter Six to show how particular groups and communities are represented in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley. Understanding representation is complex, and thus, what is thought to be 'real' could just be a depiction, meaning something or an idea that is represented by the media, and the target audiences will make recognition of what was intended to be shown, written or spoken of. In the forthcoming sections, I will discuss further the role of language in representation.

Theories of Representation

Hall (1997: 24-25) theorised three approaches that explain how representation works, which are the reflective, the intentional and the constructionist. In the reflective approach, he explains

that meaning is thought to exist in a person or idea independent of the interventions of someone. The reality in this approach is like a mirror reflecting reality as it is. This approach explains a positivist understanding. In the intentional approach, meaning is imposed by the speaker or writer; thereby, what the speaker intends a word to mean is assumed to be understood as such. This may not be appropriate in communication since language is not private, and meaning is created through an exchange with other speakers and audiences who have linguistic access to the language.

The third one is the constructivist approach that recognises that individuals cannot fix meaning to things due to the public social character of language. In this approach, meaning is constructed through the representation systems of concepts and signs in a language. This is the most appropriate approach in studying how the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley has been represented in news reports, informing its choice in this study.

In the constructivist approach, there are multiple ways of constructing meanings in an event or in something. Such ways depend on one's understanding and access to the linguistic codes of a language. This is evident in news reports where journalists covering the same event take different angles in reporting a story, leading to varied outcomes, lending credence to the reference of news as subjective constructions of reality. In view of this, I chose the constructivist approach in this study since media texts are processes of selections and constructions (Fourie 2018), which are deliberate actions of reporters and editors. Therefore, one can understand this approach with a recognition of the social character of language, which acknowledges that things in themselves or individual language users cannot fix meanings in it (Hall, Evans and Nixon 2024). In this way, audiences construct meanings out of the representations of something or an event. As Shakespeare once remarked, "that which we call a rose by any other name will smell as sweet". In this case, the word 'rose' is a representation of a flower that has a sweet fragrance.

Positivists have issues with subjectivity in constructivist research. However, the constructivist approach allows the study of representation as entering the actual structure of things, conceptualised as a key process in influencing social subjects and even historical events (Hall 1997). This important aspect assists the study analysing how the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley, Kenya, has been constructed and represented in the news reports and feature stories aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio over time. Such representations influence how

stakeholders, including community members, religious and political leaders, non-governmental organisations and the government respond to the conflict. For example, governments tend to react to a conflict once considerable public interest has been created, threatening their authority locally and internationally, hence the need for the media to make human rights and peacebuilding part of its regular programming.

The combination of peace journalism theory, the slow violence concept and Hall's constructivist theory of representation enable an analysis of the presence and representation of discourses and narratives on the four orientations of Peace Journalism, which are peace, truth, people and solutions. Therefore, I sought to establish if and how these principles may be challenged in the context of local-language radio reportage and the meaning-making of the Kerio Valley conflict.

Representation and Meaning Making

Hall (1997) explains representation as the creation of the meaning of concepts in our minds through language. A language understandable to the majority of an audience group is critical to ensure the success of the representation process. By "success", Hall means the ability of audiences to decode the preferred meaning in media reportage due to the presence of words and phrases recognisable to audiences, such as "harmony" and "displacement" that depict peaceful co-existence and the forcible removal of populations, respectively. Local-language radio stations are important in this aspect since they can reach majority of audiences in their reporting of human rights and peacebuilding in conflict situations, using a language that is understandable to those with minimal literacy skills.

Concepts that form part of a person's knowledge framework, are constructed over time and can be recalled to make sense of what we see or hear in the media. It is important to note that the use of a certain language in communication is influenced by social situations and contexts where it is used (Fourie 2018). Therefore, particular words or phrases may mean different things to different people depending on context. For example, in the Kalenjin culture, the mention of the phrase "*lagokyuk*" (my children) by a married man, which includes the wife, does not mean that the wife is a child, but it means "my beloved people whom I care and provide for" signifying the importance placed on them since their presence guarantees the continuation of a lineage. Gender equality advocates and those from other cultures have misunderstood and demonised it, creating unnecessary ridicule for the community.

Journalists must be aware of such controversial and often misunderstood words or phrases that have different meanings depending on context when they are representing an event or people in their news reports. Through such reports, the media acts as an ideological tool which shapes and distributes legitimate discourses in society (Avraham and First 2010). In essence, one can only understand cultural meanings in the media accurately if they have access to cultural codes that assist in deciphering meanings in context (Hutasuhut 2009).

There are two systems of representation, which are conceptual maps and language. Conceptual maps are memories of objects or places kept in the mind, which enable us to remember things such as a familiar road leading to a home or a bed in our bedroom. When we see such things, we recall where we are, what they are or what they mean. This brings in culture, which is a way of giving meaning to people, things or events because it consists of maps of meaning see Hall (1997) and Hutasuhut (2009), more so in a specific cultural context. Furthermore, culture plays a significant role in the creation of identities of different communities or groups of people who share various cultural aspects like language, customs and practices. Communities are able to create and share meanings among themselves.

In the context of this study, communities do not refer only to the Pokot, Marakwet, Tugen and Turkana who are in conflict with each other. It includes communities of practice such as the media, government and security agencies. These communities of practice share a common language and hence meanings in relation to certain events. These meanings are contained in layers of meaning-making, such as government narratives, journalistic reporting and security agencies' language, which they use to express themselves. Therefore, the understanding of cultural practices is important to journalists who then tailor their communications to acceptable cultural depictions. What this means is that media representation and communication ought to factor in cultural sensitivities of various communities, especially those in conflict situations, through careful choice of words that do not dehumanise or disparage the said communities. In essence, the goal is to represent such communities in a respectful manner that can aid in reconciliation and cohesion.

Language, on the other hand, allows the exchange of concepts and meanings between two or more individuals with access to or understanding of a particular language. This study will focus on the language tenet only to analyse how Kass FM and Alpha radio have represented the

sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley and the communities involved, as well as the discourses around it through news reports. For example, the ‘us vs them’ construction in the representation of victims of violence (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Hanitzsch and Nagar 2016) is important in this regard and can thus be portrayed as desperate or helpless. Language choice is important in such reports since it gives understanding to audiences on human rights and peacebuilding narratives around the conflict. The analysis showed the relationships that exist between language, power and ideology communicated through the news and feature stories (Van Dijk 2015; Fourie 2018). This comes from the narratives of news sources showing the influence they have on the conflict and how audiences react to it.

In essence, the understanding of this conflict is dependent on the language used, which helps in creating knowledge and meaning for audiences (Barker 2008). The language chosen by a media house should be linguistically accessible to the majority of the target audience, hence the importance of local-language radio stations that can reach audiences with minimal literacy skills in languages that they understand. Since radio has a big influence on its listeners, more so those in rural areas, it plays a critical role in the representation process (Fourie 2018).

By analysing the language in the radio content and the study’s participant responses, I showed the meaning of what is said and, more importantly, what is not being said, particularly during the CDA phase. The CDA method operates on the idea that media does not reflect the world, “it is a process of selection and construction, of inclusions and exclusions, of classifying and categorising. These processes of inclusion and exclusion mean that texts are never neutral but always take a position, whether intentionally or not” (Prinsloo 2018: 26). Thus, my analysis of the data showed the presence or absence of words and how they have been used to represent the Kerio Valley conflict. Showing the presence of controversial statements is not enough; therefore, I moved on to consider the context in which they were used, thus helping to see how journalists use such words and whether any attempts were made to explain their meaning.

Representation in News

Representation refers to “how the world is socially constructed and represented to and by us in meaningful ways” (Barker 2008: 7). Through representation, we can make connections between meaning and language to culture (Hall 1997), making language a key component in meaning-making, more so in radio reports. Such reports need to be clear to avoid hatred and misunderstandings that can arise from them (Ghofrani 2024). In this study, this refers to how

the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley is constructed and represented to the audiences of the two radio stations, Kass FM and Alpha Radio, through narratives in the news and feature stories aired by them.

Representation emanates from narratives of various news sources drawn from different communities of practice that represent it differently, including political leaders, religious leaders, community members and, more importantly, reporters and editors who help to make sense of their complexities by choosing words that are appropriate in creating an understanding. By studying the linguistic structures of news reports, there is an opportunity to explore the places where the ideology of the news sources manifests itself (Ge and Wang 2018), as was considered in this study. Thus, appropriate and accessible languages, which are Kiswahili and Kalenjin, were used in this context to produce and consume meaning among them about the conflict (Hutasuhut 2009). Beyond the language itself, the choice of words within it is telling. Language in this sense being a structured system of communication that has rules, symbols and context used to convey ideas. On the other hand, words are the basic, individual units of meaning within that system, which are important components in meaning making during conversations or in journalistic reporting in this context. The goal of my study was to concentrate on the meaning of specific words in a language to elicit explicit and implicit meaning.

The lived experiences of conflicting communities and other stakeholders are important building blocks for journalists in constructing the narratives around the conflict through news and feature stories. Therefore, listeners can make meaning from the news items on the causes of the conflict, the players around it, the powers they wield, and peace efforts made for its resolution, as captured in the media reports. Furthermore, representation helps us to connect the power and construct identities of the players in the conflict over time (Hutasuhut 2009). Through language, identities of such players are relocated from their private to public realms (Ge and Wang 2018), where their motives can be scrutinised. Power and ideology here are tools used by the elite to manipulate populations, thereby achieving and maintaining dominance in societies. Elites, communities or communities of practice reproduce such dominance through discourses (Van Dijk 2015).

Stereotyping also plays a role in the creation of the identities of players in a conflict. In this case, media reports can distort the social reality of certain communities into a media image, as

was the case in Hebrew television's portrayal of the Israeli Arab population in previous Israeli and Palestinian conflicts (Avraham and First 2010). In these portrayals, the Arab populations were viewed stereotypically as inseparable from the enemy, which may not be the case. Media image here, according to Eli Avraham and Anat First (2010), refers to the terms that are used in reporting on the conflict that are now familiar to the audiences and have been accepted without much question, even though they may not be appropriate. Such terms in the Kerio Valley conflict, such as 'bandits' or 'cattle rustlers,' can evoke certain emotions when used. The use of such words can promote 'othering,' vilifying, dehumanising, delegitimising or villainising other communities. Thus, the analysis of news and feature stories in this study for the presence and use of such words, phrases, or stereotypes that distort social reality in this conflict is critical to its understanding. Thus, the question, returning to the lens of Peace Journalism, is whether the use of such words can escalate or de-escalate the conflict.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the peace journalism and representation theories that guide this study. A comparison between war and peace journalism was made, showing the need to use peace journalism in media reporting of conflicts. The four pillars of peace journalism, which are peace, truth, people and solutions orientation, that are important in showing how the media represents human rights and peacebuilding in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley, were deliberated on. A discussion of the low road and high road of peace journalism shows the importance of adopting the high road by journalists reporting on conflict situations, enabling the media to play the role of a mediator in peace efforts. The chapter also discussed perceived misunderstandings of peace journalism and the hindrances to its implementation in newsrooms. In noting the limitations of peace journalism in addressing invisible effects of the conflict, the slow violence concept was introduced to highlight the existence of such 'invisible' effects on populations spanning lengthy periods. Visibilising such effects in media reports leads to greater understanding, enabling stakeholders to comprehend the true impact of conflicts and the urgent need to resolve them and mitigate their effects. The chapter discussed the theories of representation and elaborated on the constructivist theory to which this study subscribes. Representation theory is key to showing how language represents various groups or communities in conflicts in media reports through the narratives of news sources and journalists. In this sense, the importance of language and word choice in the construction of events through news and feature stories is articulated. This aspect will be key in the analysis of the narratives in the sampled news and feature stories. The next chapter presents the study's

methodology, which aligns with the overall constructivist approach.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the study's methodology. The study is broadly situated within the interpretive/constructivist paradigm, in which I employed in-depth interviews to gather the views of reporters and editors reporting on the Kerio Valley conflict. The strengths and weaknesses of constructivism are discussed, highlighting its suitability for explaining human behaviour in natural settings, with the newsroom as an example. My philosophical assumptions in epistemology and ontology, which influence what counts as knowledge and how it is acquired, are also discussed.

It details the recruitment and purposive sampling strategies used to select journalists (reporters and editors) and news and feature stories. This study took a case study approach, in which I analysed audio recordings of news and feature stories aired on Kass FM and Alpha Radio concerning the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley in Kenya. The field activities associated with this data collection are also explained.

There is also a section on reflexivity, based on my experience, training, and positionality, that has a bearing on how I approached the research phenomenon. It also presents the ethical considerations, showing the necessary preparations that I made, and approvals granted by gatekeepers to research sites, as well as the university and government ethical agencies. It then ends with a brief account of the analytical plan, which will be elaborated on and presented in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Research Paradigm: Constructivist

This section discusses the interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, including their philosophical assumptions. The study adopts a constructivist/ interpretivist paradigm, which is founded on the idea that reality is constructed through subjective perceptions and interpretations of it (Croucher and Cronn-Mills 2021). A paradigm is a set of beliefs that guide a researcher's actions in the research process. Paradigms are intellectual maps that help researchers to represent their philosophical worldviews (Brennen 2021). Interpretivist and constructivist paradigms are interrelated but with distinctions. The goal of interpretivism is to understand the meaning of human behaviour within a research phenomenon, while

constructivism concerns the social construction of knowledge (William 2024). However, these qualities complement each other. For clarity, this study adopts the constructivist paradigm, which aligns with the constructed nature of news and feature stories.

The goal of a researcher, as per the constructivist paradigm, is to explain human behaviour subjectively through those who perform it in the context in which it occurs (Siddiqui 2019). In view of this, the choice of journalists reporting on the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley is a fitting one.

It is important to note that researchers' carry their philosophical beliefs to their research sites knowingly or unknowingly, consequently affecting their research. Therefore, when designing a philosophically sound research project, one must acknowledge and understand the role of such beliefs in it (Pretorius 2024). As such, I aimed to explain the behaviour of the selected journalists in their reporting of the Kerio Valley conflict. Even so, I was cognisant of my subjectivity based on my training and experience as a journalist in Kenya and having worked in one of the stations under study, which may influence how I generated, analysed and interpreted the data.

In the constructivist paradigm, meanings are diverse and multiple; thus, a researcher is keen to examine the complexity of views or interpretations rather than constrain them into a few clusters (see Creswell and Tashakkori 2007; Guest, Namey and Mitchell 2013; Creswell and Creswell 2018). The constructivist paradigm proposes that reality is constructed through a researcher's interpretations and shared meanings, with language playing a key role. In this case, the constructivist paradigm goes further, making meaning by subjectively interpreting data through an inductive analytic process. An inductive process, as it was in this study, allows the generation of themes from the data subjectively rather than from a predetermined list. This process benefits from a researcher's experience with the study phenomenon, which was ideal in this study, given my journalistic training and work experience (William 2024), as well as my fluency in Kalenjin and Kiswahili, which are the languages of broadcast for Kass FM and Alpha Radio.

Diversity of meanings and their multiple nature means that two researchers may not see a phenomenon in the same way, leading to a multiplicity of meanings. In this sense, qualitative researchers are not concerned with searching for a single objective reality but with multiple

realities evident through the active construction of meaning. This is why I used open-ended questions in the in-depth interviews that allowed the participants to construct meanings on human rights and peacebuilding reporting on their own (Creswell and Creswell 2018). Such an approach enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the Kerio Valley conflict reporting and the complexity it displays in its unique context, and not necessarily to advocate for generalisations of results (Siddiqui 2019).

From the foregoing, subjects construct their own meanings in different ways even though they may relate to the same phenomenon (Gray 2021). As a researcher, I sought to understand the feelings and perceptions of the researched on human rights and peace reporting through active participation in the research process. I view the creation of reality [an aspect of constructivism] through social interactions, and thus reality is what people perceive it to be through experiences and meaning. In essence, participants who are acknowledged as “active knowers understand and reflect on the social phenomena” and thereby play a critical role in knowledge creation (Siddiqui 2019: 259). Therefore, this view agrees with the sentiments of Hall (1997), who theorised that in the constructivist approach of Representation theory, the construction of meaning occurs in multiple ways. News and feature stories reporting are good examples of constructions and representation of events through the actions of reporters and editors, which give meaning to such events through words, and that is why I chose them as units of analysis in this study. In this sense, journalists ought to be careful in their choice of words so that media texts communicate the intended meaning and are understandable to their audiences.

Philosophy refers to the use of abstract ideas and beliefs that inform our research (Creswell and Poth 2018: 49). A researcher’s philosophy is a consequence of years of development through peer interaction, work and training, which invariably leaves an indelible mark on how one views the world. In the recognition of the influence of such interactions on research, I continuously reflected on my training and work experience as a journalist in this study. Therefore, knowing one’s philosophical assumptions is important since they are the first ideas that a researcher uses in designing their study (Creswell and Poth 2018). Philosophical assumptions are rooted in ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology, which I discuss below according to the constructivist paradigm.

Ontology refers to the nature of reality and the characteristics of that reality (Creswell and Poth 2018). In qualitative research founded on the principles of constructivism, there is no single

reality, but that reality is multiple and qualitative researchers must acknowledge it as such. This is true when studying unbounded, complex and dynamic phenomena such as the lived experiences of journalists covering the conflict at Kerio Valley, which are not possible to view in one objective reality (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 2013). Multiple realities manifest through a collection of information from different sources, which are then triangulated to show their connection and how they corroborate each other. Creation of meaning then occurs from the resultant data using multiple viewpoints, best represented through excerpts to maintain the voice of participants. The goal here was to capture the rich human experience (Pretorious 2024), which in my case was from the selected journalists who are at the forefront of reporting on the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley. The media texts that were analysed are constructions of events as per the understanding and choices of particular journalists in various levels of decision-making thus, agreeing with the constructivist paradigm. Capturing the human experience through excerpts is a key practice in constructivism that guided this study. Here, a researcher creates or constructs narratives from empirical data and field experiences captured in detailed field notes and a reflexivity journal (Denzin and Lincoln 2018).

Epistemology refers to what counts as knowledge and how knowledge claims are made and justified (Creswell and Poth 2018). In this case, a researcher ought to be careful when choosing a method of study, which ideally should yield acceptable results upon the conclusion of a study. In view of this, the analysis of news and feature stories complemented with in-depth interviews fulfilled this function. Since qualitative research mostly takes place in the field, a researcher must be aware of how his/her relationship with participants exists and develops over the study period, since it affects the research process. Close contact between the researcher and the researched, as was the case in the in-depth interviews, enabled me to collect evidence subjectively, which becomes the way knowledge is known (Creswell and Poth 2018). Due to the close interactions that yield first-hand information, research participants can be considered co-creators of knowledge within the constructivist paradigm (Dyll and Tomaselli 2016).

A qualitative researcher may face several ethical issues, such as failing to maintain anonymity and failing to obtain consent during data collection and analysis (Creswell and Poth 2018). To avoid this potential pitfall, as a researcher in the constructivist paradigm, I followed axiological guidelines to maintain the credibility of my research findings. Thus, axiology is critical in shaping the ethical dimension of research by reminding researchers to reflect on the role of their values and biases in gathering and analysing data, which, in my case, was informed by

my training as a journalist and my role as a researcher (Pretorious, 2024). I will expound more on axiology in the ethical considerations section.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Constructivism

As previously stated, the constructivist paradigm extends upon interpretivism, hence my decision to use it in this study as guided by Stuart Hall's (1997) constructivist Representation theory and the employment of CDA (Van Dijk 2015).

Constructivism has various strengths and weaknesses as reflected upon by Siddiqui (2019: 260). The first strength is that, because a phenomenon is studied holistically in its natural setting, it has the potential to yield rich, detailed information. This is important in that it helps create a better understanding of it. Studying a phenomenon in its natural environment also encourages openness in answering questions, as familiar surroundings put participants at ease. For example, during the in-depth interviews, I conducted most of them in participants' offices, where they were comfortable and at ease. Secondly, it offers an opportunity to explore a phenomenon rather than necessarily confirm it. Exploration offers a better chance of generating data that can explain a phenomenon more clearly, without feeling boxed in by results expected to lead to a preconceived conclusion. Thus, exploration can lead to the discovery of unintended information that may be more beneficial to a study.

Thirdly, it is most suitable for studying human behaviour, which is fluid, dynamic, contextual, situational, social and personal. In this case, human behaviour can change or vary depending on the context where it is displayed. It also depends on how someone was socialised and on the personal behaviour they exhibit. Another strength is its flexible design, which can help a researcher adjust the direction of the research process. This is aptly seen in the adoption of semi-structured questions that allow participants to respond to questions in an explanatory manner. With the use of semi-structured questions, some information can grab the attention of a researcher, necessitating further probing through follow-up questions.

Flexibility can also lead to the researcher getting information that was not anticipated (Guest, Namey and Mitchel 2013). For example, during the in-depth interviews, I noticed that the participants kept mentioning their safety as one of the challenges they face in their journalistic duties in Kerio Valley. Following this, I probed them further and got rich information on their security and traumatic experiences of covering the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio

Valley. This is why it is essential for a researcher to be alert during an interview to take note of what is being said and, more importantly, what is not being said. Finally, the approach places the researcher in direct, close contact with human participants and the situation or phenomenon under study. Such placement enables a researcher to interact with participants in their natural setting, enabling him or her to make observations and probably move from an outsider to an insider position, as I did in this study. Participants may reveal more information to researchers whom they consider insiders.

However, subjective bias can threaten the constructivist approach through the credibility of the data collection process, analysis techniques and eventual findings. There is also subjectivity in the selection of samples that can undermine their credibility. Although I acknowledge these potential limitations, I mitigated them by being aware of my assumptions and positionality as a journalist and researcher through reflexivity. For instance, in the recruitment of participants at Alpha Radio, I chose my sample after having an informal meeting with various journalists who were qualified to participate in this study. In fact, one of the participants was not available for an interview at a time that I preferred, but I chose to schedule it at their convenience. It would have been easy for me to pick anyone, but that would have potentially compromised the quality of the data generated. Thus, it is important for a researcher to acknowledge their subjectivity and explicitly indicate how they will address it through a reflexivity journal, where all decisions and the rationale for making them are recorded (Berger 2015). The next section discusses reflexivity.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a process of a “continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of a researcher’s positionality or a way of turning the researcher’s lens back onto oneself to recognise and take responsibility for one’s own situatedness or positionality and how it may affect the research process” (Berger 2015: 220). There are three ways in which Roni Berger (2015) considers the effects of this positionality; first, that it can affect access to the research ‘field’ where participants may be willing to divulge more information to people whom they feel are sympathetic to their situation or cause. It can also happen when a researcher is familiar with the phenomenon under study and can relate to the operations and the nitty-gritty of a certain field. Under these circumstances, the researcher can generate rich information and nuances that would otherwise not be divulged to ‘strangers’ to the field. Even so, a researcher must be cognisant of the danger of incomplete information that is given with the assumption

that the researcher understands and can fill in the gaps. In this study, my experiential knowledge as a journalist assisted me in reflecting on my own experiences in the newsroom, which helped me understand the processes of news reporting and how the participants were willing to share their own experiences in the discharge of their duties.

Secondly, it can shape the researcher-researched relationship, which affects the amount of information that can be shared. For research that champions co-construction of knowledge and the research participant's agency in the research relationship, the roles of the researcher and the researched can be blended, placing participants in positions of influence in generating information and, sometimes, in analysis and report writing (Dyll and Tomaselli 2016). This places enormous responsibility on the researcher to cultivate a cordial relationship with participants, with clearly defined boundaries and a level of engagement that prevents excessive familiarity, raising ethical concerns. In this case, a researcher must treat research participants with respect, recognising that they are co-creators of knowledge, not research subjects to be simply extracted from. A cordial relationship encourages research participants to develop trust with the researcher, enabling them to generate relevant information. This is more critical in research phenomena that require participants to divulge sensitive information about themselves.

Thirdly, the worldview or background of the researcher affects how he/she constructs the world, asks questions, uses language, and the lenses through which he/she filters information. It is, therefore, ethically important for a researcher to declare their positionality with respect to the phenomenon under study, recognising that such positions can affect the generation of data, its analysis, and ultimately the results of the study. This declaration makes the research process credible and maintains the rigour required to maintain the believability of results.

Reflexivity is demonstrated not only by using first-person language but also by providing a thorough and clear account of how decisions were made and by recording the basis for making them in a reflexive journal, as I did in this study (Berger 2015). I, therefore, declare that I am familiar with Kerio Valley and the communities living there, having covered stories and produced various programmes on location in my early years as a journalist at Sayare radio, a premier Christian radio station broadcasting in Eldoret. I was also an employee of Kass FM in 2007 and 2008, a period characterised by post-election violence and media accusations of fanning ethnic violence. These positions moved me from outsider to insider, which benefited

me as a researcher by providing familiarity with the study area, newsroom operations, and access to media texts at Kass FM and Alpha Radio. Furthermore, between 2010 and 2014, Kenyan journalists, especially those working in local-language radio stations, were trained in conflict-sensitive journalism (CSJ) by Internews Network, leading to more balanced reporting of the 2013 Kenyan general elections. As a beneficiary of the Editorial Leadership training and having seen the best and worst of media reporting of conflict, I strongly advocate for peace journalism. I was also aware of my dual identity as a journalist and researcher, which could have skewed power relations, making my participants feel intimidated and hindering the free flow of information. I mitigated this by going out of my way to make the participants feel that I was part of them and that they were engaging in an important exercise by keenly listening to their responses. I reflected on my dual identity as a journalist and researcher in my reflexivity journal, making immediate notes of any possible biases I may hold when later engaging with the data. For example, several questions ran through my mind as I embarked on the data collection: how will it feel to interview a former colleague on human rights and peace reporting? Will they open up and let me peek into their professional life? What if I find any information that paints them in a bad light? Will I report it in the findings or let it go? I continue to document my decisions in the reflexivity journal even as I embark on the data analysis process, as guided by my research objectives and chosen theories.

Research Approach: Qualitative

I adopted the qualitative approach in which the inquirer makes knowledge claims based on constructivist views where a researcher tries to make sense of the world subjectively based on their experience. Since there are more than one meaning in this approach, the researcher looks for “varied, multiple and complexity of views rather than narrow meanings into a few categories or ideas with a big reliance on the views of research participants on the situation” (Creswell and Poth 2016: 60). The appropriateness of qualitative research is in its commitment to participant viewpoints, which are reported by the researcher in a literary format for ease of analysis and understanding (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas 2013). In this sense, the presentation of the views of participants in this study are done using direct quotes captured during the in-depth interviews and including multiple voices on one issue lending credence to the study findings.

In studies using the qualitative approach, data collection is carried out in the participants’ setting and the resultant data is analysed inductively (Creswell and Creswell 2018). To this

end, I carried out in-depth interviews with three of the selected journalists in their offices where they were comfortable in familiar environments. However, I interviewed one of them in a friend's office that offered privacy because of unsuitability of their field office. I chose the qualitative approach with the understanding that discourses of individuals and groups are produced within specific cultural, historical and political contexts (Brennen 2021). Language plays a key role in this regard helping us to understand a phenomenon under study based on people's experiences through narratives used, which is appropriate in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley by analysing how they are represented in the news reports and the in-depth interviews (Brennen 2021). In this sense, language allows participants and the researcher to co-create an understanding. Thus, language makes thoughts and perceptions possible providing a way in which the world can be experienced (Andrews 2012). In this case, qualitative research is ideal for a researcher who wishes to understand, explain, explore, ascertain and clarify situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of a group of people on a given phenomenon like the journalistic reporting of the Kerio Valley conflict (Kumar 2011).

In qualitative research, there is deliberate use of multiple data collection methods and analysis, as was the case in this study whereby I conducted a thematic analysis of both the radio news programme content and in-depth interviews, followed by a critical discourse analysis of both these data sets. Such layers of analysis results in a rich qualitative study on the meaning making and experiences to gain a nuanced understanding of the conflict and local-language radio's role in reporting it.

Research Design: Case Study

A research design is a procedural plan or strategy that is adopted by the researcher to answer their formulated research questions validly and accurately (Kumar 2011). To plan the design, I considered multiple aspects of the study, especially considering, as is advised by Flick (2022). First, the conflict is a long-standing sporadic inter-ethnic one and not sectarian or interstate like most researched conflicts are. Secondly, it is situated in a rural setting, which can make it easy to be ignored and more so its slow violence effects that appear far removed from regular mainstream media reportage and in discourses of key stakeholders.

Developing the Design

Uwe Flick (2022: 10) developed a concept that he calls the six Fs of designing a qualitative

research study. These are finding, focusing, framing, foreseeing, foregrounding and formulating which I discuss herein. In finding, the researcher must choose the most appropriate participants and methods in the generation of relevant data in a study phenomenon. In this step, I chose reporters and editors who deal with news on human rights and peacebuilding both in the field and in the newsroom on the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley. Each of these groups of journalists operate within journalistic rules and newsroom routines that give them power to determine what is reported on as well as what is included or excluded in a news story as discussed in the literature review chapter.

In focusing, the researcher chooses a topic and research questions that will elicit responses that best answer them. To this end, I drew a list of questions on separate interview schedules for reporters and editors on human rights and peacebuilding in the Kerio Valley conflict. The goal was to get first-hand their experiences of covering the conflict, what influences the said coverage and how it can be improved using the peace journalism lenses.

In framing, the questions asked should allow participants to express their own thoughts on a phenomenon. Therefore, questions framed for the in-depth interviews were open-ended which allowed the participants to explain their viewpoints on the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley, how they choose stories to be covered, themes used, narratives about it and challenges they face in its reporting.

In foreseeing, the researcher is expected to anticipate potential challenges in the research process and plan mitigation strategies. Part of this awareness speaks to reflexivity and researcher's positionality on a phenomenon and how, they can affect the study. To this end, I was aware of the potential pitfalls of interviewing my former colleagues since they may not take the interview seriously or feel that I know what they were saying and may end up leaving out some information expecting me to fill it up. To mitigate this potential challenge, I explained to them before commencing the in-depth interviews that they had to articulate their responses fully for a clear recording and understanding during analysis. In instances where I felt that a statement was left hanging, I probed for a response by asking them to explain their point further and asking follow-up questions.

Foregrounding speaks to study results that may not have been visible or given prominence by a researcher. In the Kerio Valley conflict, the slow violence concept and safety of journalists

needed to be brought to the fore. Reporting on the same creates awareness and possible favourable responses from stakeholders. Statements from news items and in-depth interviews were analysed to elicit more nuanced meanings on the same.

Finally, formulating is in reference to ways in which data is collected. I collected data for this study in two ways; analysing news and feature stories aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio as well as through in-depth interviews with selected journalists who work as reporters and editors reporting on the Kerio Valley conflict. Formulating also deals with the questions asked and the way they are asked. I had unstructured interview guides for both sets of participants that allowed explanations of answers facilitating further probing through follow-up questions on my side.

Constructing the Case Study

Putting into consideration the nature of information I desired, I adopted a case study design. In a case study, an investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time through in-depth data collection comprising multiple sources of information like interviews and audio materials, which was the case in this study (Creswell and Poth 2018). The goal of using a case study design is to provide a comprehensive understanding of a distinctive single case or phenomenon (Asemah et. al. 2022). This informed the choice of the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley itself, and the two local-language radio stations Kass FM and Alpha Radio, to understand in context how human rights and peacebuilding, were reported by them. Case studies rely on specific methods of gathering data namely interviewing, document analysis and observation (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). I used in-depth interview and analysis of recorded news and feature stories aired over a two-year period between February 2023 and February 2025. There was an ongoing security operation during this period known as “Operation *Maliza Uhalifu* North Rift” (Operation eradicate banditry in the North Rift).

When doing a case study, Jwan and Ong’ondo (2011) recommend that a researcher needs to carefully consider five requirements which are the issue of choice, triangulation, experiential knowledge, contexts, and activities. On the issue of choice, I selected the two radio stations Kass FM and Alpha Radio as case studies since both reach the populace in the conflict area with their signals. Although both have private ownership structures, they have secular and Christian religious orientations respectively, which could have a bearing on the way they

approach human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kerio Valley conflict. They also report on the conflict and were willing to grant access to their archives. This presented an opportunity for me to analyse audio recordings of news and feature stories aired as well as carry out in-depth interviews with news reporters and editors.

The analysis of news and feature stories combined with in-depth interviews gave me an opportunity to triangulate the data and answer the research questions more appropriately. Consequently, it was important to hear from the reporters and editors' first-hand, their lived experiences in covering the Kerio Valley conflict, which gave me more understanding of why they covered it in the way they did. It also gave me the opportunity to gauge their understanding of human rights and peace journalism as well as emerging issues like the slow violence, which occurs over lengthy periods and may not be visible at surface level (Nixon 2011). The choice of journalists as participants in the study was deliberate since they have been recognised as the most fitting for qualitative research on media issues because of their ability to articulate their insights clearly (Sobel and Mclyntyre 2019). Besides, using multiple sources of information as was the case in this study helps to strengthen the reliability and believability of the study results (Asemah et al. 2022).

Context was also important because the Kerio Valley conflict is a unique one due to its sporadic nature, its long history, limited studies from a journalistic perspective and the communities involved who are all classified under the Nilotic group with largely similar cultural and linguistic characteristics (see Chelall 1969). That is why it is critical for researchers to place context "within the relevant historical, cultural, political and/ or economic contexts" (Brennen, 2021: 22) when analysing data. The vastness and underdevelopment of Kerio Valley possibly play a part in proliferation of lawlessness and human rights abuses. This may be due to limited government presence. Residents of this area may feel neglected and abandoned creating a perfect condition for lawlessness to thrive. This situation places context in a pedestal position when looking for meanings of facts about the conflict (Kempf 2017). There are also invisible forms of conflict, which must be foregrounded in media reports to animate the public sphere with narratives about it, its effects on the local communities and peace efforts being made to resolve it. Thus, local-language radio stations are the ideal platforms for local communities to tell their stories and lived experiences on the Kerio Valley conflict (Sobel and Mclyntyre 2019). The use of a case study approach enabled me to understand—in context—human rights and peacebuilding narratives in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley as reported by the

two radio stations.

Advantages of Case Studies

Case studies are popular approaches in qualitative research but also has disadvantages as well (Asemah et al. 2022). First, case studies provide details on a phenomenon enabling researchers and readers to understand it better. Thus, a researcher should ask questions that ensure that participants give as much details as possible on a phenomenon under study, hence the use of semi-structured interview schedules in this study. It also gives the researcher the ability to deal with a wide variety of information. The varied sources of information provides an opportunity to triangulate the data and come up with a robust study. The multiple sources of information can also corroborate each other. Case studies can also help explain why something happens which is achieved by looking at the background and context that creates a better understanding of the case. Context is important in the reporting of human rights and peacebuilding in complex conflicts like the sporadic inter-ethnic one at the Kerio Valley.

Well-structured case studies have scientific rigour showing how the case was chosen, the methods used in data collection, how questions were asked and how analysis was done. This study adopted Braun and Clarke's (2020) six steps of RTA as an iterative guide that gives a researcher the ability to analyse large quantities of data, often generated from case studies.

Sampling and Data Collection

Sampling is “a process of selecting a few from a bigger group to become the basis for estimating or predicting the prevalence of an unknown piece of information, situation or outcome regarding a bigger group” (Kumar 2011: 193). The sampling process is a key step in obtaining relevant data that can inform one's study and ultimately lead to accurate findings. A researcher should select a sample that has the same characteristics as the study population, and which would be considered as representative of it. To achieve this, one should select a relevant sample size and avoid bias in the process. Guest, Namey and Mitchel (2013) identify three types of sampling namely censuses, non-probability and probability sampling. Census is where data is collected from everything or everyone in a study population with a good example being population census carried out periodically in a country. Non-probability sampling is used when there is no random selection of participants. I used purposive sampling, which is a type of non-probabilistic sampling to choose participants who are reporters and editors (Taylor et al. 2016).

Data collection is an important process in research whereby its successful execution will determine the adequacy of data generated in answering the research questions. Creswell and Poth (2016) see data collection as a circle of related undertakings involving several considerations that include obtaining permissions to the research field as part of fulfilling ethical requirements, choosing the right means of recording information and storing raw data securely. I embarked on data collection between 15th January 2025 and 4th February 2025.

Radio Stations

Radio continues to be a key source of information to the Kenyan populace commanding 72% of listeners compared to other forms of mass media (Kibuacha 2025) informing its choice as a medium of study. This sub section provides a brief history of the two selected local-language radio stations namely Kass FM and Alpha Radio with secular and religious Christian orientations respectively.

Kass FM

This section provides a brief history of Kass FM drawn from the reflections of the researcher as an insider having worked previously in the station as indicated in the reflexivity section. In the ranking of the most listened to radio stations, Kass FM was placed at number 14 commanding a 2% total audience segment nationwide behind 1st placed Radio Citizen, a private secular national broadcaster that airs a variety of programmes mostly on current affairs and entertainment in Kiswahili with an audience size of 22% (see Media Council of Kenya 2023). In the 2024 rankings, Radio Citizen remained the most listened to at 29% while Kass FM also made an improvement to number seven at 7% (Media Council of Kenya 2024). This shows that Kass FM commands a sizeable audience of the Kenyan population despite its broadcast targeting Kalenjin speakers only. Currently, Kass FM is the most listened to radio station in the Kalenjin community hence its choice as one of the case studies.

The popularity of Kass FM can be traced back to the favourable conditions that existed during its establishment in 2005 as the then first and only 24-hour Kalenjin broadcasting station. The late Daniel Moi, a Kalenjin who was Kenya's second president, had retired three years earlier in 2002 after being in power for 24 years. Moi was perceived as a unifying factor among the majority of the Kalenjin community but was not concerned with the establishment of Kass FM. With the exit of Moi in the political space, the Kalenjin community who arguably felt isolated

from power found solace in Kass FM that brought unity in the entire community. This occurred through talk shows, entertainment programmes and nostalgic culture imbued music previously heard during the segmented broadcasting at the KBC Kisumu regional station. Politically, the constitutional referendum the same year provided an excellent opportunity for Kalenjin professionals to debate the merits and demerits of the proposed constitution. The debates and civic education were carried out in the Kalenjin language giving an opportunity to all who could understand it including those with limited literacy skills to follow and participate in the proceedings. This was key in Kass FM, cementing its place as a source of timely information that was previously inaccessible. There were two camps created by the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK); for and against the draft constitution popularly known as the “YES” symbolised by a banana and “NO” symbolised by an orange.

The campaigns for and against the draft constitution also thrust some individuals into the political limelight chief among them current president Dr William Samoei Ruto who received favourable coverage from Kass FM becoming a kingpin in Kalenjin land political circles and consequently solidifying his influence in national politics. The draft constitution was eventually defeated embarrassing the government who were on the “YES” side leading to an unprecedented sacking of the entire cabinet. Perhaps this defeat created suspicion between the government and Kass FM in the lead up to the general elections of 2007. Kass FM was on the frontline campaigning against the incumbent president Mwai Kibaki of the Party of National Unity (PNU), who had the support of Kameme FM and Inooro FM broadcasting in the Kikuyu language. In the said campaigns, Kass FM supported the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) led by Raila Odinga dividing the country into two camps in what could be considered as a repeat of the 2005 referendum campaigns.

An informed citizenry courtesy of a free but partisan local-language media went head-to-head on election matters through civic education conducted in various programmes and news reports. Such reports formed the basis of accusations of local-language radio stations on incitement to violence in the electioneering period of 2007/2008 culminating in the unfortunate post-election violence where over a thousand Kenyans lost their lives and thousands of others were injured and displaced (Barasa, Khasandi-Telewa, and Ndambuki 2016). Two separate incidents arising from the violence sent shock waves among Kenyans; the burning of a church in Eldoret killing an estimated over 30 people. In Naivasha, the burning of an entire family of 11 consisting of two wives and children leaving the husband widowed and childless.

While accusations against local-language radio stations cannot be denied, they appear exaggerated because there was a blanket ban on live broadcasting by the government immediately after violence broke out in various parts of the country. This followed the hurried announcement and swearing in of Mwai Kibaki late in the evening that was covered by the public broadcaster KBC (see Ismail and Deane 2008). Besides, mainstream television stations that broadcast live violent scenes of looters, marauding gangs and police shootings did not receive much backlash. Other factors may have contributed to the violence including perceived historical injustices, negative ethnicity and flawed presidential elections. With the lifting of the ban on live broadcasting, local-language radio stations among them Kass FM were instrumental in peacebuilding efforts through peace messages from the staff [which the researcher participated in] and talk shows with prominent members of the society from various parts of the country meant to dissuade communities from violence.

Alpha Radio

Although Alpha Radio, a privately owned station established in 2018, is fairly new, it has quickly established itself as a popular station in parts of the North Rift and more importantly in Kerio Valley where its signal is received. The popularity of Alpha Radio can be attributed to its genre as a Christian religious station since the church has a big influence in the greater North Rift region. Its proximity to Kerio Valley also gives them an advantage in the reporting of the conflict since proximity is a criterion that is used in news selection. It also airs programmes on peace and reconciliation while advocating for good governance thereby endearing itself to the audiences.

Alpha Radio broadcasts mainly in Kiswahili with few segments in Pokot, Tugen and Ilchamus, all forming part of the Kalenjin Nilotic group. The use of Kiswahili is important in reaching non-Kalenjin speakers in the region. Alpha Radio does not appear individually yet in the popularity rankings and could be part of what is considered ‘others’ commanding an audience size of 11% in 2023 (Media Council of Kenya 2023) but unranked in 2024.

Therefore, the popularity of radio as a source of information (Okinda 2017), informed its choice as a medium of study with local-language radio stations Kass FM and Alpha Radio as case studies. Local-language radio stations, like the two selected, are ideal platforms in reporting of human rights and peace due to failure of mainstream media journalists to foreground human

rights and peace in the conflict prone areas like the Kerio Valley (Shaw 2011). The comparative characteristics of the two radio stations are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4. 1: Comparative Table of Kass FM and Alpha Radio

	Characteristics	Kass FM	Alpha Radio
1.	Ownership	Private	Private
2.	Genre	Secular	Religious (Christian)
3.	Reach	Almost National	Regional
4.	Language/s of broadcast	Kalenjin	Kiswahili, Pokot, Ilchamus, Tugen (Kalenjin)
5.	Programming	Social, political/current affairs, environmental	Peace and reconciliation, diplomacy, spiritual nourishment
6.	Broadcast location	Nairobi	Baringo
7.	Airs news/ feature stories from Kerio Valley conflict?	Yes	Yes

The two stations were chosen because they air news and feature stories from the Kerio Valley conflict in Kalenjin and Kiswahili, which are languages understood by the populace in the conflict region, and in which I am fluent in both speaking and writing. Their location, reach, secular and religious dynamics are ideal for comparison purposes.

News and Feature Stories

I purposively sampled news and feature stories on the Kerio Valley conflict aired on Kass FM and Alpha Radio. In terms of the temporal sample, the study period is February 2023 to February 2025. This is the period when the government launched an ongoing security operation in Kerio Valley dubbed “Operation *Maliza Uhalifu* North Rift” (Operation eradicate banditry in the North Rift) through a gazette notice dated 23 February 2023, following an upsurge in attacks. The operation involved the Kenya defence forces (KDF), the National police service (NPS) and the National police reservists (NPR) (NA, 2024). The security operation was targeted at specific sections of West Pokot, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Baringo and Turkana counties that were classified as “disturbed” and “dangerous” through the gazette notice in 2023. The operation was meant to take six months but has been renewed severally and even extended to Laikipia and Samburu counties (National Assembly 2024). I chose this period because of the attention generated to the conflict among the media and stakeholders by the ongoing security operation. The study’s inclusion and exclusion are reflected in Table 4.2.

Table 4. 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria of News and Feature Stories

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
News / Feature stories on Kerio Valley conflict aired on Kass FM and Alpha Radio.	News / Feature stories on other conflicts aired on Kass FM and Alpha Radio.
News / Feature stories with the words “human rights,” “peace”, “ <i>Maliza Uhalifu</i> ” “North Rift” aired on Kass FM and Alpha Radio.	News / Feature stories without the words “human rights”, “peace” and “ <i>Maliza Uhalifu</i> ” “North Rift” aired on Kass FM and Alpha Radio.
News / Feature stories on Kerio Valley conflict aired between February 2023 and February 2025.	News/feature stories on Kerio Valley conflict aired outside this period.
News/feature stories from Kerio Valley that indirectly touches on human rights and peace aired on Kass FM and Alpha Radio.	News/feature stories from other regions that indirectly touches on human rights and peace aired on Kass FM and Alpha Radio.

Purposive sampling allows a researcher to select participants or material that in their consideration have relevant information needed for their study (Kumar 2011). News and feature stories on Kerio Valley conflict had the relevant information that I needed for this study. News and feature stories were selected because they are fully scripted programmes that enable reporters and editors to choose their words carefully, unlike talk shows that are not scripted but have guiding questions from the host. Ideally, journalists should be considerate in the choice of words they use to report on conflicts forming the narratives that are used to represent it. Words have the power to heal, build or destroy thereby making radio a medium that can escalate or de-escalate a conflict. These words informed the basis of analysis in answering the research question on narratives chosen by journalists from Kass FM and Alpha Radio in reporting on human rights and peacebuilding in the inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley.

There are various types of news that include news briefs, new highlights, breaking news and news reports/bulletins and feature stories. News briefs are short news that run for three to five minutes highlighting the most important stories to be covered in the main bulletin. There is no use of sound bites because of time constraints. News highlights are even shorter with mentions of key stories and minimal details that can arouse the interest of a listener and make them tune in for comprehensive news coverage. They hardly last more than three minutes. Breaking news on the other hand covers sudden events of impact and magnitude that necessitates the interruption of normal programming in order to report it. More details are usually added as the information filters into the newsroom. News bulletin on the other are longer and lasts between

10 to 20 minutes and the magazine type news can last up to 60 minutes. They allow comprehensive coverage with the use of sound bites. Magazine type news allows various items to be covered for example vox pops, analysis, feature stories and short interviews with expert news sources. Feature stories are detailed news of about five to ten minutes dealing with a topical issue that is of interest to the listeners. It uses archival materials, interviews, sound effects, music, vox-pops and narration of a carefully written script from a reporter. Features are appropriate for tackling issues in more details than would be possible in a news story. Features can be aired repeatedly since they are not time bound.

News bulletins and feature stories are the selected formats for this study. News bulletins is a type of news programme that runs for about 10-20 minutes providing more details of the stories covered with the use of sound bites from news sources. Since the news and feature stories selected were in Kiswahili and Kalenjin, I translated them directly into English for ease of analysis. I write and fluently speak both Kiswahili and Kalenjin languages that aided me in the translation exercise.

Dias (2013), in her study on human rights reporting in broadcast news representation in Portugal, analysed a sample of 53 news programmes aired over a period of 14 months which acted as a guide. My intention was to analyse 50 news and feature stories or until a saturation point was achieved. Nevertheless, I collected 61 items and chose 55 items to form the data corpus. Six items were discarded because they were repetitions or did not meet the criteria for inclusion as provided in Table 4.2. On further analysis, a saturation point was reached at 53 items consisting of both news reports and feature stories. Data saturation in qualitative research is where a researcher detects repetitions with no new information forthcoming and is used to ascertain the threshold at which the gathered data is sufficient to address the research questions guiding a study (Naeem et al. 2024). Of the 53 items selected, 25 were from Kass FM consisting of 22 news and three feature stories, while 28 were from Alpha Radio consisting of 24 news and four feature stories. The data from news and feature stories were complimented by in-depth interviews with news reporters and editors that will be discussed below.

Human Participants

I purposively sampled one editor and one reporter from Kass FM as well as one editor and one reporter from Alpha Radio to make a sample of two reporters and two news editors. This enabled me to conduct four in-depth interviews as per the sampled participants.

Recruitment Strategy and Inclusion Criteria

In terms of the recruitment strategy, I used my networks in the broadcast media industry to recruit the news reporters and editors from both radio stations. In Kass FM, I chose those who were experienced and available for interviews during the study period of January to February 2025. For Alpha Radio on the other hand, the station's Chief Executive Officer was instrumental in linking me up with the programmes manager who introduced me to reporters and editors. I had an informal meeting with them and settled on two of them with the relevant experience in reporting on the Kerio Valley conflict. The inclusion criteria for news reporters were those that cover the Kerio Valley area. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria for news reporters were those that cover other regions. The inclusion criteria for news editors were that they must be dealing with current affairs and feature stories. The exclusion criteria were those other editors in specialised desks like sports and business. Table 4.3 shows the inclusion and exclusion criteria for sampling reporters and editors.

Table 4. 3: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Reporters and Editors

Category	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Editors	Editors of current affairs/feature stories.	Editors of other specialised desks.
Reporters	Cover Kerio Valley region.	Reporters of other regions.

I chose the editors and reporters because they are key informants whose positions, experiences and knowledge of the Kerio Valley conflict were critical in understanding what factors influence their reporting of the Kerio Valley conflict.

In-depth Interviews

I conducted face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews with two news reporters (see appendix 6- interview schedule for news reporters) and two news editors (see appendix 7 interview schedule for editors) who were purposively sampled as previously stated. An in-depth interview is an activity conducted professionally and is aimed at probing a participant to talk about their experiences and insights in relation to the phenomenon under study (Braun and Clarke 2013). This probing seeks to answer the how and why questions that are key in generating information and drawing new insights on a research phenomenon. In-depth interviews are influenced by constructivist orientation where reality is socially constructed (Brennen 2021). This is because it allows participants to express their viewpoints freely

creating meaning on a phenomenon more so when semi-structured questions are used providing an opportunity for the use of probing follow-up questions by the researcher.

Its suitability also comes from the fact that it allows modifications in challenging field conditions thus providing rich information and creating a better understanding of a phenomenon under study (Guest, Namey and Mitchel 2013). Such conditions may stem from difficult or tense interviewees who need to be reeled in gently into the topic using icebreakers or friendly preliminary questions. My experience as a journalist was helpful in this, taking me back to the many interviews that I have conducted sometimes on sensitive topics that need gentle probing. The success of in-depth interviews is also on its applicability in one-man participant at a time as was the case in this study that enables a researcher to concentrate on participant's responses, tone and body language (Guest, Namey and Mitchel 2013). Thus, in-depth interviews were ideal for this study because of the human and societal issues occasioned by the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict at Kerio Valley in which the participants themselves reported their thoughts and experiences of reporting on it (Jwan and Ong'ondo 2011).

The semi-structured interview guides that I used allowed participants to answer questions in a structured manner but was flexible to allow for agency on the part of the interviewer. The strength of semi-structured interviews is in their flexibility and that it generates rich comprehensive data on individual experiences with its major drawback being the time consumed in transcribing and translating the data (Braun and Clarke 2013). Nevertheless, this was a surmountable challenge since I conducted the interviews in English which is a language of instruction in Kenya thus translation before analysis was not necessary.

I recorded the data from the in-depth interviews using a digital audio recorder and I had a pen and a notebook for recording key information and follow-up questions. I backed up the data obtained at the earliest opportunity on site in a portable hard drive as well as memory cards and offsite in a cloud. I also listened through the interview to check on clarity of the recording and whether the information I obtained was sufficient for the study. Following this exercise, I conducted a follow-up interview with the editor at Alpha Radio to seek clarifications on some points that were not clear. As promised during the ethical clearance application, I will store the raw data for a minimum five years as per the regulations of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC- see appendix 1). Good data storage serves various purposes chief among them security of participant sensitive

information, preventing general losses, protection against any arising legal issues from the study and availability for analysis of a different sections of the data for a different study, subject to further ethical approval. In view of the above, my raw data is only accessible to me as the researcher and to my supervisor.

Fieldwork

In terms of entry into the field, on all occasions, I arrived at the interview venues over one hour before the interview to enable me to collect the recorded news and feature stories and relax before embarking on it. I had to ensure that the recorded news and feature stories that I collected met the inclusion and exclusion criteria as stipulated above. This I did through brief listening to ensure clarity of recording so that I could perceive the words well during the transcription process. This activity also gave me a chance to get a snippet of how the radio stations did their reporting on the Kerio Valley conflict. I saved the recordings on a portable hard drive, memory cards and laptop to ensure that I had backup before uploading it on the cloud. These recordings are important and form a true record of what were aired by the two radio stations that I later transcribed in readiness for analysis.

Before embarking on the in-depth interviews, I always started with building rapport through chitchats, explained my study and gave them the informed consent forms (see appendix 3) as well as the research permits (see appendix 1 – HSSREC and 2 - NACOSTI) to read. The goal was to show the seriousness of the upcoming interview. After explaining the aspect of voluntary participation and exit at any stage, I would let them sign and start the interview having sought their permission to record their voices. I explained to them that no names would be used throughout the interview for identity protection purposes. Sometimes things do not go as planned. For example, in one of the interviews, I had to wait for a reporter for a while to finish his assignment before the interview which called for patience and understanding of their busy and at time unpredictable schedules. I had also planned to interview a reporter first at Alpha Radio but was unavailable on the agreed day. To make the best use of time, I went ahead and interviewed the editor who was available. Such examples show why a researcher may need to modify activities in the field when things do not go as anticipated. Nevertheless, any adjustments on the interview schedules should not compromise on quality to ensure credibility of findings.

During the interview, I placed the recorder in a good position that ensured that I captured the

best audio for ease of clarity on playback. I ensured that the recorder I was using worked well, audio levels were ok and the batteries were charged. I always used a new memory card for recording each interview in order to ensure sufficient space and minimise chances of erasure of previous interviews something that I learned from my work as a journalist. I started gently easing into deeper discussion guided by the research questions. As a broadcast journalist, I had to remind myself that this was not a recording for broadcast but a conversation seeking information on human rights and peacebuilding reporting therefore repetitions for clarity was encouraged.

After the interview, I thanked my interviewees and made a request for follow-up if necessary which they all graciously accepted. I played back a small portion of the interview just to confirm that the recording was clear. As a journalist, I am aware that most people do not like hearing their recorded voices and may doubt its suitability for the intended purpose thus the playback was done privately. I backed up the recording on a portable drive and laptop, which I stored separately in case of any unfortunate loss of one of them.

When exiting the field, I ensured that I formally exited by informing my interviewees of the same to signal the end of the interview. As an appreciation, I gave them some souvenirs and a small monetary token for refreshments since I could not take them out of the station in consideration of their busy schedules. In the evening after every in-depth interview, I wrote short notes and updated my reflexivity journal to keep track of decisions that I was making and why. At the conclusion of the interviews, I embarked on translation of news stories from Kalenjin to English and Kiswahili to English as aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio respectively. I then transcribed all recordings once I was satisfied with the data that I had collected for ease of the analysis process.

I am aware that reciprocity and feedback to my participants is important. I will, therefore, provide an electronic copy of the completed and examined thesis to each interviewee. I have also offered to do a presentation online or in person for the broader station staff on a need basis.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics is defined as a “method, procedure or perspective for deciding how to act and for analysing complex problems and issues” (Hansen and Machin, 2018: 351). This definition has two aspects on method and analysis, which shows that ethical decisions not only guide the collection of data but also its analysis. Therefore, a researcher should not use malpractices like

coercion and deception to obtain data. Analysis of data on the other hand, needs to be carried out as per the chosen method without manipulating it to come up with pre-meditated findings. Taking into consideration the ethics of research is an important step in social science research involving human participants. Julius Jwan and Charles Ong'ondo (2011) identify three issues that are important in qualitative research; first the need for democracy and respect for truth and participants. Here, researchers should report their findings truthfully without hiding some facts to fit a preconceived narrative or to deny contradictory findings. Findings should also reflect the voices of participants maintaining their status as co-creators of knowledge. Participant voices are best represented through excerpts as was the case in this study.

On democracy, participants should not feel coerced to participate in the research thus researchers must guarantee voluntary participation and withdrawal at any stage of the research process. Secondly, striking a balance between demands placed on researchers in pursuit of truth and the participants' rights and value potentially threatened by the research such as the right to privacy. Researchers have enormous responsibility on their shoulders to pursue truth in research as a canon requirement to maintain integrity of research findings. However, this pursuit of truth should not violate or degrade the participants' rights and value. In this sense, a researcher must respect and not exploit the culture and heritage value of participants. Research findings must benefit participants where applicable and not lead to their exploitation. I believe my findings are beneficial to the residents of Kerio Valley as well as radio stations in the reporting of human rights and peacebuilding.

While I was cognisant of potential risks that the participants may face as they spoke to me, I took measures to mitigate them as discussed in the following section.

The third issue relates to the possible invasion of private space by researchers. Research at times can be intrusive to the normal way of life of participants. When participants allow researchers to conduct research on them, they are opening their lives to scrutiny that leads to loss of private space. Researchers must value this privilege and minimise the effects of this intrusion as much as possible. This protects participants and open the field for future engagements with participants. To mitigate the potential challenges mentioned, I maintained anonymity of the reporters and editors by assigning codes to protect their identities. I sought informed consent from all the participants agreeing to participate in the study voluntarily and agreeing to the recording of their voices during the in-depth interviews. This is I did by

providing them with an informed consent form (see appendix 3) to read and sign after informing them that their participation was voluntary. I also informed them that they were free to withdraw from the research at any stage without suffering any prejudice. I also gave them assurance that data generated was going to be used for this study only and raw data will be stored confidentially for at least five years. This process would not have been successful without securing gatekeeper permission from Kass FM and Alpha Radio, which I discuss next.

Gatekeeper Letters

Gatekeeper letters are keys that grant a researcher access to the field. Although I only required two radio stations for my study, I first started by drawing a list of six radio stations that I could approach to potentially grant me permission to carry out my research. This would be done by accessing their recorded news and feature stories on the Kerio Valley conflict as well as in-depth interviews with reporters and editors. My goal was to ensure that the stations that I would choose eventually would provide the data that I required. I was aware that not all stations are comfortable sharing their recordings and exposing their work to scrutiny. The initial radio stations I purposively sampled were a mix of national and regional stations. They had to be located near Kerio Valley or with signals received in the area. I contacted the six stations informally through my contacts on WhatsApp explaining necessary details about my study, data to be collected and their availability and assurance of anonymity. From this initial contact, one station was eliminated for not having recorded news and feature stories beyond three months. This was surprising since the CA requires all broadcasters in Kenya whether radio or television to keep recordings of all their broadcasts for a period of one year. Keeping broadcast recordings is one of the developments put in place after the post-election violence of 2007/2008 to avoid wrongful accusation of a media house for alleged hate speech or incitement to violence.

The remaining five stations all responded positively to my request. I took the next step of asking for official email addresses and contact persons where I could send gatekeeper request letters signed by my supervisor on the official University of KwaZulu-Natal's letterhead. From this process, one other station did not respond further to my communication despite repeated attempts. This left four stations whom I sent official emails to, stating my request officially. Of these, Kass FM and Alpha Radio responded positively and sent me their gatekeeper letters on time (see appendices 4 and 5 respectively). The other two stations ceased communication, and no further engagement was necessary on my side. Kass FM and Alpha Radio were ideal and

adequate for my study, as explained above in the sample justification because of their secular and religious orientation and their reporting of the Kerio Valley conflict. In hindsight, it was important for me to have more stations to choose from and avoid disappointments of denial of access to research sites or late responses, which could have affected my study.

While the process above was ongoing, I undertook an online course on ethics offered by the Training and Resources in Research Ethics Evaluation (TRREE) as part of requirements for ethical clearance by the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC- appendix 1) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Module one addressed several issues on the Introduction to Research Ethics (appendix 8), module two dealt with Research Ethics Evaluation (appendix 9) and module three was on Informed Consent (appendix 10). I also applied for a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI- see appendix 2), which governs all research conducted within Kenya. Once I secured the two permits above, I embarked on data collection as previously discussed in the fieldwork section.

The conclusion of the data collection enabled me to start the analysis process. The steps and details on the thematic and critical discourse analyses are presented in chapters five, six and seven. Table 4.4 shows the alignment of the research.

Table 4. 4: Alignment of Research Questions with Theory and Methods

Research Questions	Theory	Data Collection	Data Analysis
1. What narratives and discourses have the selected news and feature stories aired on Kass FM and Alpha Radio used in reporting the Kenyan Kerio Valley Conflict?	Peace Journalism/ Slow Violence	Recorded news and feature stories.	Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis
2. What factors influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peace-building reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict?	Representation/ Slow Violence	In-depth interviews.	Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis

3. How should human rights and peace-building reporting be framed within peace journalism in Kenya and similar conflict contexts using local-language radio stations?	Peace Journalism	In-depth interviews.	Critical Discourse Analysis
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The next chapter discusses data presentation and analysis procedures that I undertook in terms of cleaning and reduction to achieve a workable data set.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the constructivist paradigm adopted in the study where reality is multiple and constructed showing its appropriateness in analysing radio news and feature stories, considered as constructions of events by journalists. In constructivism, meanings are diverse and multiple requiring the researcher to look for complexity of views. It discussed reflexivity and positionality that needs acknowledgement from the researcher since it affects how they view the world based on their training and experiential knowledge on a research phenomenon, which ultimately affect the way data is collected and analysed. Acknowledgement of reflexivity and positionality helps to maintain transparency, rigour and credibility of a qualitative study.

The qualitative approach, which this study adopted requires the researcher to make knowledge claims based on constructivist views while making sense of the world subjectively based on their experience. It discussed the six F's of designing a qualitative study giving way to the collection of data from multiple sources (recorded news and feature stories and in-depth interviews) allowing triangulation and corroboration of findings. Qualitative approach maintains commitment to the viewpoints of participants through excerpts capturing their lived experiences of reporting on the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley.

It also explains the development of the case study making a discussion of the local-language radio stations, media texts and the selected journalists giving nuances on their reporting experience of the Kerio Valley conflict. A discussion on fieldwork activities is also captured giving the researcher's experiences and reflexivity during the data collection process. Ethical considerations governing the study are also discussed showing the importance of maintaining

an ethically sound research. It ends by providing a summary of the research alignment in a tabular format.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYTICAL STRATEGIES

Introduction

This chapter presents the data generated from the radio news and feature stories in the first main section, and the face-to-face in-depth interviews with the participating journalists in the second main section. I explain the analytical strategy (or process), as phases, in cleaning and organising the data in preparation for coding and eventual theme development. Braun and Clarke's (2020) six phases of the Reflexive Thematic Analysis method (RTA) guide this process. It then discusses the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) strategy.

Data analysis is an orderly process of transcribing, organising, editing, coding and reporting the data in a way that makes it sensible and accessible to the reader and the researcher who can make interpretations and draw conclusions from it (Jwan and Ong'ondo 2011). This process needs to be clear to show how decisions were arrived at, keeping in mind a researcher's positionality and philosophical assumptions as previously discussed in the methodology chapter. Clarity is achieved through documentation of various analytical activities from the selection of units of data to the eventual development of themes (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove 2019).

As stated in Chapter One, this study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify what narratives and discourses the selected news and feature stories use in reporting the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict;
2. To examine the factors that influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict;
3. To assess and provide suggestions on how human rights and peacebuilding reporting can be framed within the peace journalism framework in Kenya and similar conflict contexts using local-language radio stations.

From the research questions arising out of the stated objectives, I drew up a separate list of specific questions that guided data generation during the in-depth interviews with reporters and news editors. It was necessary to have separate interview schedules for the reporters (see Appendix 6) and for the editors (see Appendix 7) since they hold different positions of

influence in news and feature story reporting. Having separate interview schedules ensured that responses received were specific to each position.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The RTA method is useful in handling relatively large qualitative data sets, as was the case in this study (Nowell et al. 2017). Its advantage is in its accessibility and flexibility (Terry et al. 2017). Flexibility here lies in three approaches to the analysis. The first one is on the use of an inductive or deductive coding process, whereby themes generated are either data-driven or by concepts or ideas that a researcher brings into the data, respectively. I used the inductive process that allowed me to generate codes from the data itself, enabling greater flexibility when coming up with the codes, assigning meaning and doing combinations and revisions that took place through the various phases before arriving at a final list of themes.

Second is the experiential orientation of the researcher on a phenomenon or critical orientation. In this case, I used my experiential knowledge as a journalist to analyse the radio news and feature stories as well as the in-depth interviews with participating journalists from an insider position. Thus, I drew on my understanding of terms used in the industry as well as the news reporting process itself.

The third one is on the essentialist or constructivist theoretical perspectives. In this sense, as stated before, I used the constructivist approach in the study of the radio news and feature stories. Radio news is the result of journalists' constructions of events in their bid to represent reality to their audiences (Fourie 2018). The advantage of this flexibility is that it was theoretically unconstrained and methodologically versatile, allowing the process to fit diverse epistemological positions and research questions. This adaptability supported the inductive approach across various data types, as is shown in this chapter with both the interview as well as news and feature stories. Its primary benefit was, therefore, that it produced rich, complex, and nuanced analyses, facilitating the exploration of the various participant experiences.

As stated above, this thesis followed the six phases of the RTA as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2020). The phases are: phase one, data familiarisation and writing familiarisation notes; phase two, systematic coding; and phase three, generating initial themes from coded and collated data. The fourth phase involves developing and reviewing themes, and the fifth is on refining, defining and naming themes. The sixth and final phase is the report writing process.

Working with the data in each of these phases was not rigid or linear; rather, it was an iterative process involving a back-and-forth movement between the phases (Braun and Clarke 2020).

I adopted the term “phase” and not “step” as it was previously used, following the advice of Braun and Clarke (2022: 34), since the word step “evokes a fairly linear and unidirectional model. However, the six “phases” of RTA are not always sharply delineated, allowing for flexibility, reiterating the active role of the researcher in the analytical process (Braun and Clarke 2019). In fact, theme development in its emergent form is a product of active hypothesising and probing of the data set by a researcher that is carried out throughout the analysis process (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove 2019).

The success of this method required a researcher’s reflexive engagement with theory, the data and subsequent interpretation. Reflexivity in this sense being an act of “self-reference where a researcher bends back, refers to, and affects the object, unit or person initiating the study” (Dyll 2018: 144). To this end, I remained conscious of my dual identity as a journalist and researcher as I embarked on the analysis of the data. These identities were beneficial to me in this process because of my experiential knowledge of newsroom operations that aided me in the analysis.

Radio News and Feature Stories

In preparation for analysis, I transcribed the 53 recordings of the news and feature stories aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio using the orthographic method, which is a process where transcription is done verbatim as spoken by participants (Braun and Clarke 2013). This method ensured accurate capturing of what reporters and news sources said in the aired radio news and feature stories, preserving their voice on a research phenomenon. Radio news and feature story scripts are products of careful consideration in the choice of words used by reporters and editors, hence the need for accuracy in the transcription process. Accuracy, in turn, is critical in the coding and theme development process. However, it is important to note that some words or their order in a sentence can end up being omitted or repositioned during data cleaning, to give a clear meaning owing to differences in the lexical arrangements of various languages. In this step, I was careful to ensure that meaning was not lost during the data cleaning by reading the original transcript and the translated copy. My fluency in Kalenjin, Kiswahili and English aided in this aspect, enabling me to preserve the original meaning of words or phrases used in the reportage.

The news and feature stories aired by Kass FM were in the Kalenjin language, which I translated to English for ease of analysis. Since I speak and write both Kalenjin and English fluently, there was no need for me to do back translation of the resultant scripts. English was introduced in Kenya during the colonial period and is the language of instruction in all other subjects except for Kiswahili throughout all the various levels of study (Ogechi 2009). On the other hand, news and feature stories aired by Alpha Radio were in Kiswahili, which I translated to English. Again, I write and speak fluently in Kiswahili. Before continuing, I will give a brief description of Kiswahili and its position as an important language of communication in Kenya below.

Kiswahili is both a national and one of the official languages in Kenya, besides English, and is widely spoken in East and Central Africa, with an estimated population of over 200 million speakers (Ogechi 2009). It also enjoys recognition by Tanzania, Uganda and the African Union (AU) as an official and working language, respectively. Kiswahili developed in Kenya as a language of trade between the Arabs and the indigenous Bantu communities along the coast, facilitating easy communication between them (Ogechi 2009).

Kiswahili, in its varied levels of fluency, is widely used for daily interactions as a unifying language that is arguably accessible linguistically to the majority of the Kenyan population, composed of 46 tribes, and thus non- Kalenjin speaking audiences of Alpha Radio can understand it. Nevertheless, the acceptance of Kiswahili in other parts of Africa and the world continues with intercontinental media houses such as the BBC, Voice of America (VOA), Deutsche Welle (Radio Ujeremani), China Radio (Radio China, Kimataifa) using it in their daily broadcasts (Kandagor 2020). Kiswahili has been touted as a future continental language in Africa appealing to Pan Africanists such as Wole Soyinka, Ali Mazrui and lately Julius Malema (Waliaula 2023). The acceptance of Kiswahili by African countries would be a key development since language can be an integrative or divisive agent (Kandagor 2020). This is why the choice of broadcast language by a radio station is important, more so in its attempt to facilitate peace initiatives in conflict situations.

Circling back to the now complete transcription process, I embarked on data analysis, where I used an inductive approach, which is “bottom up driven by what is in the data” ensuring a close similarity with it (Terry et al. 2017: 58). In the inductive approach, the researcher does not wait for patterns to ‘emerge’ from the data but is actively seeking and generating them thereby

forming codes, which are revised into themes to answer the research questions (Gray 2021). In this case, a researcher does not attempt to code the data to fit a pre-existing code frame (Nowell et al. 2017). Hence, the researcher plays the critical role of a midwife to ‘induce’ and draw out patterns in data in an iterative process to make sense of it. This process helped in establishing patterns, consistencies and meanings in the data through the RTA (Gray 2021).

RTA places emphasis on the importance of a researcher’s reflexivity and subjectivity as an analytic resource when they are engaging with theory and data, and how these influence their interpretations (Braun and Clarke 2020). It commits to sharing the participants’ multiple viewpoints, ensuring minimum disruption to the natural context and presentation of findings in a literary format (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas 2013). To this end, Braun and Clarke’s (2020) six phases of RTA guided the process as discussed below. It is important to note that I did the RTA on both data sub-sets from the two radio stations.

Phase One – Familiarisation with the Data

The first phase starts with a researcher familiarising themselves with the data by listening to audio recordings and reading interview transcripts from interviews, as was the case in this study. Simultaneously, the researcher writes familiarisation notes, which are useful in noting key points in the data and their thoughts on the same, thus engaging intimately with data, facilitating immersion for deeper insight (Terry et al. 2017). Immersion is, therefore, the first part of data familiarisation, accompanied by the second component of critical engagement, where the researcher critically questions what the data may mean. In this case, a researcher does not accept meanings at face value but seeks deeper meanings of the words or phrases used to make sense of them. All the while, actioned in line with the third component of notetaking (see Braun and Clarke 2022: 42-43). Reading goes hand in hand with listening to recordings of interviews or recorded news and feature stories to check on their accuracy while taking notes of tone, pauses or hesitancy that can reveal something about the interviewees or the subject under discussion. Note-taking is important for capturing keywords, phrases, and the researcher’s thoughts about the dataset. Through note-taking, one can identify a rich variety of meanings in the data set (Braun and Clarke 2022). Note-taking can also capture the precise location of critical portions of data, which are retrievable when needed, a key safeguard when dealing with a large amount of raw data.

In my immersion in the data, I engaged in repeated readings of transcripts to build familiarity

and identify key sections I believed were significant for the subsequent analysis phases. The process of immersion provided me an opportunity to correct mistakes that may have happened through misspellings or non-capturing of some words in the transcript. My critical engagement was facilitated by reading through the data, noting potential patterns of meaning. This was punctuated by moving away from the data set to enable some distance for critical thinking. I then highlighted areas of the data that piqued my interest, and I could possibly use to develop semantic codes, which will be explained in the next phase. Figure 5.1 shows a screenshot of how I wrote familiarisation notes and highlighted important areas of the transcript as part of the data familiarisation process.

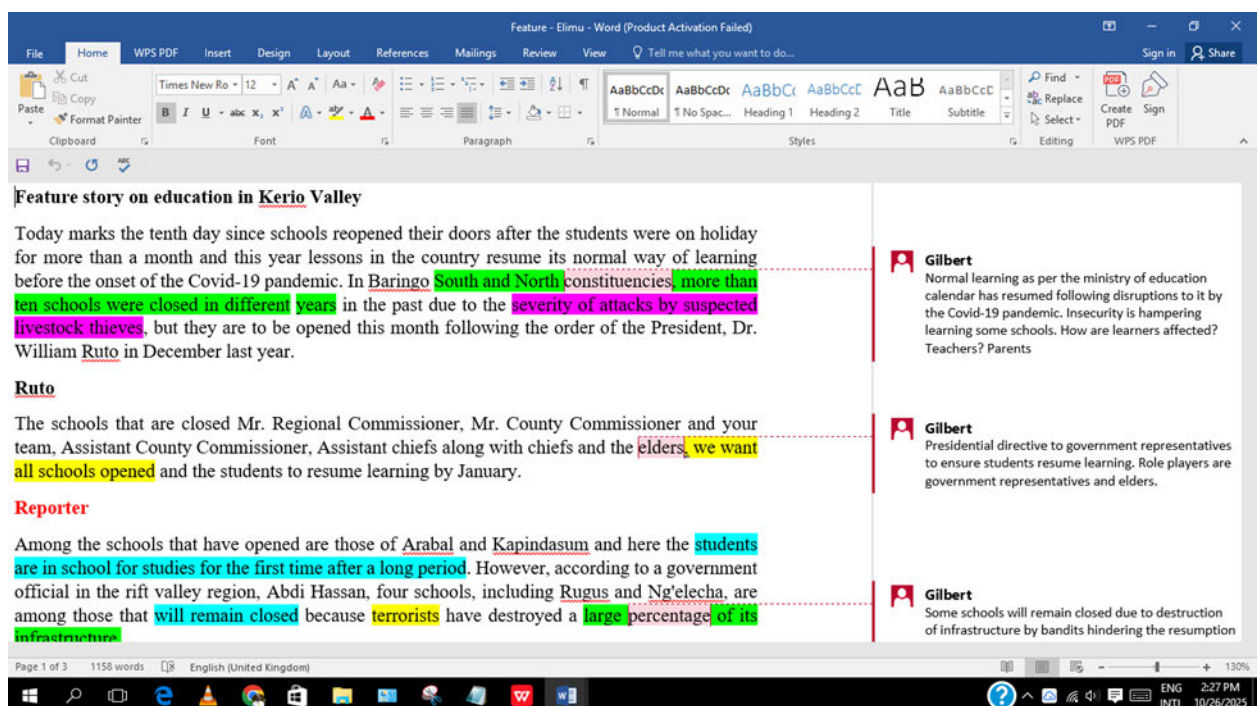


Figure 5. 1: Writing Familiarisation Notes and Highlighting Key Areas

Throughout this process, I recorded my thoughts through short notes on the transcriptions and in the reflexivity journal. The reflexivity journal assisted in keeping track of decisions that I made and why I made them based on my dual identity as a journalist and researcher, which I expand on in the upcoming section. I show a page of my reflexivity journal in Figure 5.2.

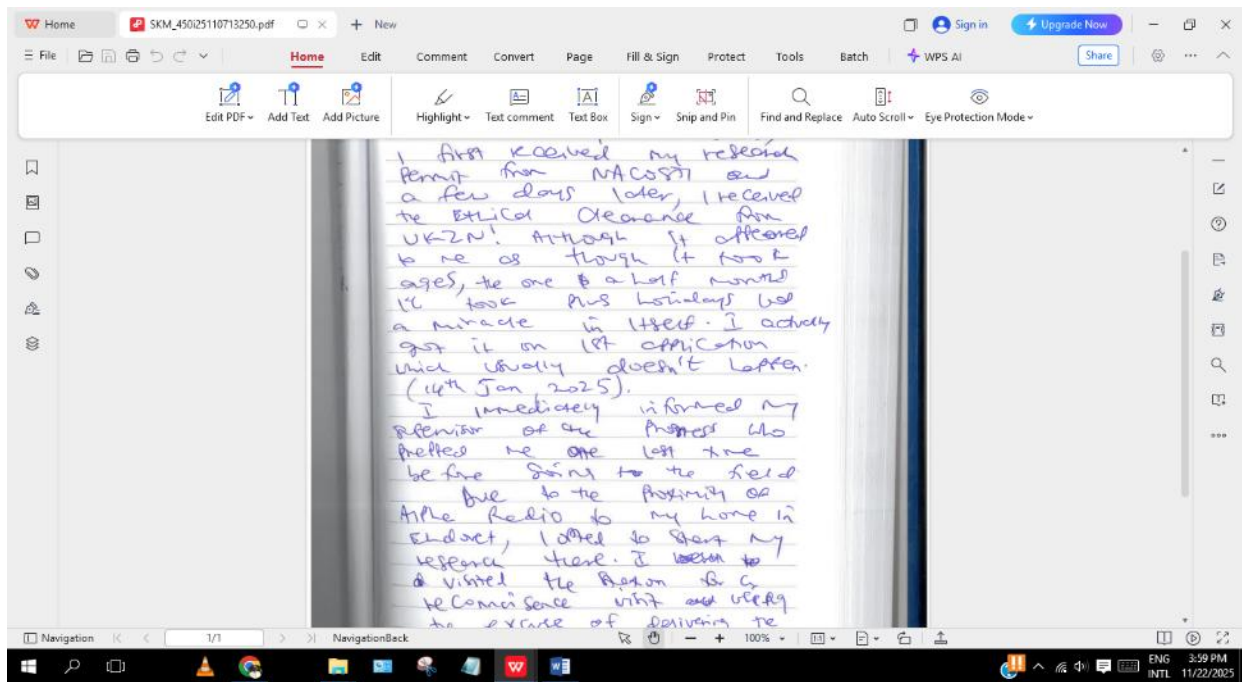


Figure 5. 2: Reflexivity Journal Entry

The coding and theme development are related to the subjectivity and interpretive activities of a researcher (Terry et al. 2017) stemming from their experiences and positionality on a research phenomenon, as previously discussed in the methodology chapter.

The importance of reflecting on one's identity and positionality is to transparently account for the way one understands the world based on one's background, experiences and nature of their interactions with study participants during the data generation process (Bukamal 2022). Reflexivity aids in avoiding weak analysis or cutting shortcuts by attempting to fit data into pre-existing codes (Braun and Clarke 2022). As stated before, I carried two identities as a journalist and researcher. I have over 15 years of experience in radio journalism in Kenya, some of which involved covering stories not related to the conflict around the study area of Kerio Valley. Thus, I am familiar with the area and the communities in conflict, who are the Pokot, Marakwet, Tugen and Turkana.

As a Kipsigis myself, my community is grouped with the Pokot, Marakwet and Tugen as part of the Kalenjin communities that are further grouped into the highland Nilotic group of Kenya. Except for the Turkana, who are classified as part of the plain Nilotic group, we enjoy similar linguistic characteristics and culture, enabling me to understand news and feature stories aired by Kass FM. Understanding the language used in data collection is important in critical

engagement with generated data in a study (Braun and Clarke 2020).

In addition, my familiarity with operations of the journalism profession and work experience was important as I engaged with data from radio news and feature stories, as well as the in-depth interviews with journalists forming the second data set. I worked in Kass FM in 2007 and 2008, a period that was characterised by media accusations of fanning ethnic violence and more so local-language radio stations, among them Kass FM. The ethnic violence erupted following the disputed presidential elections of December 2007, pitting the incumbent Mwai Kibaki and the then opposition leader Raila Odinga. Six Kenyans who were allegedly thought to bear the greatest indirect responsibility for the violence were charged with crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Netherlands, among them a former colleague, Joshua Sang. Others included former president Uhuru Kenyatta, current president William Ruto, Henry Kosgei, a long-serving cabinet minister and member of parliament, Major General Hussein Ali, who was the police commissioner seconded from the army and Francis Muthaura, who at the time was the head of the civil service and secretary to the cabinet. The indictment of journalist Joshua Sang, among others, who are politicians and government operatives, showed the uncomfortable alliance that politicians can have with the media. In such cases, politicians can influence media houses' editorial decisions, an aspect of the media's political economy. However, ICC later dropped all six cases due to a lack of sufficient evidence amid allegations of bribery and witness interference (see Jjuuko 2022).

To promote responsible journalism and reduce partisan media reporting of political issues, there was a need to train journalists on conflict-sensitive reporting through the Internews Network, which I benefited from. In the run-up to the 2013 general elections, the Kenyan Media across print and broadcast media practised peace-reporting, culminating in a peaceful electioneering period and consequently peaceful elections, albeit with accusations of underreporting of issues in a bid to avoid inflammatory reportage (see Cheeseman, Maweu and Ouma 2019). They established this through an analysis of mainstream newspaper coverage of the 2007 and the 2013 elections, complemented with interviews conducted with journalists and civil society groups. Their study found that journalists self-censored themselves by avoiding controversial stories on the front pages of two main newspapers: *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard* (see also Gustafsson 2016 b).

Thus, having seen the effects of partisan reporting that led to conflicts and opportunities for

their peaceful resolution through the peace journalism framework, I support peace journalism in conflict reporting. Through Peace Journalism (Galtung 2003), I believe that conflicts among communities or groups can be solved peacefully, thereby promoting human rights and peace, more so in long-standing conflicts such as the sporadic inter-ethnic conflicts in Kerio Valley. Yet it is important to understand the conditions in which peace reporting may best work and to identify some of the challenges that could hinder its success.

Therefore, my positionality moved me to an insider position, which aided me in the analysis process of the recorded news and feature stories, as well as in-depth interview transcripts with selected journalists, as previously discussed in the methodology section. Declaring your positionality as a researcher and the context of research aids readers in determining the relevance of the study in their own contexts (Dodgson 2019).

Phase Two – Data Coding

The second phase involved a systematic coding of data, ensuring that all generated data is coded and available for eventual theme generation and reflexive analysis. A code in this sense referring to a unit of analysis that has a precise meaning in a data set, showing its suitability in answering the research questions guiding a study, thereby acting as a building block of a strong analysis (Braun and Clarke 2022). As per the advice of Terry et al. (2017), good coding needs to be flexible with the attendant engagement with the research data that happens iteratively.

Coding is, therefore, a process that a researcher undertakes through careful and systematic reading of data while tagging pieces of it that, in their judgement, are potentially important in code development (Braun and Clarke 2022). The idea here was to start isolating critical pieces of data that would assist me in the reflexive coding process. Here, the researcher actively generates codes since they do not emerge from the data (Braun and Clarke 2019). For the accuracy of this process, it was important to stay close to the original transcriptions through an iterative process of constantly going back and forth to the data (Norwell et al. 2017). Indeed, the success of theme development hinges on the laborious coding process (Braun and Clarke 2019). The value of repeated engagement with the data informed my decision not to use any software to assist in the coding process, but rather code it manually as I iteratively and systematically moved within the data set, creating familiarity with it.

Coding in this phase results in semantic codes that have surface-level meanings that do not

reveal any hidden meaning apart from that which a word or sentence means at first glance (Braun and Clarke 2022). Semantic codes are important since one develops latent codes from them, which then, in turn, can be used to generate themes. Latent codes reveal hidden meanings in a word, phrase or sentence. The theme here is in reference to patterns of shared meaning in the data (Braun and Clarke 2020). This step helped me in generating semantic meanings from the narratives derived from the transcribed news and feature stories, which I tagged using different colours to highlight their importance and potential meaning to the research questions (Braun and Clarke 2022). I show a sample of the tagging process and semantic code generation in Figures 5.3 and 5.4, respectively.

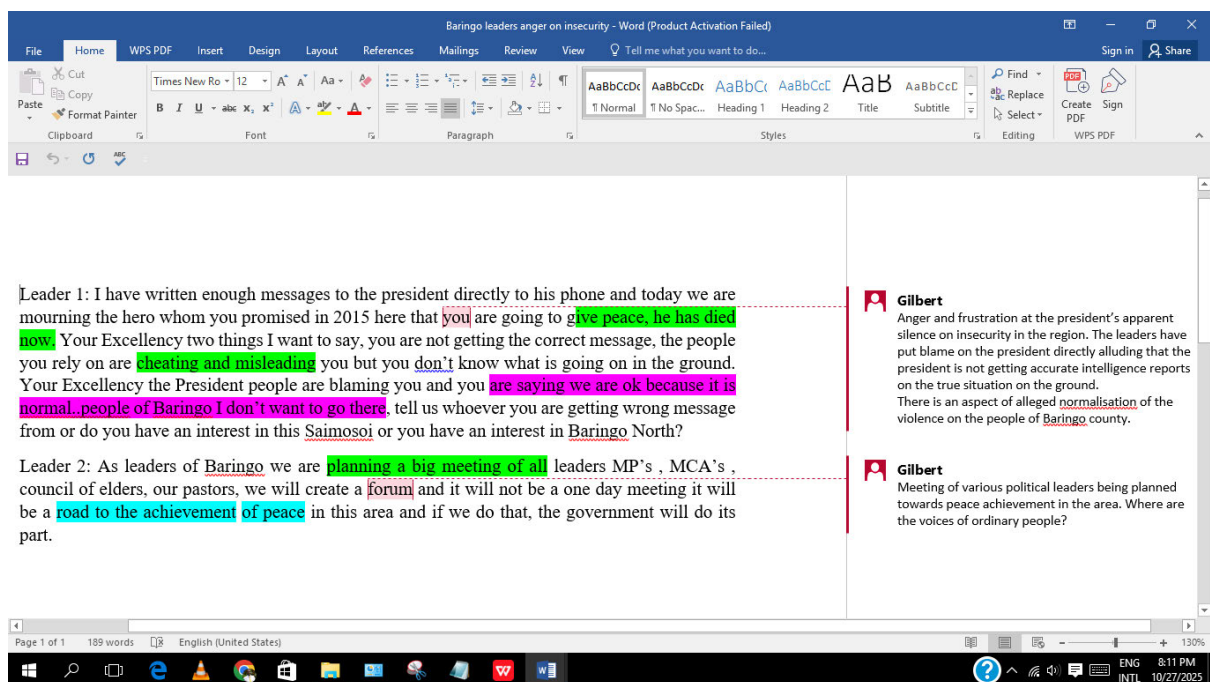


Figure 5. 3: The Tagging Process

Clipboard Font Paragraph Styles			
<p>RQ 1 <i>What narratives do the selected news and feature stories aired by <u>Kass</u> FM and Alpha Radio use in reporting the Kenyan <u>Kerio</u> Valley conflict?</i></p>	Narrative	Semantic meaning	
	I have written enough messages to the president directly to his phone and today we are mourning the hero whom you promised in 2015 here that you are going to give peace, he has died now.	Frustrated with the president's silence on insecurity.	
	As leaders of Baringo we are planning a big meeting of all leaders MP's, MCA's, council of elders, our pastors, we will create a forum and it will not be a one day meeting it will be a road to the achievement of peace in this area.	Unity of spiritual and political leaders will provide a roadmap to peace.	
	The General Secretary of the Bible Society of Kenya has expressed faith that bible distribution to school learners will bring positive change in Kerio Valley.	Positive change due to exposure to God's word.	
	CEC in charge of Agriculture said that change in thought patterns of children in Kerio Valley can assist to	Conflicts and cattle rustling to be discarded due to change in thought patterns.	

Page 1 of 26 8185 words English (United States)

12 items 1 item selected 51.0 KB

Figure 5. 4: Semantic Code Generation

The inductive semantic coding shown above illustrates that meaning is data-driven with no pre-existing codes used in the analysis process (Braun and Clarke 2019), thus offering flexibility while drawing on the researcher's experience, knowledge and positionality on the research phenomenon. Of importance, here is how the researcher approached the meaning-making process and how that shapes how they notice patterns in the data (Braun and Clarke 2022). Since inductive coding is subjective, researchers must continually examine themselves, note the decisions they make and why, and record them in a reflexivity journal throughout the analysis process (Norwell 2017). While coding is a clear way to reduce large amounts of data, what a researcher chooses to code must be of analytical interest to them and should ideally offer some interpretation of the generated data, or, in newsroom terms, tell a story (Braun and Clarke 2022). For example, in the first narrative shown in Figure 5.4, the main idea communicated is the frustration the speaker alludes to but does not explicitly mention. Therefore, I interpreted the statement as expressing the leader's frustration, revealing its deeper meaning. The frustration came from the apparent silence of the president and the killing of the peace champion.

Some of the semantic codes generated from the analysed data at this stage include: frustrated with the president's silence on insecurity, the unity of spiritual and political leaders will provide a roadmap to peace, and conflicts and cattle rustling will be discarded due to a change in thought patterns. Others are: they do not want to steal animals but kill people, the government

should know the source of guns, bandits are killing people, children are not going to school, the criminal network needs to be broken, ending violence will bring peace and development, and teachers fear teaching in Kerio Valley, among others. Having generated several semantic codes from the transcripts of radio news and feature stories, I moved to the third phase, where the generation of initial themes took place as the iterative analysis process continued.

Phase Three – Generating Initial Themes

The third phase of RTA started with the initial coding and collation of semantic codes across the data set, thereby creating a working list of it (Nowell et al. 2017). The main activity in this phase involved generating latent codes from the initial semantic codes generated in phase two. The generation of latent codes required a deeper engagement with the data since the meaning was not obvious at first glance. The meaning tends to move away from the surface-level meaning to draw out hidden meanings, especially in inductive coding chosen in this study (Braun and Clarke 2022).

Deeper engagement with data was an appropriate endeavour when conducting inductive coding, resulting in generated themes that may not necessarily bear much resemblance to the research questions (Nowell 2017). In this case, the researcher generates latent codes through an active search process, aided by their experience and knowledge of the research phenomenon (Terry 2017). Some initial codes may be used to generate main themes while others form sub-themes of the main ones (Nowell 2017). Reiterating the blurring of the analytical *phases* as opposed to *steps* [my emphasis], the confines of generating semantic and latent codes are not necessarily separate but “represent ends of a continuum of ways of looking at data” (Braun and Clarke 2022: 58). Thus, it may be possible to have semantic codes that loop over to the latent codes. For example, the semantic code “hindrances to teaching and learning” was retained as such in the latent code generation phase.

The success of this phase is dependent on a researcher with an open mind. Braun and Clarke (2022) view such a researcher as one who is not overly concerned with the endpoint but rather where the process will lead, since it is still in its early stages. Therefore, the coding process is vital to successful theme development (Braun and Clarke 2020). This phase involves exploring the data set to identify segments with similar meanings, which are then clustered to form candidate themes (Braun and Clarke 2022). Candidate themes in this sense refer to products of the clustered codes, enabling the generation of a potential theme that requires further

exploration by the researcher before it is considered settled (Braun and Clarke 2022). In this sense, the researcher's creativity plays a key role in making a robust analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2022: 78) identify five points to explain the coding analogy of a sculptor working on 'raw material' or data to make sense of it, equating it with what can enable or constrain a successful process, as discussed herein. The first one relates to the skills that a researcher has in working with the material. This could refer to past coding competencies gathered over time that may contribute to the success of a current coding process. The second one is on personal positioning, knowledge and traditions that a researcher brings into the process. In essence, this refers to a researcher's positionality, experiential knowledge of the research phenomenon, and epistemological and ontological leanings, as previously discussed in the methodology chapter. Thus, I drew on my training and experience as a journalist in this aspect, as discussed in the reflexivity section.

The third one relates to the limits that the initial material places on the possibility of a final product, since not everything is possible to thematise. What this means is that the analysis output is as good as the raw data available to the researcher for analysis. At the same time, not all collected data may be relevant to the research questions guiding a study, leading to the casting off of some of it. The fourth one refers to the range of possible outcomes, since there is no single correct endpoint or destination during coding. The absence of a defined endpoint or destination means that a coding outcome is unpredictable, especially when inductive, given the multiple nature of reality, as was the case in this study. The fifth one speaks to the quality of the final product, which can vary depending on many factors. One factor that can lead to this is the rush researchers can feel during the coding process, which can lead them to come up with weak themes. Robust coding requires patience and close reading of the dataset in an iterative manner, which I employed to avoid this potential pitfall. That is why it is important to spend more time in this stage, enabling one to cycle back to the data with a critical lens.

In the study at hand, I derived candidate themes from semantic codes generated earlier from highlighted sections of transcripts, resulting in clustered codes. Clustered codes come from a grouping together of semantic codes that have similar meaning but are not necessarily drawn from the same transcript as spoken by news sources in a news or feature story analysed in this study. Grouping clustered codes yielded candidate themes that drew out the deeper meaning of the discourses in the codes. This gave a sense of what may come up in the coding process

through the various revisions and a combination of some candidate themes for more clarity. Other candidate themes that were not combined formed sub-themes of major themes, though not yet considered as final ones. Combinations and revision eliminated repetitions, which can lead to confusion in data. In the screenshots below (Figures 5.5 and 5.6), the second cluster under candidate theme number nine was combined with candidate theme number four as its sub-theme and revised for more clarity. In this case, the candidate theme changed from “expectations of government in conflict” to “expectations of government to mitigate the conflict and consequences”.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We moved out because of threats. - Teachers fear teaching in Kerio Valley. - Banditry has caused a lot of deaths and fear. - Fear of children in missing out on learning completely if insecurity continues. 	Prevalence of threats and fear.	9. Prevalence of threats and fear.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government will protect lives and property. - Safety and dignity of Kenyans is a constitutional right. - Government urged to forcefully arrest or kill bandits. (combine with frustration) 	Expectation of government in the conflict.	Combined with government neglect.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools closed due to infrastructure destruction by bandits. - My child will be disadvantaged during 	Hindrances to teaching and learning.	10. Hindrances to teaching and learning.

Figure 5. 5: Combination of Similar Candidate Themes for More Clarity

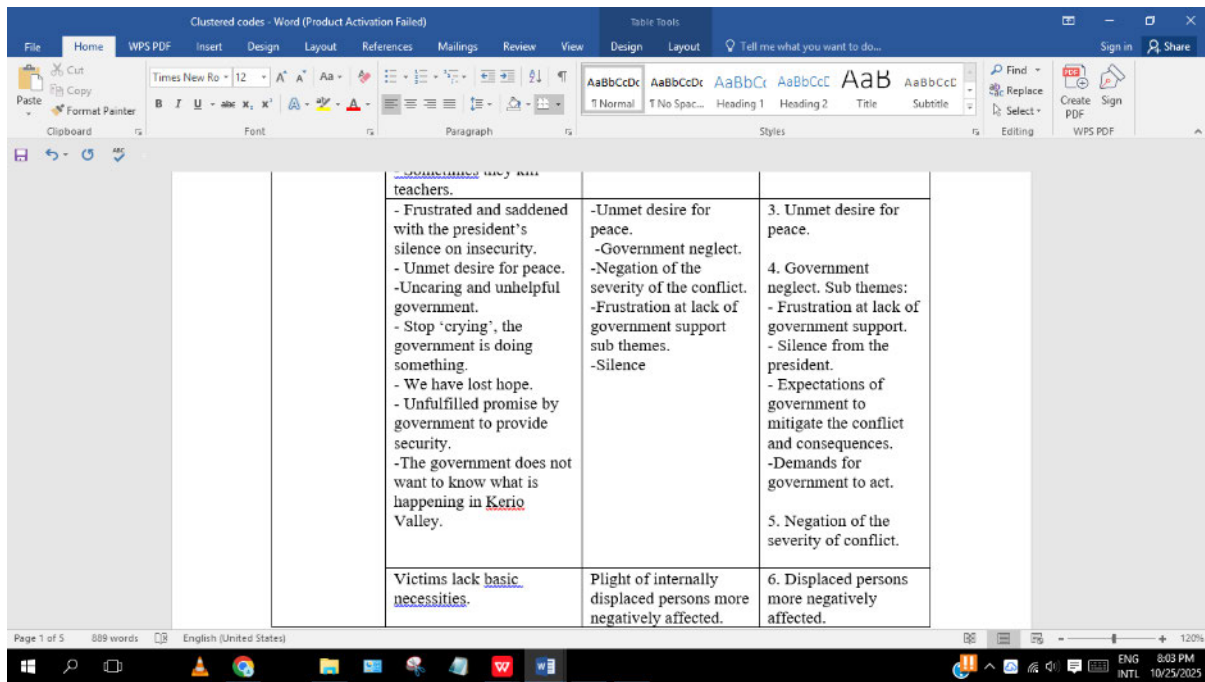


Figure 5. 6: Placement of a Former Candidate Theme Nine to Sub-Theme of Candidate Theme Four

It is important to remember that a researcher examines a cluster on its own merit, as it answers a research question, eventually enabling them to explore patterns across the dataset rather than just one single item (Braun and Clarke 2022). The use of field notes and a reflexivity journal aided in this task, minimising confusion that can arise in a miasma of data. Thus, I agree with the assertion of Braun and Clarke (2022) that this process gives a sense of finding direction, getting lost and finding your way again, something that I personally experienced. Thus, a researcher's focus should be on the analysis journey and not the destination of arriving at certain themes.

Since this is still the early stages of theme development, Braun and Clarke (2022: 88-89) advise researchers to consider the following during the laborious process: To remember that the initial and final themes do not have to capture everything in the data set. Some codes and themes along the way may undergo some revisions, at times combined or discarded with the sole purpose of ensuring that what is thematised answers the research questions adequately to the satisfaction of a researcher. For example, clustered codes such as 'we are seeing them maim people, criminals are killing people as though they are insignificant, people's children are killed and sometimes they kill teachers', were revised to form the candidate theme titled "Anger at inhumane type of killings". Consequently, through this single candidate theme, merciless killings carried out by suspected bandits in Kerio Valley was well captured hence their

clustering under one theme. Nevertheless, researchers should keep such codes and themes since they may become relevant at a later stage. I did this by keeping a separate folder in the computer for each phase that I can refer to when there is need.

Secondly, Braun and Clarke (2022) advise that each theme ought to have a central organising concept that clarifies the purpose of the analysis and how codes fit into it thereby assisting the researcher in making sense of the data. In the example shown below (Figure 5.7), the central organising theme was ‘unity and peace’ desired and advocated for by various groups showing its benefits such as eradicating banditry in communities, promoting cohesion and ultimately the achievement of peace. The idea here was that the achievement of peace was dependent on unity of various stakeholders. On further analysis, this candidate theme was revised into the second theme under “unmet desire for peace” and one sub-theme “unity and peace.” The revision allowed a discussion of it in a wider context across the entire data set giving equal chances to least evidenced data extracts which were included in generating final themes.

		-Separation of family members. -Unity of spiritual and political leaders will provide roadmap to peace. - Unity is necessary in achieving peace without unnecessary competition from leaders. - Unity among communities will drive away bandits. - Church and political leaders need to work together in searching for peace. - Communities to unite as one church and drive away bandits in their midst. - Everyone needs to be on board in peace efforts.	Unity for peacebuilding. - Desire for unity and peace	7. Desire for unity and peace.
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Figure 5. 7: Revision of Themes for More Clarity

Thirdly, Braun and Clarke (2022) caution researchers on their possible attachment to emerging candidate themes that may change due to revisions, combinations or even new insights as the analysis process continues. Undue attachment to your candidate themes suggests a pre-determined outcome that is not appropriate when aiming for a robust analysis that generates themes that appropriately answer the research questions. To avoid this, researchers should let

the coding process run its course and accept any changes that may happen at any stage of their analysis process. Figure 5.8 shows a good example of this in the candidate theme “prevalence of threats and fear” that was initially placed at number nine but was revised to form number seven as a stand-alone theme. (see the end of phase five for the list of final themes and sub-themes).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parenting is a communal responsibility. - Nurture good behaviour. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We moved out because of threats. - Teachers fear teaching in Kerio Valley. - Bandits has caused a lot of deaths and fear. - Fear of children in missing out on learning completely if insecurity continues. 	Prevalence of threats and fear.	9. Prevalence of threats and fear.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government will protect lives and property. - Safety and dignity of Kenyans is a constitutional right. - Government urged to forcefully arrest or kill bandits. (combine with extortion) 	Expectation of government in the conflict.	Combined with government neglect.

Figure 5. 8: Showing Changes in Emerging Themes

The fourth point, according to Braun and Clarke (2022) is that researchers consider the number of themes that is appropriate to a particular study. Braun and Clarke do not propose a given number recognising the difficulty of pegging a specific number on various studies. Nevertheless, they suggest a reasonable number that will allow greater depth of analysis, for example about six themes for an 80,000-word thesis. Such a small number stems from the belief that fewer themes offer a richer analysis of the data set. Therefore, the eight themes that I generated at the final phase addressing the first research question were within the suggested limit and appropriate in this regard.

The fifth and final consideration is a call to avoid a ‘question or answer’ orientation when engaging with generated codes and themes. This can make one fail to notice patterns of data across data sets that may not be evident if one sticks to question and answer analysis. It may also prevent a researcher from exploring patterns in the data set that may not be obvious at first glance. Thus, what a researcher ought to do in this phase is to generate themes that tell a story

enabling the reader to see how it addresses the research questions guiding the study. In this case, the reader can decipher what the data say in relation to the research questions and theory through a discussion and analysis of their deeper meaning.

Phase Four – Developing and Reviewing Themes

The fourth step is where themes were developed and reviewed from the previous candidate themes in phase three. Braun and Clarke (2022) consider this phase as critical in developing a robust list of themes drawn from a researcher's iterative engagement with the coded data extracts and the entire data set. The aim here was to scrutinise the viability of generated themes that ideally would help one to achieve a rich analysis that addresses their research questions. To achieve success in this phase, Braun and Clarke (2022: 98) suggest that researchers ask themselves one critical question to analyse the viability of candidate themes as part of an ongoing review process.

The question is whether a theme is a viable one in relation to a central organising idea and the varied manifestations of the idea in the data set. For example, in Figure 5.8, the theme “prevalence of threats and fear” organises the physical fear that residents have over possible attacks and killings from bandits, the fear of non-local teachers to teach in Kerio Valley and the fear of parents that their children will lose academic opportunities due to interruption of learning. Therefore, the viability of a theme relates to evidence that is adducible from the data set to support the generated themes in relation to the guiding research question/s. If a researcher answers in the affirmative, then they proceed to ask review questions in relation to each theme. I discuss the provision of the review questions below as asked by Braun and Clarke (2022: 99). The first relates to whether the boundary of a theme is identifiable which is answerable by looking at its central organising theme. It also includes defining what a theme covers and what it does not in relation to the research questions. The second deals with availability of sufficient data that can act as evidence in support of the theme. In this case, the researcher looks for the availability of nuanced meanings that allow drawing of varied meanings from the generated theme. The third asks about the diversity and range of the data contained within each theme thereby informing its coherence. Wider ranging and overly diverse data can lead to addition of data extracts that may not be relevant to the research question. Hence, there was need to stay within the parameters of the study's research questions.

The fourth one asks whether the theme expresses something that is vital to a study. The

importance here is in relation to the information that a theme has that potentially aids in answering the research questions. A theme that addresses these questions sufficiently can be selected as the final theme. In Figure 5.9, I show the way I revised theme number eight to make it more succinct, thereby capturing the main theme and two sub-themes. I did this in consideration of the availability of sufficient evidence to support them through excerpts from transcripts of radio news and feature stories. In terms of addressing a vital point to the study, this theme fulfilled it appropriately since there is a desire for change in the behaviour of young people in Kerio Valley thereby stopping the banditry and thus supporting the assertions of Hall (1997) who viewed culture as dynamic leading to the discarding of undesired behaviour.

leaders need to work together		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discard cultural <u>behaviours</u> that are not relevant (rustling and banditry). - Exposure to God's word may bring positive change to learners. - Children in <u>Kerio Valley</u> can discard conflicts and cattle rustling when they experience change in thought patterns. - Parental advice to children can bring change. - Parenting is a communal responsibility. - Nurture <u>good behaviour</u>. - We moved out because of threats. 	Communal responsibility for children as hope for the future. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who plays role - Sub theme; - Who plays role as possible lever of change - parenting as communal responsibility. 	8. Communal responsibility for children as hope for the future. Sub themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who plays the role as possible lever of change? - Parenting as communal responsibility.
	Prevalence of threats and fear.	9. Prevalence of threats and fear.

Figure 5. 9: Developing and Reviewing Themes

In view of the above, generation of themes includes a review to see if they can stand alone or there may be need to combine some of them if they convey similar information. In this stage, a researcher ought to be open to more reviews to come up with robust themes that adequately address the research questions. Combination ensures that developed themes do not overlap each other and create confusion in the analysis as well as the final reporting of the findings, which must be coherent. I show the process of combining themes in Figure 5.10 below as part of the activities of developing and reviewing them.

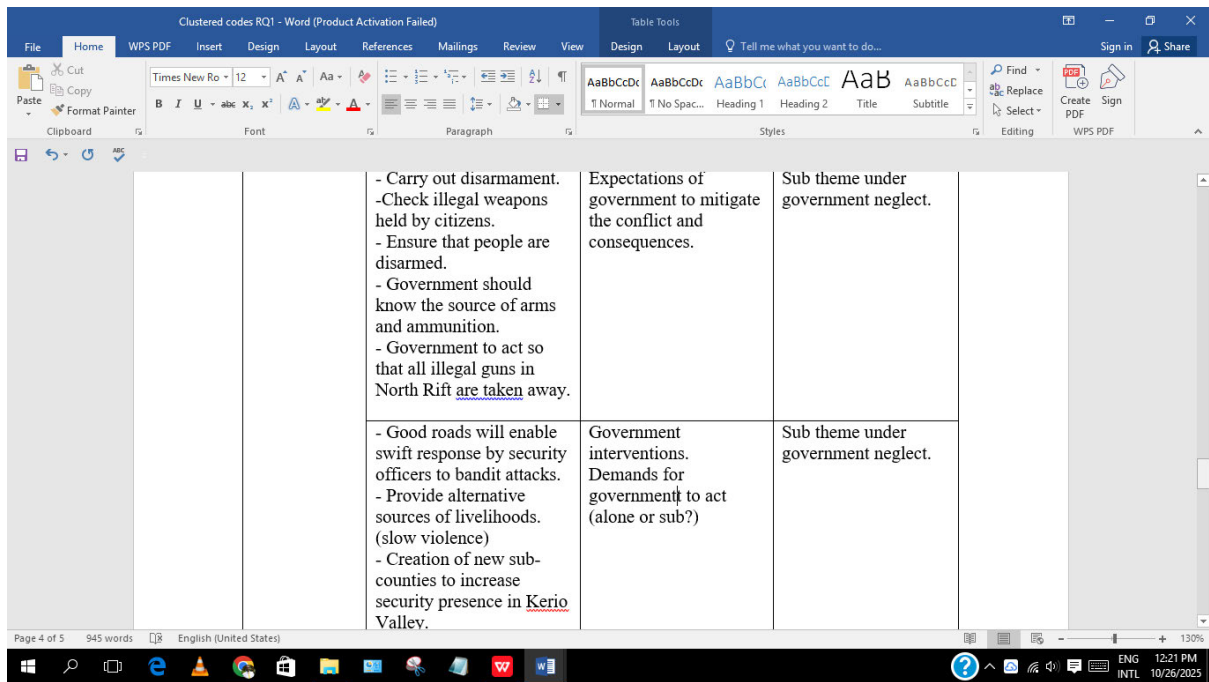


Figure 5. 10: Combining Themes as Part of Development and Reviewing Activities

Although the goal of grouping together similar themes was to achieve more clarity, the activity gave me an opportunity to deal with manageable data reduced from a large data set.

Phase Five – Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

The fifth step is where the researcher refines, defines and names the themes for clarity and ease of understanding. The researcher in this phase refines the themes by creating the structure and flow of their analysis, which is critical in the final presentation of results (Braun and Clarke 2022). The refining process may lead to the discarding or combination of some candidate themes with others to achieve clarity. Having moved away from the entire data set, Braun and Clarke (2022) advise that it is important for researchers to move back to it to ensure that the selected themes can tell a story. Defining and naming of themes is through a subjective process that chooses names that point to the content of the themes, which will eventually aid a reader at the conclusion of writing the final report in phase six. I demonstrate an example of a theme refining process in Figure 5.11, where I combined two reviewed themes one and two to form one refined theme titled “killers as bandits and not humans”.

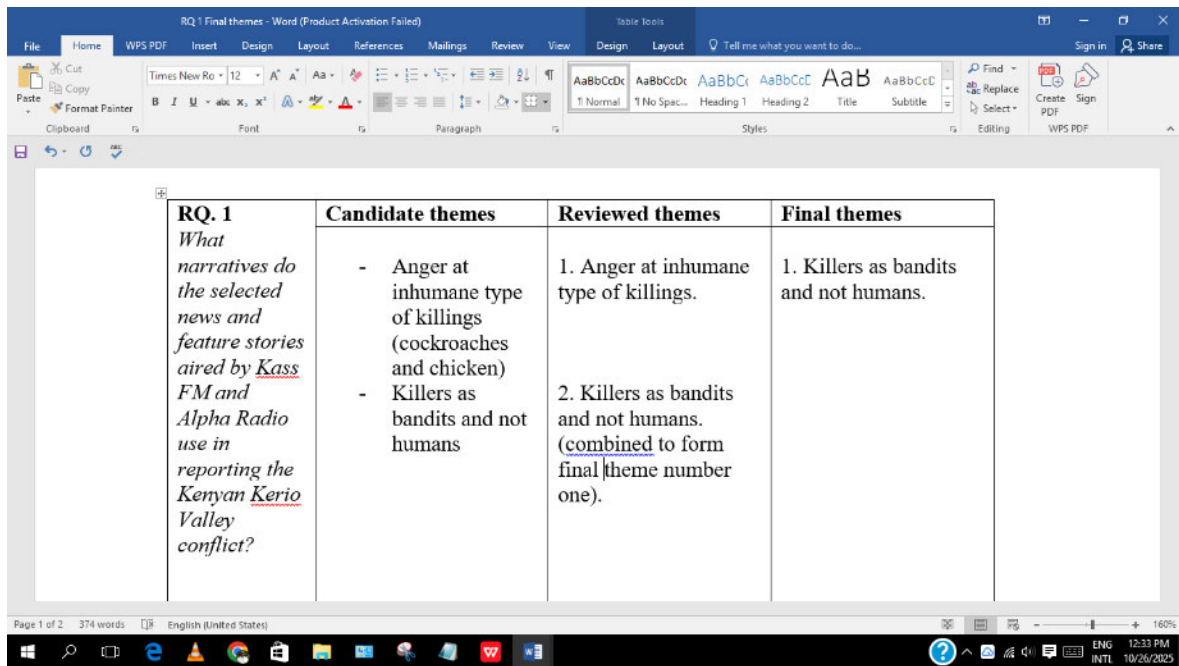


Figure 5. 11: Refining the Final Themes

At the conclusion of the fifth phase, which involved further revisions, I generated the following eight (8) themes and six (6) sub-themes to constitute the final list as per the first research question. They tell a story of the predominant narratives aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio stations on the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley. I show the final generated themes and sub-themes in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 A: Final Themes and Sub-Themes for Research Question One

Research Question 1. <i>What narratives and discourses do the selected news and feature stories aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio use in reporting the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict?</i>	
Main theme	Sub-theme
1. Killers as bandits, not humans.	
2. Unmet desire for peace and calls for unity	
3. Government neglect and slow violence.	-Frustration at the lack of government support. -Expectations of the government to mitigate the conflict and consequences. -Silence from the president. -Demands for the government to act.
4. Negation of the severity of the conflict.	
5. Displaced persons and persistent uncertainty.	
6. Prevalence of threats and fear.	
7. Hindrances to teaching and learning.	
8. Communal responsibility for children as hope for the future.	-Who plays the role as a possible lever of change? -Parenting as communal responsibility.

Phase Six – Report Writing

This phase involves the final writing of the report as well as a discussion of findings in relation to the research questions in the coming sections of the thesis. In this case, the research questions, the chosen theories of peace journalism (Galtung 2003) and representation (Hall 19997) as well as the Slow Violence concept (Nixon 2011) guided the final report writing. It is important to note once again that this was not a linear process but iterative involving a lot of back-and-forth movement through the various phases back to the data to ensure credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability of results (Braun and Clarke 2020). It also involved a time of moving away from the data and eventually moving back in with new insights that enable a researcher to develop a robust analysis. The discussion that aligns with this sixth phase will be presented in Chapters Six and Seven of this thesis.

In-Depth Interviews with Study Participants

The following section explains the generation of themes for the second research question and the associated data set of the study. I collected data for this question via in-depth interviews with two reporters and two news editors purposively sampled from Kass FM and Alpha Radio. In light of the discussion on the RTA presented in section one, this section will be briefer, focussing on the pragmatics of the phases in direct relation to the study at hand. Although there were slightly different interview schedules for reporters and editors, thematisation happened across both sub data sets.

The success and credibility of the RTA hinge on a clearly illustrated process (Nowell et al. 2017). A clear and transparent process enables readers to see *how* the researcher arrived at the generated codes and themes that reflect the varied voices engaged in the data collection process, which in this case was in-depth interviews with the participating journalists. Multiple viewpoints dovetail well with the constructivist paradigm adopted in this study. It is important to note that theme development commences once a researcher has determined the focus of the study, and thus coding and interpretation start and progress as the analysis continues (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove 2019). The six phases of the RTA (Braun and Clarke 2020) again guided the explanation of how the interviews with reporters and editors were thematically analysed.

Phase One – Familiarisation with the Data

I conducted the in-depth interviews with reporters and editors from Kass FM and Alpha Radio in English, which is a language of instruction in Kenya. Since there was no need for translation, I transcribed the recording using the Microsoft Word function with a time stamp for ease of location of information on playback. To ensure accuracy of the transcripts, I played back the recording severally while reading the scripts and correcting any noted mistakes on them in the form of omissions or wrong capturing of local names of places that arose due to incompatibility of the participant accents with the Microsoft word software. I also wrote familiarisation notes on the scripts as part of an initial but crucial analysis activity. Although this process was repetitive and appeared tiresome, it gave me an opportunity to familiarise myself with the data even before the initial reading commenced building the much-needed understanding of it in order to deliver a robust analysis. Figure 5.12 shows a sample of a transcript that is time stamped and include familiarisation notes.

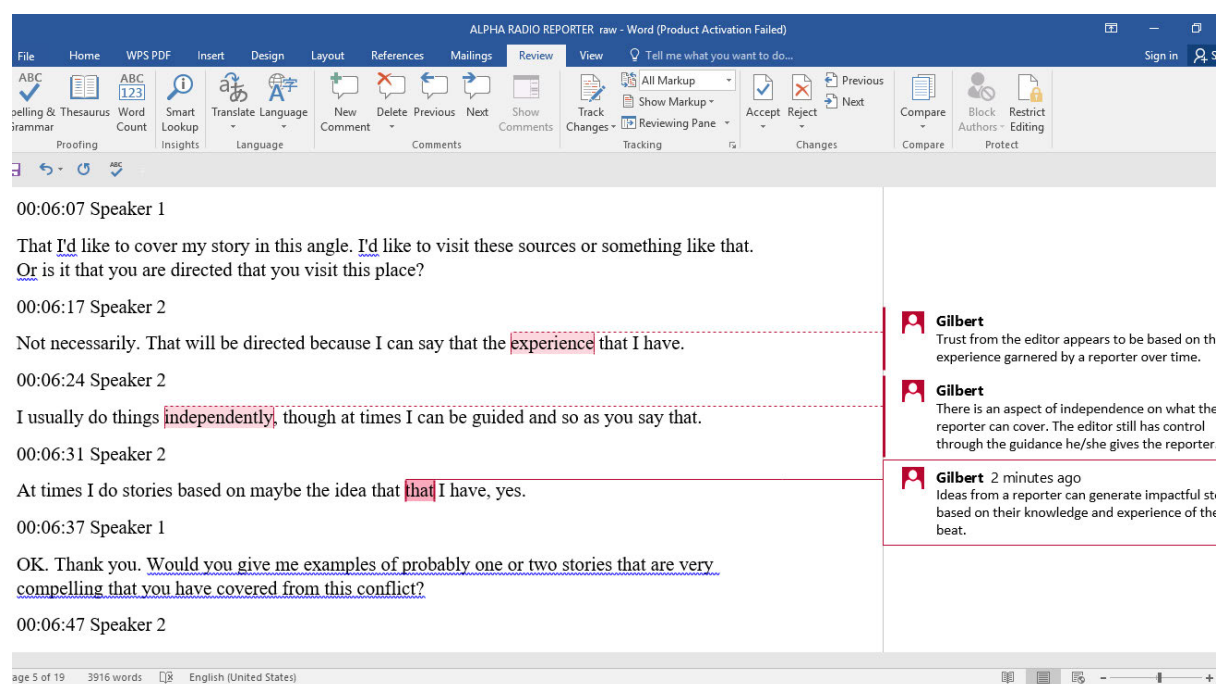


Figure 5. 12: Writing Familiarisation Notes

Phase Two – Data Coding

Coding has been described as a process of “disassembling data and taking it apart in order to create meaningful groupings” (Castleberry and Nolen 2018: 808). These meaningful groupings are codes, which are the building blocks of themes. Since meaning making is the objective of data analysis, interpretation, and explanation of it are key activities in qualitative studies, hence the need for tagging key portions of the data in readiness for coding (Alhojailan and Ibrahim

2012). Coding, in this sense, referring to the gradual development of labels appropriate for potentially significant segments of the data set (Herzog et al. 2019). Although such segments could be in the form of varied sizes of data, such as sentences or phrases, they often carry a complete thought when considered with the entire data set (Castleberry and Nolen 2018).

Once the transcription was complete, I started tagging sections of the data that piqued my interest, which I would use in generating semantic codes. Tagging here is part of the data reduction process that ensures that a researcher deals with manageable data, since qualitative studies tend to generate large quantities of data. Tagging ensured that all the transcribed data is available for analysis and the generation of possible semantic codes as part of the inductive thematic process of searching for the themes. While conducting this analysis, the researcher moves across the entire data set iteratively to generate relevant codes while factoring in the context that is critical in meaning-making (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove 2019). A researcher in this phase also relies on their individual judgment in generating relevant codes in the absence of pre-determined classification methods (Herzog et al. 2019). In addition, experiential knowledge of the researcher aids in this hence the importance of declaring one's positionality as previously discussed in the reflexivity section. Thus, codes are useful in categorising and retrieving similar data across the data set (Castleberry and Nolen 2018). I show the tagging process, from the edited transcript of an interview with an editor in figure 5.13 below.

RQ 2. What factors influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio valley conflict?	<p>Factors</p> <p>We normally check on the content and the weight it carries, especially if it touches human life. So if it touches human life we give it a priority. And when human life is affected, it means that our communities are affected. So we put it as a priority when choosing the story.</p>	<p>Semantic meaning</p> <p>Striking and involving human life.</p>
	<p>Of those affected some of them may be their fathers are killed, their mother and children remain so it becomes a top story because those who remain now need help. So for them to get help, we have to highlight the story.</p>	<p>Impact and consequence of killings on survivors.</p>
	<p>It depends on the season of</p>	<p>Insufficient water and pasture.</p>

Figure 5. 13: The Tagging Process

Phase Three – Generating Initial Themes

The third phase involved the generation of latent codes drawn from the semantic codes in phase two, clustered together through the guidance of similarities in content and meaning. Meanings in latent codes go deeper beyond the surface level meaning, and thus their generation is a product of close engagement iteratively with the data from the researcher. I show this process in Figure 5.14.

RQ 2.	Factors	Semantic meaning	Clustered codes	Latent codes	Candidate themes
<i>What factors influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio valley conflict?</i>	We normally check on the content and the weight it carries, especially if it touches human life. So if it touches human life we give it a priority. And when human life is affected, it means that our communities are affected. So we put it as a priority when choosing the story.	Striking and involving human life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content and weight it carries. - Touches on human life. - Affects human life. - Communities evicted. - Displaced families. - Follow-up stories on attacks and insecurity. - Measures taken. - Success and failures. 	- Human interest	Human interest

Figure 5. 14: Latent Codes Generation

A researcher's close engagement with the data and their creativity influences the quality of themes to be generated and consequently the study itself (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove 2019). The said creativity involves a clear description and consideration of context in the analysis. In essence, qualitative research is a contextual activity that takes place within a precise time and space (Dodgson 2019). This consciousness of context is imperative not only in RTA, but is also instrumental in the CDA, which I will explain at the end of the discussion on phase six in this chapter.

Context allows an understanding of participant views through their lived experiences on a research phenomenon (Castleberry and Nolen 2018). In this case, the context was the long-standing inter-ethnic conflict that occurs sporadically in Kerio Valley, a rural area in the North Rift region in Kenya and the experiences of journalists who report on it. Nevertheless, researchers do acknowledge surface level meanings through their own subjectivity and sensitivity to participants' viewpoints on a research phenomenon (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove 2019). Thus, when taking into consideration the context and close engagement with data, the emerging themes in this phase should answer the research questions ensuring that one does not stray from the objectives of the study.

Phase Four – Developing and Reviewing Themes

The fourth phase involved the development and review of themes drawn from the previous candidate themes in phase three. Reviewing themes here can involve activities such as grouping together similar ones (also referred to as reassembly), naming the chosen ones and discarding others that may not be relevant to the research questions (Herzog et al. 2019). Discarding or grouping of similar themes could be a result of limited information supporting them or a bid to make them clearer. On the other hand, names given to themes ought to be memorable and capture the essence of it. Thus, a reader can understand what a theme represents even before they read the supporting data extract. This is why Braun and Clarke (2022) advice against the use of single words as themes since such words are not relatable to the data at first glance. Therefore, the chosen themes in the form of short sentences or a few words ought to resonate with the data, as was the case in this study.

In Figure 5.15, I show how I grouped together two latent codes, “human interest” and “negative impact/consequence stories.” In this case, human interest became a main theme while negative impact/consequence stories became its sub-theme. The combination of the two created clarity while enabling the analysis of supporting extracts from the sub data sets drawn from the in-depth interviews with selected journalists. Human interest is key to representing and humanising news stories (refer to the people pillar of peace journalism; Galtung 2003), helping to show the slow violence effects on them (Nixon 2011). Effects in this case manifests through such things as lost income or livelihoods due to injuries, displacements or deaths.

	Clustered codes	Latent codes	Candidate themes	Refined themes
RQ 2. <i>What factors influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio valley conflict?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content and weight it carries. - Touches on human life. - Affects human life. - Communities evicted. - Displaced families. - Follow-up stories on attacks and insecurity. - Measures taken. - Success and failures. 	Human interest.	1. Human interest.	1. Human interest Sub theme: -Negative impact/ consequences stories.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breadwinners killed. - Vulnerable 	Negative impact/consequences stories	Sub theme in human interest.	

Figure 5. 15: Developing and Reviewing Themes

Development and reviewing of themes involve significant decision-making on the part of the researcher; thus, these decisions and the reasons for making them need to be accounted for. As indicated previously, one way to do this is to keep track of decisions in a reflexivity journal throughout the research process (Nowell et al. 2017).

Phase Five – Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

The fifth step is where refining, defining and naming of the themes by the researcher takes place. Since themes cannot speak for themselves, the researcher is required to interpret and make conclusions on their meaning which helps in establishing patterns in the data and how they relate to each other on the research phenomenon (Castleberry and Nolen 2018). As part of refining activities, I revised some themes for better understanding. In Figure 5.16 for example, the candidate theme “peacebuilding efforts” was revised to read “peacebuilding and conflict de-escalation.’ The revision and refining here allowed a discussion on peacebuilding efforts and de-escalation strategies from various stakeholders that can include conflict sensitivity in news reports by journalists. Thus, the revision increased the scope of analysis.

Another example is the candidate theme titled “inaccessibility, security and intimidation of journalists” which is now titled “safety and security of journalists” after revision. The revision and the refining here made the title to be succinct and memorable while still capturing the

intended meanings in the candidate theme. Besides, the aspects of inaccessibility and intimidation form part of the discussions on human-related risks, which is one of the three sub-themes under the theme safety and security of journalists. Table 5.1B shows this process and the resultant themes and sub-themes that were generated from the journalist interview data set. I do not present the feature and news story data set separately, as the below is an illustrative example of the process I followed for both data sets, and the final themes are presented in Chapters 6 and 7, which are two analysis chapters.

Table 5.1 B: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

RQ 2. <i>What factors influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict?</i>	Candidate theme	Reviewed themes	Final Themes
	Human interest	1. Human interest Sub theme: -Negative impact/ consequences stories	1. Human interest and consequences for the community
	Negative impact/consequences stories	Combined with human interest theme	
	Fight for resources	2. Fight for resources	2. Fight for resources and sacred land
	Verified and unverified information	3. News sources Sub themes: -Who are they? -Verified information. -Unverified information	3. Constructedness and credibility of news sources: diverse voices and verifiability
	Peacebuilding efforts	4. Peacebuilding and conflict de- escalation	4. Peacebuilding and conflict de-escalation
	Human rights violations	5. Human rights violations	5. Human rights violations
	Inaccessibility, security and intimidation of journalists	6. Safety and security of journalists Sub themes: -Human-related - Environmental -Psychological	6. Safety and security of journalists Sub-themes: -Human-related - Environmental related -Psychological related

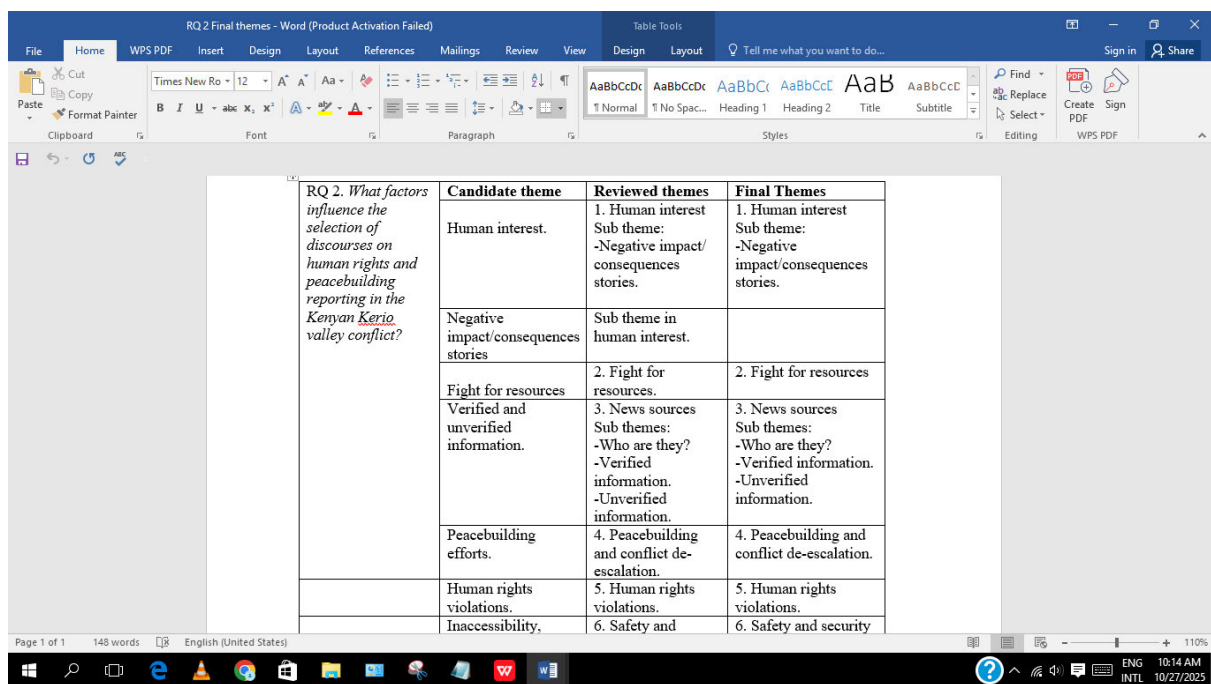


Figure 5. 16: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

At the conclusion of this phase, I finalised the process with the following six (6) themes and three (3) sub-themes addressing research question two of the study, as shown in Table 5.2, and that will be interpreted in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

Table 5. 2: Final Themes and Sub-Themes for the Interview Data Set

Research question 2. What factors influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict?	
Theme	Sub-theme
1. Human interest and consequences for the community.	
2. Fight for resources and sacred land	
3. Constructedness and credibility of news sources: diverse voices and verifiability	
4. Peacebuilding and conflict de-escalation.	
5. Human rights violations.	
6. Safety and security of journalists.	-Human related. -Environmental related. -Psychological related.

Phase Six – Report Writing

The sixth phase involves the writing of the final report as a discussion on the generated themes supported by excerpts from the news and feature stories in Chapter Six, and with in-depth interviews with journalists in Chapter Seven. These two chapters are structured according to

the final themes and present a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of excerpts that illustrate the themes.

Critical Discourse Analysis Strategy

This section explains how I used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an analytical and theoretical foundation for studying radio discourses as guided by the Peace Journalism theory, the Slow Violence concept and the Representation theory drawing on the reflections of Van Dijk (2015). It explains how Teun A. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach is relevant to this study, as it views the role of discourse as social power, a key aspect in the production or reproduction of dominance exercised by elites in the society. Through CDA, I show how various news sources and journalists' themselves constructed and represented the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley and the meaning of discourses used in the reportage under analysis.

CDA is used to interpret the generated themes for each of the data sets that are supported by excerpts derived from the analysed news and feature stories, as well as the in-depth interviews with the selected journalists. I identify and discuss the ideological underpinnings of discourses in the themes generated from the narratives in selected news and feature stories aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio over time, considering their interactional wider social contexts. CDA is not just a linguistic method, but also an interdisciplinary, critical practice linking text, cognition, and society. CDA assists in analysing the social and political dominations that are produced by text and talk (Jwan and Ong'ondo 2011). It thus aided this study in eliciting deeper meanings of the narratives used to represent the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley, situated in the North Rift region in Kenya.

Purpose of Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA aligns with my study's ethical orientation, questioning how journalism might either reproduce violence or open discursive spaces for peace. CDA studies the relationships between discourse, power, dominance and social inequalities in societies (Van Dijk, 2015). Van Dijk considers discourse to play a role in the production and reproduction of dominance by elites against groups or other communities in society. Dominance is defined by Van Dijk (2015: 249-250) as "the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that result in social inequality that includes political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality". The

mentioned areas of possible dominance indicate that communities or groups can face domination in more than one instance at a time, creating more disparity in equality. Could this be the case among the residents of Kerio Valley? Although CDA is critical in examining power and dominance in discourses, systematic and comprehensive accounts of radio news and feature stories are lacking in the Kenyan context, specifically in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley, and thus this study filled this gap.

CDA refers to a research approach in which language material, such as conversations or written texts undergo an examination as evidence of a phenomenon beyond the individual person (Taylor 2013: 2). Thus, CDA is used to study the way power is enacted, reproduced, legitimised or resisted through talk in various contexts by people or groups who can exercise it (Van Dijk 2015). The prominence of talk places language centrally as a means of social construction and power structures, necessitating the need to understand its use and meaning in conflict reporting by local-language radio stations. The importance of language in this sense is on its perceived lack of neutrality since it is laden with values and attitudes of the speaker to the audience (Khaemba 2024). Therefore, language used by journalists or news sources in conflict situations may lean towards conflict or peace. Thus, words, expressions and arguments can be analysed as social and cultural resources that are associated with certain social groups and contexts, and are recycled or modified by individual language users during conversations (Taylor 2013). However, the connection between language and power is vague to many people, making them prone to manipulation through it by the media in its various texts, such as news, constructed to drive a certain narrative on an issue of interest (Hassan 2018). In this case, the media can manipulate audiences since most people may not be cognisant of its manipulative power in seemingly innocent broadcasts.

Discourse analysis can go further to explore values and identities that are contained, prevented or encouraged by day-to-day practices and unspoken rules of a particular discursive formation, with the newsroom being a good example of this (Branston and Stafford 2006; see also Khaemba 2024). The newsroom has its own rules and lingua that journalists use to explain various activities and decisions undertaken in the processing of news and feature stories. This aspect is important when analysing media reports and decisions that journalists make when reporting on human rights and peace stories in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley. Such decisions include sources to interview, questions to ask and how to ask them and what to include or omit in news reports.

CDA prides itself on a clear objective, which is the study of inequalities and injustices in society. By studying language use, CDA can reveal the ideology and power behind it. Ideology in this case referring to attitudes, a set of beliefs, values and doctrines that one has (Van Dijk 2015). Through CDA, one can reveal how elites use language to exercise control and maintain their dominance. Since language is critical to the success of discourses, the study of words chosen and phrases can illuminate the thinking of speakers as well as journalists in local-language radio stations. CDA also exposes the inherent relationship between ideology and discourses, which is ideal in studying local-language radio content. Local-language radio allows interactions on it by offering a platform to elites who can be sources or subjects of news broadcasts. Through ideology, social power can undergo changes, influencing the political and social discourse of a country (Omondi 2016).

Van Dijk and Conceptualisation of CDA

Van Dijk conceptualises discourse as the interface between three levels, namely the micro, meso and macro. The first deals with text and talk at the micro level that shows linguistic and narrative choices made by journalists in radio news and feature story reporting. In this level, journalists use language, signs and images to represent a phenomenon, such as conflicts, meaningfully to their audiences (Hall 1997). Thus, one can only understand meanings in the media reports accurately if they have access to linguistic codes that assist in deciphering meanings that they contain, whether explicit or implicit (Hutasuhut 2009).

The second deals with cognition at the meso level, showing journalists' and radio audiences' shared mental models, ideologies and contextual assumptions that influence how a story is reported and understood. The goal here is to understand both the journalists and the audiences encoding and decoding the intended meaning, respectively. Through the use of common language and phrases, audiences can decode the preferred meaning in media texts (Hall 1997) in recognition that language is influenced by social situations and contexts (Fourie 2018). In this case, the media acts as an ideological tool that shapes and disseminates legitimate discourse in society (Avraham and First 2010).

The third societal or macro level deals with institutional, political and historical structures that shape media production and conflict representation. The analysis of such structures helps audiences to connect the power and construct identities of the players in the conflict over time

(Hutasuhut 2009). Power is a tool used by the elite to manipulate populations, thereby achieving and maintaining dominance in societies (Hall 1997). Hall asserts that the dominating elites can then exercise symbolic power over others, which they can use for economic exploitation or coercion to support some views. Thus, media reports allow the relocation of identities of players in such structures of dominance from their private to the public realm, which ought to be encouraged in local-language radio reporting to enable audiences to make informed decisions on an issue (Ge and Wang 2018).

Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis Applied to Media Reporting

CDA operates on various principles as theorised by Van Dijk (2015: 254 - 259). In this section, I discuss the general principles showing how they can inform the analysis of discourses in media reports to expose power and dominance by elites, groups or communities. The first principle addresses social power and dominance that elites in society can exercise over others. Elites in this context refer to political leaders, influential businesspeople and educated individuals holding influential positions in the private sector, county and national governments. When elites exercise dominance, they can gain access to social power, giving them access and control to socially valued resources such as wealth, education, status or the freedom to engage in legitimate businesses to sustain dignified livelihoods. Elites who enjoy such power play significant roles in the planning and decision-making processes in society, such as the distribution of development projects or other resources from government and non-governmental organisations. This can lead to skewed development, favouring areas where the elites come from, increasing marginality and inequality that can lead to conflicts and human rights abuses. Thus, what would be the power displayed by communities and elites in the Kerio Valley conflict, and how does it influence their access to limited resources?

The second principle is the relationship between discourse and access, in which state and local media actors have varying degrees of access to airtime, sources, and editorial framing, which they exploit to influence the narratives used to cover certain news stories. The access referred to here is the opportunities that elites have that enable them to participate in discourses such as journalistic interviews, enabling them to influence narratives about the conflict. In such coverage, the media may disseminate the ideologies of such actors in the guise of reporting objectively (Hassan 2018). CDA helps to reveal how radio narratives normalise certain power relations, for example, portraying some actors as “perpetrators” and others as “victims”, creating a duality of the conflict. In other instances, violence is framed as inevitable, episodic

or ethnic driven. These discursive choices reveal the ideologies underlying journalism practice, connecting directly to peace journalism's critique of war-oriented reporting or elite-driven narratives projected in media reports.

The third principle deals with social cognition that Van Dijk (2015) recognises as a 'modern power' with a major cognitive dimension that has a goal of accessing and influencing the public mind. In this case, journalists and audiences' mental models of the Kerio Valley conflict affect how violence and peace are represented and understood. These models are shared socially through repeated discourses in radio reportage, and thus, the way this conflict is talked about becomes how it is known. Through CDA, I interrogated how discursive patterns construct social reality, directly linking to the constructionist theory of representation (Hall 1997). The cognition here allowed the linking of dominance and discourse, thereby explaining the influence of dominant text and talk in local-language radio. Thus, the importance here was on the understanding of the production and communication of media texts such as news and feature stories, which formed one part of the data set available for analysis in this study. Since such talks and texts are produced through contributions of many sources coupled with power displays through the work of reporters and editors, their understanding was crucial in studying the power and influence of local-language radio in reporting on human rights and peacebuilding in conflict situations. Persuasion is crucial in social cognition, which is enabled through everyday media forms such as news and feature stories. Therefore, through CDA, one can uncover manipulation strategies as well as efforts to gain legitimation and the manufacturing of consent with a goal of influencing the minds and actions of people targeted with the manipulation in sampled media reportage (Amoussou and Allagbe 2018).

Ideology also plays a role in this since it influences the lenses through which journalists view the Kerio Valley conflict, the questions they ask and how they ask them. The influence does not end with journalists; it extends to what audiences accept as true or false. Language also plays a role in this through lexical arrangements meant to appeal to the audiences in a certain way, hence the importance of local-language radio in this study as well as the fully scripted media texts in form of news and feature stories. Such media texts use carefully considered words and phrases to express certain points and thus the need to study the factors influencing journalistic choices that may reveal implicit and explicit powers behind their decisions. As suggested by Van Dijk (2015), the goal here is to analyse specific discourse structures that may influence mental processes of audiences thereby aiding in the formation of specific

representations. Rhetorical figures and hyperboles are also important in this aspect.

The fourth principle deals with discourse structures of text and talk that are key in power enactment, expression and legitimation by influential groups and individuals in communities. Through this principle, we can understand how the said dominant individuals and groups are able to influence radio audiences through discursive structures and strategies they employ, as captured in the news and feature stories. The influence here stems from a combination of discourse and cognition that I discussed earlier. Discursive reproduction of dominance has two facets, namely the production and reception. In this sense, discursive production or reproduction of power comes from social cognitions of powerful and dominant groups or individuals. On the other hand, situated discourse structures lead to social cognitions. In the two scenarios, discourse structures play a mediating role with the media linking text and society. Thus, efforts aimed at uncovering discursive ways of mental control are a resistance against powerful individuals in society (Amoussou and Allagbe 2018).

Analytical Procedures of CDA

To ensure the success of discourses in local-language radios, speakers employ different strategies to ensure that their messages resonate with their target audiences. To this end, van Dijk (2015) highlights six strategies employed by the said speakers and journalists to achieve this goal. One is using argumentation based on facts, possibly skewed, to persuade audiences to consider and probably take a preferred stand on an issue. In radio news reporting, this could involve interviewing sources whose opinions mirror those favoured by journalists, media owners or politicians affiliated to them, presented as ‘factual’ reporting. In this situation, speakers deploy their persuasive techniques to win over the masses, especially those with minimal media literacy skills. My analysis showed the presence or absence of such argumentations in the themes drawn from the selected media texts and the in-depth interviews. I went further to show what they mean in relation to human rights and peace reporting in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley.

The second strategy is the use of rhetorical figures such as hyperboles, euphemisms, denials or understatements of ‘our’ negative actions that aids in propagating ‘othering’ tendencies. In conflict reporting, journalists need to be aware of sources who exaggerate figures or events for their own selfish interests. This could be on the number of fatalities, the injured or displaced that can give a representation of a dire situation by playing the victim card. On the other hand,

the use of euphemism can fail to capture the true situation on the ground due to sources that negate the severity of a situation. Denials or understatement of evils on a favoured side by the government or the media hinders the flow of truthful and accurate information on conflicts. This may give rise to propaganda and misinformation that can lead to escalation of conflicts. To achieve the desired dominance, elites can try to justify their selfish actions giving them a semblance of legality through sponsored legislations in parliament or purported agreed upon proposals from a dominated group. The goal of my analysis was to show such rhetorical figures and how they are used to drive an agenda favoured by the speakers or those behind them in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley.

Lexical strategy is the third approach identified by Van Dijk whereby words chosen in speeches or media reports can have negative or positive inclinations. The employment of this strategy especially on the positive inclination can help to de-escalate conflicts thereby possibly operationalising peace journalism in media reports. Through sensitive reporting a form of high road choice, journalists can use radio news to persuade audiences to respond to conflicts peacefully. The analysis in the second and third approaches above is a form of microstructure one where lexical choices, pronouns, metaphors and rhetorical devices used are analysed. The use of pronouns, metaphors and rhetorical devices in combination with lexical choices signify a shift from the normal everyday communication to the adoption of persuasive discourses meant to influence audiences to adopt a favoured view on an issue. In my analysis of the sampled media texts, I showed examples of such words, their meaning and the context in which they were used.

The fourth strategy is storytelling about negative events through personal experiences, highlighting the event's negative features. The lived experience of such individuals is key in showing that the violence affects the lives of various people across the social fabric of society. This strategy aligns well with peace journalism (Galtung 2003) and the slow violence concept (Nixon 2011) that represent the effects of violence on individuals. The resultant macro structural analysis of these personal stories provided engaging, relatable commentary on larger structural issues such as violence, displacement, and/or the desire for peace.

The fifth strategy is an insistence on the reporting of the negative actions of others. In conflict situations, this is still a form of 'othering' where speakers or the media portray rivals in a negative light while magnifying positive images of favoured groups. In such cases, positive

aspects from a negatively branded group are ignored, creating and reinforcing a negative image of them among audiences. Thus, the question here is what examples of such negative reporting could be present in the analysed news and feature stories?

The sixth strategy is on quoting credible sources and experts in news reports who may aid in the analysis of a subject. When done in a balanced manner, such analysis would be helpful to audiences who can draw on multiple realities regarding an issue, aligning well with the constructivist paradigm chosen in this study. The use of credible sources would be a welcome move since audiences stand to benefit from good-quality information, enabling them to make informed decisions on it. The analysis enabled cognitive interpretations of findings through the lens of ideology, shared social knowledge and representational practices. The news in this case is persuasive and can reveal hidden meanings and ideological assumptions on a given issue with significance to the public thereby exposing possible biases and implicit power displays (Alo, and Ajewole-Orimogunje 2013).

In view of the above, CDA is critical for uncovering power and ideology in media reports that elites use to create and sustain their dominance in society; hence, its choice as an analytical tool for local-language radio reporting of the Kerio Valley conflict in Kenya.

Conclusion

The chapter outlined the process of RTA, showing the phases followed in theme generation from the two data sets through this qualitative data analysis technique. The main themes that were generated from the radio programme data include: Killers as bandits, unmet desire for peace, government neglect and slow violence, negation of severity of conflict, displaced persons and persistent uncertainty, prevalence of threats and fear, hindrances to teaching and learning, and lastly communal responsibility for children as hope for the future. The main themes that were generated from the interviews with editors and reporters are: human interest and consequences for the community, fight for resources and sacred land, constructedness and credibility of news sources: diverse voices and verifiability, peacebuilding and conflict de-escalation, human rights violations, safety and security of journalists.

This chapter also argued for the benefits of using CDA to study the relationships between discourse, power, dominance, and social inequalities in societies, and has thus demonstrated its relevance to this study's objectives. It discussed how elites typically use discourse to enact

and maintain dominance in societies, especially in conflict situations, where biased, event-driven, reactive reporting could promote war journalism. On the other hand, CDA can also subvert this dominance by deconstructing the discourses elites use by quoting credible sources on an issue, as proposed by Van Dijk, helping audiences make informed choices. In this case, the use of credible sources acts as a form of resistance against elite-driven narratives. This chapter also presented several points of connection between this idea and the principles and practice of peace journalism, which is people-focused, contextual, and solution-oriented reporting. The connection between peace journalism and CDA is evident in the way negative experiences of individuals on an issue are told, which aided in showing the negative effects of violence on victims, thus contributing to scholarly knowledge in conflict reporting. CDA allowed me to trace journalists' discursive framing that either sustains conflict or creates dialogic possibilities for peace.

On the slow violence concept, CDA can reveal how non-spectacular, long-term harm in form of ecological degradation, displacements and poverty becomes discursively invisible in radio reporting. By analysing lexical choices, narrative focus and silences, CDA exposes the discursive invisibility of structural and environmental violence that unfolds slowly and rarely makes news headlines.

Van Dijk's emphasis on social cognition dovetails with constructivism where meaning is not fixed but constructed through representational practices. The CDA, presented in Chapters Seven and Eight allows me to show how radio discourse constructs the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley as knowable and reportable, shaping public perceptions of violence, identity and peace.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA ANALYSIS: NEWS AND FEATURE STORY PERSPECTIVES

This chapter analyses data in the form of themes and sub-themes using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as proposed by Van Dijk (2015). The themes and sub-themes were generated from local-language radio content in terms of news and feature stories aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio between February 2023 and February 2025, using Braun and Clarke's (2020) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). CDA studies the existing relationships between discourses, power, dominance and social inequalities in societies (Van Dijk, 2015), which may not be visible to a casual observer. To visibilise this, a study of language and its use by elites in societies and journalists themselves (evident in the news reports) was necessary to determine how they enact, reproduce, legitimise or resist power in discourse (Van Dijk, 2015). Through CDA, one can analyse the presence of power and ideology in media texts.

I framed the generated themes within the Peace Journalism theory and subjected the narratives and discourses in them to CDA. In this sense, CDA lived up to its ideals as a form of analysis with a strong connection to the social issues in the society that it seeks to identify, explain, and challenge (Taylor 2013). The chapter, therefore, demonstrated the connection between language and conflict as well as tactics employed for its resolution, such as peace talks or dialogues (Chiluwa 2025).

Theme 1: Killers as Bandits, not Humans

In the Kerio Valley, sporadic inter-ethnic conflict reporting, criminal gangs and their violent acts are referred to by reports in Kass FM and Alpha Radio using various terms that include terrorists, terrorism, bandits, banditry, crooks, criminals, cattle thieves, outlaws and cattle rustlers as shown in the excerpts below. This study used cattle rustling, bandits and banditry interchangeably, as this is the case with the Kenyan citizens and audiences (Cheserek, Odenyo and Omondi 2012). The use of such terms in media reports can distort the social reality of certain communities into a media image used to represent them (Avraham and First 2010). The media image here refers to how audiences have been socialised by the local-language radio and the media in general to view certain communities or individuals in society in a certain light (which could be stereotypical) based on their reportage. In the Kerio Valley context, I refer to banditry as activities of organised criminal gangs who are primarily concerned with livestock theft for profit in national and international markets. As pointed out by Ojewale (2024: 316),

banditry is “characterised by violence and supported by a criminal economy” confirming its motivation and sustenance as economically driven. The following news reports that have politicians as sources support this idea:

Nothing can progress if the people are not safe. I ask the leaders and the citizens to work together. Don't hide the crooks, don't hide the thieves, don't hide those who destroy our security. If someone is a crook, if he is a bandit, if he is a cattle rustler, tell us and we shall deal with them... (President William Ruto, feature story transcript³).

...all the schools in this area that were closed because of bandit attacks, because of violence and terrorism, those schools, all of them will be opened without exception... (Kithure Kindiki, Cabinet Secretary for Interior Security, feature story transcript).

Here in Baringo we have a problem with something called bandits who have disturbed us, people are being killed, children are not going to school... (Florence Jematia, Woman Representative, Baringo County, news story transcript).

Both news sources and the average reporter use either of these terms interchangeably to represent the persons committing attacks in the Kerio Valley area. Such language can contribute to demonising communities and promoting hate speech (Doll 2025) when the acts are associated with entire communities and not a few members who commit the crimes. In this sense, the choice of language in representing the conflict becomes vital since it shapes the lenses through which individuals and communities view each other (Chiluwa and Chiluwa 2022).

In the first excerpt, President William Ruto referred to the bandits using various terms that are recognisable to the audience. The discursive technique of repeating the word “don’t” aids in stressing the importance of not aiding the “bandit”/“crook” and rather reporting them. Despite pleading with residents to identify bandits in their midst, he still exercises power and authority by stating that they “will deal” with the said criminals. Although, the president did not expound on how to do so, such an utterance borders on a threat since the president is speaking from a position of power and authority. The same is true of Kithure Kindiki who was then the Cabinet Secretary for Interior Security, before his appointment as the deputy president following the impeachment of Rigathi Gachagua. Both display authoritarianism (Alo and Ajewole-Orimogunje 2013) in a bid to reinforce their dominance and retain the existing ideology of a powerful government and power structures as representatives of the executive in the national

³ I have not identified the exact radio station where each excerpt is taken from to aid in anonymity. Besides, there are no objectives in the study to compare the two sources. The radio stations were selected to provide a representation of types of reporting across both religious and secular orientations.

government structure. In addition, both use the modal verbs “shall” and “will”, which place responsibility on an expected action. The preferred message here is that governments are powerful and no one should threaten or question their authority. In this excerpt, the real story is not the reopening of schools but the missed learning opportunities since the violence broke out, which led to the closure of several schools. As per the recommendations of McGoldrick and Lynch (2006), journalists ought to avoid viewing a conflict in their own terms, only where it occurs, and, more importantly, when it occurs, which aids in documenting its invisible effects that accumulate over lengthy periods (Nixon 2011).

Florence Jematia, the Baringo woman representative, and the third politician quoted above, chose to objectify bandits by calling them “something”, which is derogatory and dehumanising. Through this word, she constructs the identity of bandits as not humans, reinforcing possible contemptuous stereotypes that could be in existence in the eyes of the audience and society in general. This goes against the thirteenth recommendation of McGoldric and Lynch (2006) on avoidance of language that can create or sustain stereotypes, denying communities and audiences a chance to value and consider non-violent responses to conflicts.

In addition, the use of such language in news stories fails to meet the criteria for conflict sensitivity proposed by Peace Journalism theory (Galtung 2003; see also Kempf 2013). Moreover, it can be classified as a form of war journalism reporting that is elite-focused and reactive. News reports informed by peace journalism should not include demonising language that may invite ridicule or stir up emotions of communities in conflict, minimising the chances of peaceful resolutions and reconciliations. The analysis above is at a micro level that looks at linguistic choices that are present in texts and talk as theorised by Van Dijk (2015), showing their importance in creating perceptions of the conflict.

Although the said bandits perpetrate the violence in Kerio Valley, they are human beings who enjoy human rights such as the right to life and fair trial. A suggestion from a news source in the excerpt below could violate such rights and possibly escalate conflict. In this case, the media aired raw unconsidered rhetoric from news, which is in contravention of conflict sensitivity through peace journalism (Ahere 2019).

There is a line up [network] from down there [Kerio Valley] all the way to Nairobi and we are going to break that line up. I want to announce it to them here and let them hear it properly; it has come to the time of doing the right thing. The president said there are only three things, ‘mambo ni matatu’. We start with people who are criminals, those

who drink in Cedars [referring to a popular restaurant in Nairobi] or other places in Nairobi using crime money... (Oscar Sudi, MP Kapseret Constituency, news story transcript).

Mambo ni matatu is a phrase made by President William Ruto on 27th August 2023. This was in reference to the three options for sugar cartels: they can leave the Kenyan territory, go to jail or “travel to heaven”. Although the president did not mention the mode of travel to heaven, the hidden message in the statement is insinuated as the death of the cartel members. This statement was not well received by human rights defenders, who saw the third option as a threat to kill them extra judicially and delegitimise the judiciary's powers to charge suspected offenders as per the provided laws of Kenya (see KHRC 2023; ICJ 2024). Thus, the excerpt is loaded with implied threats against members of suspected bandit networks whose activities the authorities seem to know. The excerpt also shows that what news sources do not mention is equally important as what they mention, as illustrated below.

Oscar Sudi, in this case, invokes the name of the president to show the severity of the matter and thereby enacts his power and influence carried by his association with the highest office in the land. Members of the suspected bandit networks are represented as opportunistic criminals whose main agenda is to party and use money obtained through criminal activities. On the other hand, Mr Sudi is silent on the complicity of the government in arresting the alleged members of the criminal network who are known to them, showing that what is not said is equally important as what is said. In such a story, journalists need to adopt clear and fair reporting by asking for substantiation of such claims to avoid sensationalist claims and misinterpretations, thereby enabling better understanding by audiences (Kariuki 2019). Substantiation allows for the crucial process of verification and interrogation of information from news sources, thereby maintaining the accuracy and credibility of news. Additionally, journalists ought to be careful in their choice of words, recognising that insensitive information dissemination can fan conflicts, especially in multi-ethnic societies as is the case in Kerio Valley (Omondi 2016).

Theme 2: Unmet Desire for Peace and Calls for Unity

Due to the long-standing nature of this conflict (Chelall 1969), residents and leaders in Kerio Valley have expressed concern with the absence of lasting peace in the region and have used several strategies to communicate their feelings to stakeholders. One such strategy used is the lexical style in the form of repetitions to stress the point and create the desired reaction from the listeners. In the excerpts below, there are repetitions of the words “peace” and “everyday

raid” to show the severity of the situation and the urgency needed to take action, stop the raids and look for a lasting solution to achieve peace. Historical influences, for example, the longevity of the conflict, shape such discourses, hence the appearance of urgency in the first excerpt that uses a former legislator as a source:

We have tried to look for peace! Peace! Peace! And peace is not being achieved. I would like it this way...I would like us to go back to the drawing board, check what it is, go back to those areas... (Boaz Kaino, former legislator, news story transcript).

The severity of the perpetual nature of the conflict and the desire for it to stop is evident in how a Cabinet Secretary implores residents of Kerio Valley using emotional appeal as a tool to entreat them to stop the conflict. Van Dijk (2011) views emotion as a subjective construct by speakers who aim to construct and elicit an intended reaction from their audiences through language. As a key element in communicating human rights and peace issues, how language is used influences its reception and understanding. Hence, the success of emotional appeal in communication depends on the recipient’s mind and not on the speaker and the text alone (Alcantara-pla 2024). Thus, Alcantara-pla argues that a recipient’s mind constructs and displays emotions contained in a discourse and therefore, its success is a product of understanding a recipient’s mind that politicians usually aim to manipulate. We see this in the excerpt below:

Of late, I think in the last two weeks there have been raid after raid every day, every day there is a raid, every two days there is a raid, this cannot be left to continue anymore (Kithure Kindiki, Interior Security Cabinet Secretary, news story transcript).

The lack of control of the situation is visible through the admission of constant raids by CS Kindiki. Governments and politicians tend to downplay the severity of conflicts using the secrecy of intended mitigation strategies (Kibet 2015). However, the plea above from a senior government official challenges this notion. Local-language radio stations are important in bringing such security concerns to the attention of concerned authorities by highlighting issues of importance to the communities while influencing their perception and actions on them through news reporting (Tayeebwa 2017). On the other hand, this is an overrepresentation of violent episodes that leads to an overemphasis on aggressive actions of some communities or groups in contravention of the twelfth recommendation of McGoldrick and Lynch (2006). In such reporting, peace efforts may be neglected (Miloni et al. 2015).

The achievement of peace hinges on the unity of the residents of Kerio Valley who can then choose peaceful means to promote peace and cohesion among them. When political leaders are seen to encourage such unity, they are likely to be emulated by ordinary community members,

gaining acceptance and potential success. The goal here is to reduce tension and work towards a peaceful resolution of conflicts (Doll, Moy and Beckers 2023). Local-language radio can highlight such efforts by broadcasting content that builds confidence of peacemakers and corrects misunderstandings, which may arise, potentially leading to conflict prevention and transformation (Mensah, Boasiako and Acquah 2017). The excerpt below, drawn from an introduction to a news story by a reporter, talks of calls for such unity by various political leaders aimed at peacebuilding. An introduction in a news story is important due to the application of a ‘news hook’ that creates interest in it by the audience. A news hook can be a word or theme (in this case, “unity”) that creates the necessary interest that sustains it all through the upcoming segments of a news story. In this sense, the reporter is exercising his or her power through the choice of words, the angle of the story, and the quoted sources in the representation of unity discourses. Such perceived unity communicated as a media discourse influences the social relations between communities in conflict, thereby reducing tensions and pursuing peaceful resolution of it (Omondi 2016).

Leaders from three counties touching the Kerio Valley Baringo, Elgeyo Marakwet and West Pokot today held a joint meeting in a bid to find a lasting solution to insecurity in the region. The meeting involved activists involved in peace drives and security officers and was meant to discuss ways of stopping conflicts between communities (Reporter, news story transcript).

Since news is about constructions of reality, the reporter and editor exercise power that enables them to select specific portions of talks of news sources, leaving out others, guided by newsroom procedures and their own biases (Tesot 2021). The build-up to the story above captures excerpts from religious and political leaders, representing different levels of power as shown below:

Pokot people, Marakwet people, Tugen people, all people should live as brothers and sisters. We have raised these hands saying that from today we will stay together, we will hold hands together (Chairman, National Council of Churches of Kenya, news story transcript).

Our neighbouring counties are our friends and the others should also know that since we are their neighbours we are also their friends and we are their brothers. This issue of violence in our country Kenya, issues of cattle rustling, fighting, I humbly ask you that those activities to stop because our economy cannot grow when we have those things (Member of Parliament, news story transcript).

The speakers above use lexical arrangements that appeal to audiences, such as “all people should live as brothers and sisters”, “we will stay together, we will hold hands together”, “we are their neighbours, and they are our friends”. The use of the word “we” in such flowery

language evokes a sense of unity and cohesion, ingredients that can aid in peacebuilding efforts. It is a form of collocation enacting the ideology of oneness, love and peaceful coexistence (Tchakote 2024), discursively drawing on Christian ideals of brotherhood and peace.

The speaker also uses the family metaphor in referring to “brothers and sisters”. The family is a relatable metaphor that calls for unity among the Kerio Valley residents. This story shows three levels of how the family metaphor is deployed: first, the news source uses it, secondly, the reporter includes it, and thirdly, the editor decides to retain it, hence the question of why? According to Van Dijk (2015), the use of metaphors is a discourse strategy aimed at manipulating audiences to view each other as relations who should live in peace. Through such metaphors, the unity of residents of Kerio Valley is established and possibly maintained.

The excerpts above also support the second recommendation of McGoldrick and Lynch (2006) on avoiding “othering” tendencies in news reports, but ideally tone down on ethnic differences through interpretive reporting (Teresa 2011). The main idea is the unity of residents to achieve peace and cohesion.

In the excerpt below, a political leader cautioned against competition from leaders in peace initiatives since their common target is the achievement of peace:

There is no need for competition; there is no peace that is greater than another. For us to achieve peace in Kerio Valley we need unity (Political leader, news story transcript).

The use of the word “competition” communicates an attempt by some leaders to dominate others in the search for peace. The presence of such tendencies portray leaders who likely do not care about the peaceful co-existence of residents, but possibly how they look in the eyes of stakeholders.

Theme 3: Governmental Neglect and Slow Violence

The long-standing inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley has led communities to feel that the government has neglected them. In their eyes, the government has not done enough to end the conflict and mitigate its effects. Reference to the government in this case is on its two levels of administration at the county and national levels (see the Constitution of Kenya, 2010). As pointed out by Kariuki (2019), prolonged conflicts between communities result in an increase in poverty and human suffering through infringement of their rights as human beings. The

neglect creates a feeling of hopelessness and despair in communities, as demonstrated in the following excerpts by displaced people, illuminating the realities of Slow Violence (Nixon 2011).

My child is staying at home and others are studying yet he is expected to do the exam and he has not even studied... (Internally displaced woman, news story transcript).

As I stand here, I have no goats or cows because they have all been stolen. How will I pay my children's school fees? My children have suffered and even from the look of things, they may end up staying at home because we have nothing to sell or eat. It is becoming painful for us and if the government sees it at all, they should tell us the truth of the matter, because we have felt great pain (Internally displaced man, feature story transcript).

In the first excerpt, the displaced woman feels neglected by the government, especially as it impacts her children, who are not going to school but expected to compete with others who are studying in peaceful environments, showing the inequality and marginality that exists. Denial of learning opportunities in children is an infringement on their right to education and a form of slow violence that manifests itself through failure to achieve upward mobility in future.

The second excerpt expresses frustration, despair and a man on the brink of giving up. The excerpts portray the government as able to help, yet at the same time cast doubt on that ability, raising a paradox of expectations. The killing and theft of livestock by bandits over time is a form of slow violence on their victims, like the case of the displaced man in the second excerpt above. Through news sources, journalists can construct and reflect on the social realities residents face due to the conflict. Both excerpts above have education as a dominant concern since education is a human right, and its denial is a form of slow violence. Victims feel the slow violence in the immediate and in the future as an extension of it. The local radio, in this case, used the two victims to humanise the story, aligning with the people pillar of Peace Journalism theory (Galtung 2003).

In the excerpt below, the speaker, a member of the county assembly, speaks from a higher level of power due to their elected position. Although such leaders are elites in the society, he too is lamenting about his personal experiences of the conflict, as shown here:

I have lost a father through this conflict, two cousins and my only aunt through this thing [conflict] and in all these years it is because the government does not want to know what is really happening. As we speak now, I lost over 23 goats yesterday that I reported in Kinyach Police Station and informed the chief (Member of the County Assembly, Baringo County, news story transcript).

The two sources (the displaced man and the Member of the County Assembly (MCA) refer to the government and question information in two different ways. The displaced man implies that while the government knows the truth about the conflict, they choose to ignore it, while the MCA implies that the government may, in fact, not be aware of what is “really happening”. The statements question the ‘truth’ of information on the conflict, threatening the truth pillar of peace journalism that requires the airing of truthful and accurate information to mitigate conflicts (Galtung 2003).

Sub-Theme 3.1: Frustration at Lack of Government Support

Apart from the unmet desire for peace, there is widespread frustration with the government's handling of the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley. Residents, religious and political leaders feel that the government ought to do more to de-escalate the conflict by disarming those who possess illegal guns and providing adequate security to residents. In the absence of such measures, criminal gangs take over, leading to perpetual conflicts and human rights abuses. As stated by Thoms and Ron (2007), countries with weak administrative or security presence in far-flung or remote areas allow insurgencies to emerge unchecked, creating lawlessness where human rights abuses are perpetuated in situations like those witnessed in Kerio Valley. Perceived government bias may also affect the attainment of peace (Elfversson 2019). The bias here is in relation to the provision of security and development projects.

Representatives from the church and educational systems also articulate this frustration, as they are integral to the ideological state apparatus, as argued through Althusser's concept. That education and religion are part of the ideological state apparatuses used in maintaining the dominant power's ideology and status quo (Althusser 2024). However, as the following excerpts illustrate, the call out of the government to act by disarming illegal fire arms holders and protecting the lives of citizens all relate to power and discourse. Representing different positions in society (religious and educational), the sources in the news excerpts below deployed different persuasive strategies in a bid to ensure that their message reaches their target audience and draw a desired response:

It is an unfortunate situation in the 21st century that we still have people in Kenya that are internally displaced and we have been asking our national government and county government to step in... they have the duty of protecting the lives of Kenyans enshrined in our constitution. Preserve the dignity of life and that they must be on the ground to come up with processes and programmes that can enhance peace and ensure that people are disarmed because those arms are not legally held by those who hold them

(Jackson Ole Sapit, Anglican Church Bishop, news story transcript).

In the excerpt above, the Bishop highlights negative actions of both the national and county governments, who have failed to act on the violence despite repeated requests from religious leaders. This aspect presents the government as uncaring and unable to guarantee its constitutional mandate of providing and ensuring the security of all Kenyans.

By referring to the Kenyan constitution, the Bishop mobilises discourses of legality, legitimacy and national identity, but most importantly for this study it mobilises human rights. Modern constitutions often contain bills of rights, so referencing them can activate a powerful human rights and social justice discourse, particularly in the context of challenging discrimination or inequality. The Bill of Rights is contained in Chapter Four of the Kenyan Constitution, promulgated in 2010.

The Bishop, in the previous excerpt, is solutions-focused through his suggestion to the government to come up with peace programmes and carry out disarmament of people who possess illegal weapons. This solution-focused approach by the Bishop dovetails well with the solution-oriented approach of peace journalism. The question is, are journalists in this context deliberately operationalising the principles of peace journalism, or are these moments of solution-based discourses shared in news reports, more inadvertent? I will reflect on this critical question in the thesis conclusion. Churches such as the Catholic Church, the Africa Inland Church (AIC), and the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) have been at the forefront of carrying out peacebuilding activities in the region. The churches draw on their symbolic repertoires such as provision of education, healthcare and their perceived neutrality in the conflict, giving them power and legitimacy to influence peace processes (see Elfversson 2016).

Speaking at a different power level, a teacher's union leader called on the government to address the insecurity in the region, a mix of pleading and blame. The excerpt below shows this:

We plead with our government led by beloved Dr William Samoei Ruto that the issues in Kerio Valley which the government appears unable to solve, we request if possible let them check the weapons held by citizens because there is no peace in Kerio Valley with weapons (Teachers union leader, Baringo County, news story transcript).

In the excerpt above, the speaker deployed a combination of pleading and blame transfer, albeit with a polite undertone that can be considered as an honorific through the phrase "our beloved

president”. The opening line captures the plea, with the speaker appealing directly to the president, showing the helpless situation in which the teachers find themselves due to the insecurity in Kerio Valley. This shows two centres of power: from the bandits who have challenged the government’s authority and the government itself, while the victims, who are teachers in this case, are caught in between, agreeing with the views of Van Dijk (2015) that through discourse, there is a revelation of injustices and inequalities in society.

Nevertheless, the speaker is quick to transfer blame to the same government, citing its perceived inability to tackle illegal ownership of fire arms, leading to the escalation of the inter-ethnic conflict. Blame transfer in this case is used to delegitimise government in the eyes of the communities (see Alo and Ajewole-Orimogunje 2013). The blame transfer device is also used in other instances that highlight frustration with the government, particularly in the sub-theme 3.2 below, where there are expectations that the government should be mitigating the conflict and its consequences. The use of these words “we request” and “if possible” in asking the government to intervene is a form of lexical strategy that connotes a corporate ownership of the decision with other leaders and the community, while at the same time enacting the power of the government to solve the conflict. It also shows an aspect of politeness where a speaker chooses not to be combative in their talk, which is also arguably strategic to show respect to authority.

Continuing to express his frustration, the same teacher unionist picked on the purported inability of security personnel to secure them and their properties, infringing on their right to safety:

...so I am asking the government to come up with a strategy or give the Marakwet weapons to protect themselves and remove all security officers currently in Kerio Valley because the ones called “kaltina” who were given NPR jobs cannot protect the land from the ‘army’ of the region [bandits] (Teachers union leader, Baringo county, news story transcript).

The speaker uses hyperbole to express the gravity of the frustration (Van Dijk 2015) by asking for a human rights impossibility in the removal of government security and arming one community. In this sense, language has been used to attract attention as well as to express the emotions of anger and desperation (Alo and Ajewole-Orimogunje 2013). The speaker also refers to the bandits with a military metaphor as the “army of the region”, thereby cultivating their dominance while demeaning the work of the National Police Reservists (NPR). The use of such metaphors mobilising the military metaphor signifies a large, highly organised group

(see Raupp 2022) as it transcends its literal military definition to represent overwhelming force, collective strength, and unwavering dedication in non-military contexts thus assigning power and dominance to the bandits. The use of the word “kaltina” is derogatory term portraying the NPR’s as incompetent.

If such calls were to be heeded, they would potentially lead to an ‘arms race’ among communities, leading to unending conflicts. In fulfilling its watchdog role, the media can hold the government accountable for its failure to fulfil its mandate of providing security, a key human right to all residents (Winston and Pollock 2016). Respecting human rights is also an aspect of good governance (Hegre and Nygard 2015) through provision of adequate security. However, the excerpt above is arguable in two ways through the Peace Journalism theory. As a potentially conflict escalating statement, the local-language radio station should not have aired the part calling for the arming of one community [which it mentions by name] because it is sensational and promotes “othering” tendencies. Although it does not mention it explicitly, this statement’s inclusion suggests one community as warmongers from whom other communities need to protect themselves. On the other hand, peace journalism advocates for the exposure of warmongers on all sides, giving the audience a chance to make informed decisions on a conflict and possibly choose peaceful means of resolving it (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005). In this case, a journalistic dilemma is created through struggles of conflict sensitivity and the need for reporting fully on warmongers in news stories. This calls for a delicate balancing act between reporting objectively and using the peace journalism lens to report in a conflict-sensitive manner.

Sub-Theme 3.2: Expectations of Government to Mitigate the Conflict and Consequences

There are expectations on the government to act and mitigate the conflict and its consequences on the residents of the Kerio Valley region. The expectation is supported by the recognition of the government’s ability to pre-empt attacks through intelligence gathering that aids in snubbing out possible dangers to residents by cutting off weaponry supplies to Kerio Valley. The excerpt below shows this:

The government also has investigative capacity to know where the ammunition is coming from, to know the source of arms, where are they coming from? (Jackson Ole Sapit, Anglican Bishop, news story transcript).

With the enumeration of the government’s ability to investigate the source of firearms and ammunition, the Bishop has made a blame transfer to the government, painting it as able but

unwilling to investigate or stop the proliferation of illegal weapons in Kerio Valley. In this case, the news source, reporter, and editor likely understood the power of news to make the government uncomfortable when its authority is threatened. Through such discomfort, the expectation is that the government will act, carry out disarmament, and restore peace in the Kerio Valley. Thus, the media here has succeeded in uncovering bias and negligence in the government's exercise of power (Van Dijk 2015).

Sub-Theme 3.3: Silence from the President

Lack of information on the Kerio Valley conflict from officials in positions of authority can be frustrating to stakeholders. The excerpt below drawn from an introduction by a reporter to a news story, demonstrates this:

Member of the County Assembly and the Speaker of Baringo County Assembly expressed disappointment on the laxity of President William Ruto to take decisive action on security matters in Baringo County (Reporter, news story transcript).

The use of such a statement by the reporter arguably portrays the president as careless and indecisive in taking bold actions to tackle the insecurity. Such a story may create a media discourse that can shape negative or positive political and social discourses in the country (Omondi 2016). On a positive note, such candid reporting can jolt authorities to act on the conflict, confirming the important role of the media as a watchdog on those in power, more so in conflict situations that require the reporting of timely and relevant information (Hassan et al. 2024).

In other instances, political leaders expressed frustration at the president's apparent silence, despite efforts to reach him directly to address the Kerio Valley conflict. In the excerpt below, the speaker uses what Alo and Ajewole-Orimogunje (2013) term "foregrounding of informativeness" by quoting a promise made some years back to a peace champion killed by suspected bandits. The speaker elevates the victim to hero status using him to show the loss suffered by those working for peace.

I have written enough messages to the president directly to his phone and today we are mourning the hero [peace champion killed by suspected bandits] whom you promised in 2015 that you are going to give peace he has died now (Political leader, news story transcript).

The use of the words "written enough messages" by the speaker shows agitation as well as being at a loss for what else he can do. He makes it personal by the repetitive use of the word

“you” and shows his own level of authority in political circles by sharing that he personally sent several WhatsApp messages to the president. By sharing such information, he shows that he has access to the highest office in the land, and the degree to which the president is allegedly ignoring the situation is made evident, and thus those without the same power would then also be ignored.

The perceived silence from the president could be due to the sensitive, secretive nature of the information on strategies for handling the conflict in his possession (Kibet 2015). Even so, the president and other leaders ought to communicate relevant information on the conflict in recognition that such communication is vital for human interaction and influence on their behaviour (Middleton and Njogu 2019). Timely communication also helps prevent the spread of rumours, misinformation, and propaganda that can fuel conflicts leading to human rights abuses.

Sub-Theme 3.4: Demands for Government to Act

There are calls for the government to act and end the violence in Kerio Valley as a matter of urgency. The Speaker, as a Member of the County Assembly, is speaking from a position of authority representing the second level of government, as shown below:

This is now the call of all people and leaders that we want dialogue in Baringo that is the first thing. Secondly, we want this conflict to be stopped and ended completely and my ward that is Barwesa Ward is affected like we have said and particularly Kabos Kerio location, Tiaty sub-location, parts of Marikut and Kuikui sub-locations (Member of the County Assembly, news story transcript).

The excerpt above is a call for all sectors of society to unite and engage in dialogue, which, in essence, is a call to action for everyone. The speaker is not only pointing fingers at the government to end the violence as an outcome, but also realises that there is a process involved, which should include dialogue between differing groups, making them responsible for the peace process. Dialogue points to a solution that aligns with the solution pillar of peace journalism. This excerpt speaks to the people pillar of peace journalism, not as the literature explains, where people’s stories are central to the narrative, but perhaps this idea of the people pillar can be extended to include reports where leaders call on the people to unite and dialogue.

In the excerpt below, the Elgeyo Marakwet Governor gave an ultimatum in a show of dominance as an elite member of society. The enactment of this power is through discourses

of such elites in their privileged access to communicative platforms. In the second sentence, the governor shifts the tone and offers support to the president and the Cabinet Secretary for Interior Security giving his overt backing in a top-down approach. Overt support is a mode of discourse power reproduction process (Van Dijk 2015). I demonstrate this in the excerpt below:

We want this thing to end and it has to end now, not another time. And as leaders of this region we want to tell the President and the CS Interior, we support you 100%. [this was in reference to the Maliza Uhalifu North Rift security operation] (Governor Elgeyo Marakwet County, news story transcript).

The two leaders above both call for an end to the violence, albeit using different approaches. The member of the county assembly is leaning towards the people pillar in calling on all people to dialogue, whereas the governor is being elitist in assuming that it is a job for leaders only. Nevertheless, the achievement of peace will enable the provision of good governance by having policies that encourage economic growth, thereby helping to reduce poverty and conflicts among communities (Hegre and Håvard 2015). Sound policies from the government reduce perceived inequalities by various communities, leading to conflict de-escalation. On its part, the local-language radio ought to lead in efforts at peacebuilding as suggested by McGoldrick and Lynch (2006) through airing such peace discourses.

Theme 4: Negation of Severity of Conflict

At times, there is a feeling that the government does not acknowledge the severity of the conflict in the Kerio Valley. News sources blamed this on insufficient and, at times, misleading information from intelligence personnel about the conflict, as well as the simplification of mitigation strategies. Since most journalistic reporting on conflicts is attuned to the spectacle and is elite-driven, radio reports may miss crucial information on human rights, mitigation strategies and progress of peace efforts, consequently missing the opportunity to report on invisible effects as per the peace journalism theory and the slow violence concept (Galtung 2003; Nixon 2011). Also, spectacular or event-driven reporting can result in misrepresentation or underrepresentation of events, more so those around socio-economic issues that are at times “downplayed or depoliticised as law and order or ethnic conflicts” (Joseph 2014: 232). The excerpt below shows the sentiments of an MCA on this:

The problem we have is that people in the intelligence service do not give information to the government on the true situation on the ground (MCA, news story transcript).

Media reporting can aid in representing the true picture of the situation by relocating the identities of players in the conflict from their private to the public realms (Ge and Wang 2018).

Through the revelation of the identities of such players, audiences have a chance to interrogate them and their actions, potentially preventing themselves from manipulation through their discourses and actions. This aligns with the truth pillar of peace journalism theory (Galtung 2003) that calls for truthful reporting of players in a conflict, potentially helping audiences to consider and value non-violent responses to it (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005).

The excerpt above also shows an aspect of “negative other presentation” (Alo and Ajewole-Orimogunje 2013) by alleging that personnel in the intelligence service do not represent the true reality on the ground to the government. By saying so, the member of the county assembly portrays the intelligence community as unprofessional and possibly indirect enablers of the violence. By indirect, I mean that it is inadvertent in that it is not intentional, but their lack of communication is arguably exacerbating the situation.

Continuing the assault on the intelligence community, a member of parliament (MP) told the president that they were misleading him without giving specifics. The MP did not reveal the source of his allegations in what Alo and Ajewole-Orimogunje (2013) call “source avoidance” where a speaker does not reveal the source of their damning statement. As argued in a previous study by Omondi (2016), use of the words “cheating” and “misleading” can shape prejudices, beliefs and behaviours of residents towards the government and its security machinery.

You are not getting the correct message, the people you rely on are cheating and misleading you but you don't know what is going on in the ground. Your Excellency the President, people are blaming you and you are saying we are ok (Member of Parliament, news story transcript).

The confrontational attitude of the political leaders could be read as a manipulative strategy with the goal of making the president and the public doubt the work and motives of the intelligence personnel in the region. This is also a case of playing down or denial of the gravity of the violence, creating a sense of normalcy or isolated incidents of insecurity affecting a small number of people in the region. Denial of the gravity of a situation is one of the persuasive strategies identified by Van Dijk (2015) that aims to portray things as normal or posing minimal threat when they are not. The goal of such a strategy depends on who is applying it. For example, in the case of the intelligence service cited by the news sources, the aim could be to hide the seriousness of the situation, thereby attracting minimal governmental response or to hide their inefficiency in gathering information and possibly pre-empting attacks.

Theme 5: Displaced Persons and the Persistent Uncertainty

Internally displaced persons suffer the most in makeshift camps due to insufficient food and water. The old, women and children are the most affected in this way (Musau et al. 2023). By reporting on the lived experiences of such victims, journalists can show the slow violence effects of the conflict on them (Nixon 2011). Additionally, reporting such stories aligns with the Peace Journalism theory's recommendation that the media form an attachment to actual and potential victims and survivors of violence (Galtung 2003). The reporting in this sense is both reactive and pre-emptive. The excerpt below demonstrates the suffering experienced by victims:

When you see me like this, I don't have clothes or anything else, I have left my home, people have moved out. I was with a grandmother and I was wondering what to do with her, I trekked with her for long until she couldn't walk. I asked her to stay there in the bush as I come to look for people to go and carry her over (First unidentified displaced woman, feature story transcript).

The displaced woman above is a victim of the violence who shared her experience, showing the desperate situation she is in resulting from the conflict. The fact that the reporter included her experience contributes to the discourse of victimhood that is deployed by the reporter to represent the conflict. Her mention of lacking necessities and the introduction of a grandmother who could not walk express helplessness, thereby possibly aiding in gaining sympathy for her and people like her who are severely impacted by the slow violence of the conflict. This narrative is also evident in the second excerpt, which shows the struggles of displaced people who have difficulty accessing food and water.

When we got here, we suffered a lot because we get water late, there is no food and we are in the forest. Now at this point we don't know what we will eat because everything is money... and even as I stay here my husband is not here because I don't know where he went since there's no through way from there... (Second unidentified displaced woman, feature story transcript).

The excerpt above shows an infringement of the basic human right to adequate food and clean water, as provided for in Article 43(1) of the Kenyan Constitution of 2010 (KLO, 2013). Additionally, structural inequality symbolised by the mention of unavailable food shows the inequalities that displaced people in Kerio Valley face thereby constructing sustenance as a symbol of power and privilege (Oburumu and Forteta 2024). By consistently referring to “not knowing”, the second displaced woman above develops a discourse of persistent uncertainty. Uncertainty discourse signals a feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness.

Theme 6: Prevalence of Threats and Fear

Despite the efforts of the government to tackle insecurity, more so during the *Maliza Uhalifu* North Rift security operation, residents continue to live in fear of attacks and displacements. As suggested by the Peace Journalism theory, instigators of violence and attacks need to be exposed, and in this study, by the local-language radio stations, identified as suitable media in disseminating peace messages (Momanyi 2015). Structural and systemic issues around a conflict also need to be brought to the fore, thereby helping to create understanding of it and help in de-escalation efforts (Doll, Moy and Beckers 2023; Hassan et al. 2024). The media can also construct identities of players in a conflict and connect the power they have through representation (Hutasuhut 2009). The construction of identities of players in a conflict is in line with the truth pillar of peace journalism that requires exposure of warmongers on all sides (Galtung 2003). The excerpt below, drawn from a feature story, paints a picture where information on the bandits is ignored by authorities, leading to more raids:

The other day we were threatened, we relocated and we said here are the footsteps but yesterday they raided the Chief's home at night (First displaced man, feature story transcript).

The “footsteps” referred to above are an indexical sign of the presence of bandits that were ignored. Nevertheless, the reference to “here are the footsteps” is also deployed metaphorically and can only be understood contextually. The communities in conflict, being livestock keepers, have many such idioms around livestock, especially cattle and their attributes. In this sense, animals serve as “allegorical representations of human emotions and desires” (Oburumu and Forteta 2024: 24). Hence, the word “footsteps” as used by the speaker communicates direction where the bandits may have gone to or evidence that can lead to their identification and apprehension. The use of metaphors and pronouns in this case also signifies caution by the speaker, who does not communicate directly but uses the metaphoric device to pass a sensitive message across. Furthermore, the speaker does not identify the chief by name. Examples of other idioms and metaphors common in the Kalenjin community include ‘respect is equal to a cow and a man’ and ‘a cow slips despite having four legs’. While the first example is used to build respect among community members, it constructs and reinforces patriarchal tendencies, thereby elevating male members to a higher status while diminishing that of women, contributing to inequality. The second example on a cow slipping with four legs is used to show that human beings with two legs are at greater risk of making mistakes and thus one should not expect perfection from them. Local-language radio journalists must understand such metaphors to interpret the meaning to their audiences if need be, thereby aiding the understanding of

audiences who were previously ignored in mainstream radio reports (Okoth 2015). In this case, language is behavioural and situational (Van Dijk 2015). That the chief was then the victim of this ‘warning sign’ being ignored, conveys a message that no one is safe and its reporting enacts the power of bandits over the residents.

Due to the dynamic nature of banditry, raiders appear more interested in carrying out killings and not livestock theft. The excerpt below represents this aspect:

It is a daily raid, every day and in many circumstances, they are not even coming for cattle and sheep and goats, they are coming for people (Second displaced man, feature story transcript).

The constant raids create desperation and fear, as demonstrated in the second excerpt, where the speaker indicated that raiders are not interested in livestock but specifically target people, proving the dynamic nature of the conflict. Based on this example, understood through the intention of peace journalism, journalists arguably need to excavate the reasons for such behaviour, potentially exposing underlying interests and giving contextual information to make news stories understandable to their audiences. On the other hand, airing such stories creates discourses of fear leading to psychological warfare on the radio audiences (Omondi 2016). Fear is an example of a hidden ideological agenda that can be a product of inadvertent negative reporting by journalists. This raises the question: are reporters aware of the impact of such reporting on their audiences? In conflict reporting, journalists need to be careful when choosing words to represent the situation to mitigate the said psychological effects arising from the power of language to influence feelings and perceptions.

Theme 7: Hindrances to Teaching and Learning

Violence has hindered teaching and learning, infringing on the human rights of children to education as provided for in Article 43 (1) subsection ‘f’ of the Kenyan constitution 2010 (KLO 2013). The violence has created fear among parents and non-local teachers who are afraid to continue teaching in the volatile area, affecting the standards of education. Such human rights issues have the potential to be ignored in media reports because of their purported unspectacular nature, resulting from cultural, political or journalistic policies that constrain them (Fourie, 2018).

Journalistic policies stem from the editorial decisions of reporters or editors, who may not see the relevance of a story unless something bad is involved (Barker 2012). For example, teachers

leaving the area may be reported on, but the long-term effects of such a move will be ignored and unacknowledged. To stem further infringement of the right to education, there is a need to encourage cohesion in the area. Through its programming, local-language radio stations are ideal in promoting cohesion by encouraging various communities to embrace diversity (Biwott and Mberia 2019). The selected excerpts below show concerns from a variety of stakeholders, all related to education in the Kerio Valley. The words they use and the aspects they highlight demonstrate how one issue can be experienced and represented in multiple ways depending on the speaker and the context in which it is expressed. The excerpt below, drawn from an introduction to a news story by a reporter, captures this aspect:

Speaking shortly after visiting victims of a bandit attack undergoing treatment at Kapsowar Mission hospital, KUPPET Secretary General for Elgeyo Marakwet county said that education standards have gone down in Kerio Valley due to insecurity. He said that most non- local teachers are afraid of teaching in the valley for fear of attacks (Reporter, news story transcript).

The reporter in the excerpt above sets the stage for discourses of fear arising from the words of news sources. By talking of victims of bandit attacks in the hospital, the reporter constructs and represents the conflict as real with real victims. The reporter also linked the dropping education standards in the Kerio Valley region to the inability of non-local teachers to discharge their duties due to fear of attacks from bandits. The reporters thus construct the government as unable to provide security to all Kenyans in the region, going against the provisions of the various bills of rights (see the Kenyan constitution 2010).

A concerned parent in the excerpt below used rhetoric to show the severity of the situation by indicating that no one is bulletproof. By insinuating that bullets have ‘crossed’ him many times, the concerned parent confirms that attacks occur on a regular basis. The parent also shows fear and concern for the physical and psychological safety of both learners and their teachers. The excerpt below demonstrates this:

Who is bulletproof to gunshots? I know a good bullet because it has crossed me several times. I can’t be told that my child or teachers will go back there because even the sound of a gunshot makes someone terrified (Concerned parent, news story transcript).

In the excerpt below, a displaced woman contributes to discourses on education by demanding the reopening of a school to enable learners to continue with their studies:

We want this school to be opened for our children to study but we cannot go there before seeing security in action (Fourth displaced woman, feature story transcript).

Although the fourth displaced woman expresses a desire for the reopening of schools and resumption of learning by the displaced learners, she expresses hesitancy and fear in returning home due to unassured security. As previously stated, the inability to learn by children is an infringement on the right to education.

Speaking from a position of authority, a teachers' union official cautioned teachers to value their lives and not jobs since their employer can replace them in the unfortunate event of their deaths at the hands of bandits, as shown below:

We cannot allow criminals to roam around in those areas killing every day as if we are chicken, as if we are cockroaches. We are not cockroaches; we are human beings. I therefore request my teachers that on Wednesday, do not remain in school teaching because maybe you are not affected. We are all affected because a relative, a life has been lost and when we lose a life, Teachers Service Commission (TSC) will replace you the next day (Mr Nyambui, Kenya National Union of Teachers, KNUT, News story transcript.

Mr Nyambui, the KNUT official above, is emotive in his expression of wanton killings and being treated as if they were “cockroaches”. He enacts bandits as not valuing human life, equating the killing of teachers to that of “cockroaches” and “chickens”. In this case, the speaker is using emotion to construct the reduction of human life to that of animals by bandits who take it with minimal consideration of its value. Hence, the use of such terms likely elicits an emotional response in the audience. The use of the word “cockroaches” brings back the memories of the Rwandan genocide of 1994, where the Hutu militia deployed it in radio broadcasts to communicate hate and encourage the killing of an estimated 800,000 minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus (see Hagos 2001). The word “cockroach” used in the Rwandan context and in the excerpt above thus signifies something of little value, as it compares people to vermin.

This example points to the relevance of context in determining the intended meaning of certain words. Deployed in other contexts a “cockroach” is used as a metaphor to represent the oppressed and marginalised people in society (see Oburumu and Fortela 2024). Such people who struggle for survival in an indifferent world are equated to a cockroach that displays adaptability and resilience, enabling it to survive unimaginable dangers.

Nevertheless, the speaker is using hyperbole to communicate helplessness and the severity of rampant killings by bandits. Disrupted learning points to an injustice for learners who may miss

quality learning opportunities due to an inability to attend school, and to a possible drop in the number of teachers resulting from the boycott of teaching by non-locals in the region.

Theme 8: Communal Responsibility for Children as Hope for the Future

In a bid to curb the adoption of banditry in Kerio Valley, some stakeholders are now targeting children for positive behaviour change and consequently preventing them from engaging in criminality. Such initiatives are an attempt to assist the youth form identities that are in common with others (James 2003), helping them to build tolerance, respect and acceptance. This also supports the non-essentialist nature of identities that are dynamic and thus aspects that are no longer beneficial can be discarded (See Hall 1997; Barker 2008). Such reports promote the idea that youth have options in their behaviour and may even alert them to the idea that their identity is not fixed by what they face arising from the violent environment, which does not define them.

As posited by Ghofrani (2024), the media can help such peace efforts to succeed by promoting unity and intercultural co-existence, thereby fulfilling the solution pillar of peace journalism. As such, peace journalism challenges traditional conflict reporting practices by also reporting on positive developments (Doll 2025). The following excerpts, drawn from different sources but on the same news story, illustrate a polysemy where an issue seen from different perspectives allows the construction of different but related meanings (Hall 1997). This is demonstrated in the excerpts below:

We are now targeting learners in primary and secondary schools so that they can know the word of God because we know the greatest weapon for peace is not the gun alone. We must also use the bible. Change in thought patterns of children in Kerio Valley can assist to raise a generation that will discard conflicts and other practices that include cattle rustling (Elizabeth Muriuki, General Secretary, Bible Society of Kenya, news story transcript).

The excerpt above is an example of biblical discursive deployment targeting learners in schools aimed at teaching love among various communities in the Kerio Valley. In addition, the speaker uses the bible to enact the power of religion and doctrine to create positive changes among young people in the communities in conflict. The ideology and influence of religion here is subtle, with “love your neighbour as you love yourself” packaged as a desirable character to nurture (see Murang’ai 2022). The promise of heavenly rewards is a good magnetism, enabling the control of one's behaviour.

In the following excerpt, the speaker, who is a government official, draws a similarity between government and religion that both prohibit stealing and killing:

When you see the laws of Kenya and bible laws, they are just the same for example don't kill, the government and the church are saying the same thing. Don't steal, the government and the church are saying the same thing (Julius Maiyo, Deputy County Commissioner, Keiyo North Sub-County, news story transcript).

The above excerpt is an attempt at aligning the government and the church in aiding the objective to instil peace and control among young residents of Kerio Valley. The said control is visible in the comparison of the Kenyan law and the bible that both prohibit stealing and killings. The appeal to both ideologies is in the belief that a person will appeal to one or both thereby enhancing the opportunities for the success of the project. Another goal here is to build acceptance of the bible distribution project by parents and consequently enable its success among the young people.

In the following excerpt, Mr Mutwol, the Chief Officer in charge of security at the Elgeyo Marakwet County, called for the use of dialogue between security officers and the youth:

Mr Mutwol said that use of force is not good in peacebuilding efforts, calling on security officers in the conflict area to strengthen dialogue, to reach out to the youth more importantly the need to discard cultural behaviours that are no longer relevant like cattle rustling and banditry (Reporter, news story transcript).

The excerpts above are forms of intertextuality where views of different news sources are used to communicate a point, which is the behaviour change of young people in Kerio Valley. In the excerpt above, the suggestion to security officers to explore other strategies aimed at peacebuilding and specifically dialogue, is a form of soft power. The achievement of soft power is through such attributes as persuasion and attraction, but not force, where one's agenda has the potential to gain acceptance and support (Nye 2022). It also shows compromise as a strategy for change through the suggestion to adopt dialogue in peacebuilding (Tchakote 2024). Thus, the local-language radio here is using discourses of news sources to challenge existing power structures aptly represented by security officers who may not consider dialogue as a first option. Indeed, as Van Dijk (2015) opined, dominance is not total and can always be contested and challenged. The excerpt also captures a shift in meaning where the speaker terms cattle rustling and banditry as 'cultural behaviour' and not 'criminal behaviour', showing the wider acceptance of the practice as cultural. Such outdated cultural behaviours can be challenged through local-language radio reportage aimed at encouraging audiences to discard them. The

excerpt also shows the importance of word choice as a form of persuasive technique in representing news events since the suggestion of Mr Mutwol to the security personnel is a departure from the norm, calling them to dialogue with the youth.

Sub-Theme 8.1: Who Plays the Role as Possible Lever of Change?

Creating change in a community is not the responsibility of one group of people only. County governments in the conflict region are on the forefront providing opportunities for alternative sources of income to deter residents from banditry. For example, the Elgeyo Marakwet County is promoting skill development among the youth to create a culture of honest living. Creation and maintenance of such pro-social behaviour can occur through mass communication media, and more importantly on the local-language radio stations that can reach even those in remote locations with minimal literacy skills (Baran, 2011).

We have said this time round when you take away a knife from a child, you give them a stick in the Kalenjin culture. So we want to tell the youth that we are planning for alternative livelihoods. Even you today, if you decide to go back to school come to my office and tell me governor I want to go to driving school or anywhere else... (Wisley Rotich Governor, Elgeyo Marakwet County, news story transcript).

The excerpt above shows Governor Rotich using a discourse structure with flowery language in form of a metaphor of the exchange of a “knife with a stick” meaning the provision of alternative source of livelihoods that is appealing to the audiences. It also means that such alternative sources of livelihoods are harmless compared to banditry. Pegging the proposal for alternative income sources to traditions of the Kalenjin communities builds acceptance and legitimation in their eyes thereby gaining the needed support from them more so elders who are influential in patriarchal societies. It also elevates him in the eyes of elders as a wise person whose advice needs to be adhered to. In using the words “if you decide today” shows urgency and readiness to help ‘would be bandits’ thereby absolving themselves of blames if no one takes up the offer and ends up engaging in banditry.

In a bid to reduce the number of children engaging in criminal activities, education is mooted as a solution to changing the fortunes of the children in Kerio Valley. In the excerpt below, a community elder recognises the positive role that education plays in dissuading young people from Kerio Valley not to participate in criminal activities due to occupation with school matters and changed mind-sets. Support of education from such elders reinforces its importance as a change agent.

We would request the government, the Ministry of Education, all of Kerio Valley and Samburu, children must go to school. A child aged eight to eighteen must go to school so that we reduce the number of people who could become criminals because if a child is sent to school, he changes his mind and sees that there is another life out there. The biggest challenge is children who have not gone to school and if they don't go to school, when he reaches 9 years old, he can hold a gun, when he gets to thirteen years, he is the one that troubles the people (Community elder, feature story transcript).

Complementing school learning, the media can champion cultural change through the promotion of peace and intercultural coexistence (Ghofrani 2024) by airing messages of those calling for positive behaviour change as shown below coming from a political leader:

...also build schools in every location. We all know that those who come to cause trouble are none other than the youth aged between ten to fifteen years. Anyone who has gone to school in that area of Tiati, no one comes to handcuff him (Political leader, feature story transcript).

Although the speakers in the two excerpts are from different walks of life, both stress the important role that education plays in shaping the lives of young people. On the other hand, unless the speakers are using hyperbole, it shows an early age (nine or ten years) in which young people engage in criminality, robbing them of their normal childhood. Their young age also shows that they are subject to possible manipulation and exploitation by older members of criminal networks. The two excerpts above support the fourth recommendation of McGoldrick and Lynch (2006), which discourages journalists from assessing the merits of a conflict based solely on visible effects and urges them to consider invisible effects as well. The invisible effects, as per the excerpts, are on lost opportunities at a better life that children who do not go to school experience, and may end up engaging in criminality at a young age, hence the need for everyone to play a role in parenting them in the community. In such cases, the possibility of cycles of crime and poverty may be witnessed in families whose children miss learning opportunities. Therefore, local-language radio reporting on such invisible effects ought to be a common feature of programming in order to represent the true magnitude of conflicts and strive for their peaceful resolution. To encourage good behaviour among the children in Kerio Valley, responsible parenting is necessary, as discussed in the next sub-theme.

Sub-Theme 8.2: Parenting as Communal Responsibility

Parents and communities approach the important role of parenting differently since it is influenced by individual and cultural considerations in teaching values (Wilkie, 2018). Since

good parenting influences the development of a child, its provision is of utmost importance in a disruptive conflict situation like the one in Kerio Valley. In the absence of parents in a child's life, their welfare and upbringing are dependent on the extended family and community at large, who must train and nurture them to deter possible future irresponsible behaviour (Okafor 2020). The excerpts below demonstrate the desire of various stakeholders to nurture good behaviour among the children of Kerio Valley:

Most of these thieves could be Marakwet, Pokot but they are few people. It is important for the communities to talk to their children, there is no child who does not belong to anyone, every child belongs to the community so we need to be close to them and nurture them... I am requesting every village to talk to their children because there is no child who does not belong to anyone (Lawrence Mutwol, Chief Officer for Security, Elgeyo Marakwet County, news story transcript).

There is no benefit in killing your brother, in killing your sister, in killing your fellow citizen, we are all human beings. Let us teach our children, those who are young, those who are grown that it [violence] has no benefit. Let us nurture good behaviour so that you can engage in business activities, so that we can do farming (Simon Kachapin, Governor, West Pokot County, news story transcript).

In the first excerpt, the speaker uses explanatory discourse to emphasise that the responsibility of raising well-behaved children belongs to everyone in society. Through explanatory discourse, the speaker is encouraging cohesion through shared responsibility and thereby encouraging communities to imagine peaceful societies through news reports, cementing the role of local radio in creating positively inclined discourses in communities. Peaceful co-existence is an example of a value that is encouraged and consequently enacted through discourse. Explanatory discourse is an attempt by a speaker to create understanding and persuade audiences to take a favourable position on a phenomenon, which in this study is the task of raising well-behaved children to deter them from engaging in acts of lawlessness. The use of the pronouns “we” and “us” aids in creating a corporate ownership of the noble responsibility.

The second excerpt adopts persuasive language that has the potential to attract the attention of the audience and help to emphasise the need to stop the killings of members of other communities who are their relations. In this way, discourse influences the desired interactions between communities, revealing the power of the local-language radio in emphasising tolerance and acceptance.

The findings above have revealed the narratives used by news sources and the media in the

representation of the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley. The strategies include repetitions, amplification of negative actions, blame transfer and pleadings. Through CDA, it has shown examples of power displays, dominance and inequalities faced by residents of Kerio Valley and how they are enacted through language. Some narratives show awareness of peace journalism ethos while others reveal a lack of awareness of it.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the study results grouped into eight themes and sub-themes where applicable. It discussed the themes from the transcribed news and feature stories using the Peace Journalism theory, then subjected the narratives in them to critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA revealed the role of language in creating, maintaining and legitimising the dominance and power of various groups and individuals. It also showed how such power, in some instances, was questioned and resisted, showing the critical role that local-language radio can play in human rights and peace reporting in a bid to peacefully resolve the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley.

The analysis revealed how the conflict has created frustration among the residents of Kerio Valley over the feeling that the government was not doing enough to resolve it. It also showed how displacements have interfered with the schooling of learners, denying them the right to education. The displacements have also denied residents the right to decent living as well as the opportunities to engage in meaningful economic ventures. The narratives also revealed the slow violence effects of the conflict on the population who suffer it long after a given violent incident.

The following discourses are evident in the chapter: discursive technique of stressing a point, dehumanising and objectifying bandits (as well as local people when they consider how the bandits may view them), media discourse, use of the family metaphor, legality discourse, blame transfer, foregrounding of informativeness, overt support, source avoidance, persistent uncertainty, hyperbole and explanatory discourse. These discourses show attempts by their users to influence their audiences to view the conflict in a certain light. The chapter then delved into possible strategies that can and are being employed to resolve the conflict, such as unity among leaders and residents, good parenting and provision of alternative sources of income. The next chapter deals with themes generated from interviews with selected journalists that answers the second research question.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DATA ANALYSIS: JOURNALIST PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

The chapter presents a critical discourse analysis of excerpts that illustrate themes arising from in-depth interviews with reporters and editors from Kass FM and Alpha Radio covering the Kerio Valley conflict. It therefore directly addresses the study's objective of identifying and analysing the factors influencing the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict. The chapter is structured according to the six themes generated from transcribed in-depth interviews with selected journalists, which were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke 2020). The themes are: human interest and consequences for the community; the fight for resources and sacred land; the constructedness and credibility of news sources; diverse voices and verifiability; peacebuilding and conflict de-escalation; human rights violations; and the safety and security of journalists. The interpretation of data was guided by the Representation theory (Hall 1997), majoring on its constructivist approach; and Peace Journalism theory (Galtung 2003; see also Lynch and McGoldrick 2005; McGoldrick and Lynch 2006; Nzibo 2020; Kabeya and Ngwenya 2026) through its pillars of peace, truth, people and solutions-orientation. The slow violence concept (Nixon 2011) was also key in the analysis helping to consider if and how the invisible effects of the violence that have affected conflict victims over time were reported.

Theme 1: Human Interest and Consequences for the Community

Human interest is a general journalistic news value that influences which stories may be selected for broadcast in a particular news programme. Human-interest stories are those that report on individuals' experiences of a newsworthy event, which is appropriate for reporting on human rights and peacebuilding efforts in conflicts such as the one in Kerio Valley (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005). Such news stories prioritise “tribulations, sufferings and experiences of ordinary people” affected by the conflict (Nzibo 2020: 101). In this sense, the media provides a platform where lived experiences of such individuals are constructed and represented (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Hanitzsch and Nagar 2016). While human-interest stories are in line with the people-oriented approach of Peace Journalism theory (Galtung 2003), their selection based on the human-interest news value confirms the critical processes of selection and construction by journalists (Fourie 2008). As such, the constructedness of news and feature stories is highlighted, as per Hall's (1997) explanation that the media constructs and re-presents

events about real-life issues through a media language that influences people's opinions about them. The construction here is through journalistic activities such as angle choice, story placement, source selection, and editing (Tesot 2021). The process of deliberate construction is revealed in the sentiments of an editor below:

We normally check on the content and the weight it carries, especially if it touches human life. So if it touches human life, we give it a priority. And when human life is affected, it means that our communities are affected (Editor one, interview, 22nd January 2025).

The editor here uses their professional authority to decide which story is selected for airing, based on its human-interest aspect as a news value. Considering the “weight of the story,” some stories on human rights and peace can still be discarded when the editor feels they may have less impact on the community than another story. Such considerations may limit the presence, number and length of human rights and peace stories aired. This excerpt suggests that editors are aware of the consequences of events on individuals and communities at large, and therefore have a responsibility to report on such events or issues that directly impact their audiences. Such awareness is arguably an attempt to fulfil their role as society's watchdog. The use of the words “content” “weight” and “priority” supports this idea. Yet journalists should not focus solely on visible effects. It is likely that the “weight” of a story is more prominent in cases where consequences are more immediate, taking precedence over slow violence or long-term consequences. In this way, they are likely to ascribe to war journalism that focuses on spectacle (Galtung 2003). Ideally, journalists ought to look at invisible effects as well (Nixon 2011).

News stories are also chosen based on their impact or consequence on victims. This could be deaths, injuries or loss of livelihoods that such victims sustain from the violence. In such stories, language choice is critical for accurately representing the events, thereby enabling the construction of the intended meaning (Hall 1997). This strategy supports the peace and people orientations of Peace Journalism theory (Galtung 2003; Kabeya and Ngwenya 2026) while showing the effects of Slow Violence (Nixon 2011) on the said victims. The following excerpts reflect this:

There are those who have recovered and those who lost their loved ones and now they are coping up with life, then there are those who were injured they have permanent injuries (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January 2025).

You may also choose the victims and especially those who have been taken to hospital or the deaths (Editor 2, interview, 16th January 2025).

In such stories, journalists use humanising discourses to enact, legitimise and reproduce

narratives and identities of victims of violence by telling their stories through their lived experiences. Humanising stories aim to capture audiences' attention and possibly create empathy. In the following excerpt, a journalist explains that the only way in which they can assist affected people, is through inclusion of their stories in news reports:

You come from families who are crying to you and you do little to help them apart from running their stories (Reporter 1, interview 17th January, 2025).

For such reporting to succeed, journalists must be creative in how they package stories for their audiences, thereby capturing the true magnitude of the conflict through the personal consequences for local people. Not only is creativity in storytelling required, but that journalists ought to be empathetic to the circumstances of their sources and tell their stories as though they have “borrowed their tongues” (Manyozo 2016: 57).

Theme 2: Fight for Resources and Sacred Land

Insufficient resources, land ownership issues, and stereotypes drive the Kerio Valley conflict, confirming Khamadi's (2015) findings that inadequate resources, particularly water and pasture, are more pronounced in regions with arid and semi-arid conditions. However, communities do not fight for resources alone but also for the sacred land, with which they have a spiritual connection. As posited by Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008), indigenous ontologies and spiritual issues are connected to land, forming a deep connection among communities, as they derive their identities and cultural practices from it. An example of such connection is the unclear distinction between the living and the dead whereby displaced communities may feel that they are leaving their ancestors behind when they are forced to leave their ancestral homes.

Another example of spiritual connection to the land was provided by James Howard Smith (2008) in his study of witchcraft and development in the Taita region of Kenya. He argues that in most African contexts, witchcraft is believed to influence development hence the need to “construct visible moral and social boundaries that can mitigate the impact of violence, death and greed from within or without” (Smith 2008: 5). As such, this can encourage people to work towards asserting their control or freeing themselves from the influence of witchcraft. Thus, the presence of such content in a news item is a contributing factor in its selection for airing. A participating reporter reflects on these factors:

So there are shared resources like pasture, water for both [human and] livestock, the goats, the sheep the cows, the camels, the donkeys. It is more of resources that trigger these conflicts. Some of these conflicts are based on clan land issues, the territorial

issues with some ancestral places that used to be inhabited by some families or clans, or subtribes which are on traditional basis [communal ownership], because these communities are pastoralists, so sometimes they move from one place to another because of either famine, diseases or war. So when this happens, it brings conflicts in terms of where you graze, where you share water...the fight for resources is a fight for survival for both livestock and human beings (Reporter 2, interview, 20th January 2025).

Interpreting the above, it appears the reporter believes the conflict is motivated by both profane, driven by a desire for economic accumulation, and sacred, rooted in cultural and spiritual ties to the land. The use of the words “shared resources” points to a motivation for survival and, at times, to the profane, where individuals and communities accumulate wealth to the detriment of others. The words “territorial” and “ancestral places” point to a spiritual connection to land, underscoring the importance of reporters' understanding the backgrounds and contexts of conflicts for successful representation. In this sense, how are these dynamic and dual considerations for what drives the conflict understood by the reporters and included in their stories? A more detailed discussion of this question is provided in Chapter Nine in this thesis.

The sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley is economically motivated, and violence is enacted by the perpetrators to ensure their objectives are met (see Chepyegon 2023; Ojewale 2024). The urge for economic dominance encourages certain communities' perceived entitlement to use the limited resources over other communities, who are then marginalised. Economic dominance aligns with cultural affiliation (Musau, Ichani, and Mulu 2023), in which there is a historical perception of one group's superiority over the other. As established by Elfversson (2016: 475), other factors, such as sociocultural and war culture of some communities, motivate them to carry out raids against their neighbours. Through stereotypes that promote ‘othering’ and elevate some cultural groups above others, the elevated communities can exercise symbolic power over others, thereby exploiting it for economic purposes, as posited by Hall (1997: 249). According to Hall, media representations can create and reinforce stereotypes that reduce communities to simple traits, thereby maintaining class hierarchies. Such othering can reproduce and sustain inequalities through tribalism and ethnic biases that need challenging through discourses in local-language radio reportage. The relevance of news in this aspect is in its ability to reveal hidden meanings of the utterances of various news sources through the analysis of their viewpoints. In this case, multiple meanings of news events can be constructed (Hall 1997). Through such construction, the conflict becomes knowable and reportable, thereby shaping the public opinion on it, from multiple

perspectives. Further to this, journalists must be aware of economic, cultural and spiritual beliefs connected to land that can influence if and how communities assert their “control and sovereignty” (Smith 2008: 7). Knowing these motivations deepens their knowledge and enables sensitivity in the reporting of conflicts.

Theme 3: Constructedness and Credibility of News Sources-- Diverse Voices and Verifiability

News sources form a vital component of journalistic reporting of human rights and peace in conflicts. Their discourses are key in the production and reproduction of dominance by elites in society through ideology and stereotypes that reflect or distort reality, thereby maintaining boundaries between various groups or communities (Hall 1997). According to Hall, those in positions of power, such as the government, the media or influential businesses, define the preferred meaning of events by controlling narratives. In this sense, how the media represents events can help in enacting the power and dominance of such elites within society. On the other hand, the media, as well as individuals as active audiences, can question such power by actively decoding, interpreting, and making meaning, influenced by their cultural and social orientations in specific contexts (Hall 1997). The accuracy and impact of news stories depend on the sources chosen for interviews by journalists who should have the relevant information needed. Barker (2012) recognises the challenge of finding news sources that have relevant information to the audience as a product of patience and networks built over time by a journalist.

This study found that politicians and security personnel accounted for the bulk of the news sources journalists interviewed in the Kerio Valley conflict, thereby marginalising the few voices of ordinary people and their experiences. Politicians hold elective positions in both county and national government, making them part of the society's elite, who are both sources and subjects of news (Van Dijk 2015).

In some cases, journalists interview politicians who do not necessarily hold any elective or appointed political positions at the time but have influence in society through their association with media owners or government officials as part of the political economy of the media. Such politicians, connected to media owners, can influence editorial decisions even when such politicians do not hold any public office (Ozawa et al. 2024: 855). However, media practitioners should be wary of information from such sources, more so community elites who

may want to advance their partisan agenda (Wolde and Woldearegay 2024). The onus is on individual journalists to interrogate and verify information from such sources as part of the rigorous news reporting process necessary to maintain the credibility of news stories. Fact-checking involves researching and interviewing relevant, varied sources to verify and corroborate information.

I have different people for example, I talk to the administration officers, the senior police commandants like the County Commissioner, the Deputy county commissioners. And then, we also have the religious people, the pastors, the Chiefs, the assistant chiefs and the village elders, the people that are in the interior parts of the villages and then the politicians also, they make stories each and every day (Reporter 1, interview 17th January 2025).

There are individuals who call you or community leaders. The Peace building team [peace champions] or NGOs and organisations that work there, the local administration, heads of security here and the county government so those are our sources (Reporter 2, interview, 20th January 2025).

As shown above, some journalists mentioned having a variety of news sources that include ordinary people. Having sources at different levels of society mitigates against a ‘grand narrative’ since audiences are exposed to a variety of perspectives. Voices of ordinary people are good in revealing the slow violence effects (Nixon 2011) of the conflict. Foregrounding of such voices in news reports is necessary. Since most of the sources cited by participants are security chiefs and other government representatives, who are secretive by nature, they can manipulate the media by withholding information, thereby shaping public perception of the conflict and protecting their vested interests (Hassan 2018). When civilian sources connected to the politicians have access to media spaces, they may exercise authority on behalf of their friends, helping them to maintain their dominance.

Having a variety of news sources supports the eighth caution of McGoldrick and Lynch (2006) to avoid one-sided reporting but instead engage multiple ordinary sources and perspectives, thereby achieving balance in their reportage. Besides, using ordinary sources enables the reporting of the slow violence effects of conflicts on them, their everyday experiences and impact. Having a variety of news sources also aligns with the peace and people pillars of the Peace Journalism theory (Galtung 2003).

While the word “make” may not intentionally show that the reporter believes the stories to be constructed, it reminds us that representations are ‘constructed’ as per Hall’s (1997) constructionist perspective. These ‘constructions’ are frameworks of knowledge specific to

each source that influence both their interpretation of an event and their retelling of it depending on the position of the person in the conflict.

Reliable news sources are important to all journalists and especially in reporting on conflicts due to the sensitive nature of information that they may share. Trust and mutual respect sustain a good relationship between a journalist and a news source.

You build confidence with your sources. This particular person gives you information based on the confidence that you have kept and the delivery you have done. If this person shares this information and you share it correctly, as they say, they develop trust with you (Reporter 1, interview 17th January 2025).

Accurate and verifiable information is key in building individual journalistic credibility and the media by extension. As Ryzhova and Toepfl (2025) pointed out, truth is an essential component that influences how audiences negotiate trust or distrust in the news and the media in general. Thus, trust in the media plays a critical role in its quest to foster democracy in a country where human rights and peace are respected (Garusi, Juarez, and Hanusch 2025). In this case, journalists ought to air verified information only (Owino and Karani 2021). Verified information deters the spread of propaganda and misinformation, which can lead to the escalation of conflicts. Following this argument, then, verified information might facilitate the peaceful resolution of conflicts (Doll 2025). This is demonstrated in the excerpt below:

...if this person calls me for example, that bandits have attacked this particular village... Hey, what has happened? This has happened... The livestock stolen, you know, sometimes they exaggerate, they tell you 100 cattle were taken 200. Two hundred livestock is a big number which can cause a stir (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025).

In the excerpt above, the reporter discusses sources using hyperbole to report incidents such as stock theft, which poses a challenge for verification due to accessibility constraints. In such cases, news sources can manipulate the media for their own agenda through exaggerations and sympathy seeking. Source exaggeration can be interpreted as a means to gain sympathy from the media, thereby obtaining favourable coverage in news stories reaching their audiences and other stakeholders. The use of the phrase “cause a stir” can be interpreted in two ways: the large number of livestock stolen is hard to conceal, or the loss of such livestock can provoke anger among members of the victim community, leading them to seek revenge. However, this source misrepresentation can “cause a stir”, arguably framing other communities as aggressors, thereby creating or reinforcing stereotypes about them that can be normalised through repeated radio news broadcasts over time. Othering is thus promoted through the ‘us vs them’

constructions in the representation of victims of violence (see also Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Hanitzsch and Nagar 2016). An editor in one of the sampled radio stations explains the significance of verifying information to avoid controversies and further conflict, and that this is an active decision on their part:

Those that can be verified you choose to report on that, but now the details that you don't know, you avoid that because if you say this other side are the ones who have attacked this other side you may cause a problem (Editor 1, interview 22nd January 2025).

This conflict-sensitive reporting aligns with peace journalism practice. In such cases, journalists withhold some information when its accuracy is in doubt. Hence, the editor exercises their authority, demonstrating the power and vetting role they hold in the newsroom's editorial processes. The excerpt above also supports the first call of McGoldrick and Lynch (2006) to journalists, urging them to avoid portraying a conflict as affecting only two parties or portraying one party as an aggressor and the other as a victim, which inevitably leads to conflict escalation (Adebayo and Makwambeni 2019).

Related to but not directly based on source story accuracy is the issue of access. Journalists may fail to gather accurate information on their own when access to conflict areas is denied, as shown below:

Sometimes when you don't access these areas, chances of you getting manufactured information is very likely. When you don't go there, when you don't see it with your eyes it is very difficult to be sure of what you are sharing. Sometimes there are gaps...chances of you misreporting is very high. However factual they are, if you say that these bandits disappeared to this particular community, you are subjecting that community to ridicule. It really is a grey area (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025).

The reporter's use of the word “manufactured” indicates that they are aware that sources may intentionally share false information about the conflict. Such behaviour can facilitate deliberate misinformation and stereotyping, affecting community relations and the trust audiences place in the media. It would be important for journalists to ask themselves whether such sources are acting on their own or if there are powers behind them driving a certain agenda and narrative. Awareness of potential powers behind untrustworthy sources can help journalists overcome the dangers of manipulation, especially when access to a conflict area is denied (Kibet 2015), as discussed further under Theme 6 on the safety and security of journalists. Such reporting that relies on unreliable sources challenges the peace journalism theory by airing unverified or

untruthful information that can escalate conflicts and compromise peacebuilding efforts. The next section discusses peacebuilding efforts in Kerio Valley.

Theme 4: Peace Building and Conflict De-escalation

There are peacebuilding efforts in the Kerio Valley from various stakeholders, encouraging a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Such efforts need to be prioritised by local-language radio in their news reports to enable their audiences to value and consider non-violent responses (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005). As discussed in the previous theme, the inclusion of local voices in such news reports ought to be encouraged to reflect diverse perspectives, but importantly for this theme, it can also promote ownership of peacebuilding processes by communities (Orgeret and Tayeebwa 2016). The following excerpt shows the positive effects of a peace meeting that resulted in reported cohesion among communities:

There is a meeting that we attended at the border between West Pokot and Elgeyo Marakwet and it was all about sensitising the residents about the need to keep peace. It was attended by different leaders, both religious and political and also community leaders. That meeting brought together people from different communities with one goal, to talk about peace. Since that meeting, there was at least calmness for a longer time before some attacks were witnessed (Reporter 2, interview 20th January 2025).

In the excerpt above, the reporter uses the words “bringing together” and “one goal” to promote discourses of unity and cohesion among the Pokot and Marakwet communities. The result of the meeting was “calmness” that was witnessed in the region for some time. These sorts of meetings should be reported by local-language radio. Through such reports, the local-language radio can correct biases that can lead to conflict escalation (Njigua and Manyengo 2017).

From a peacebuilding perspective, the excerpt above demonstrates the potential for peace achievement when various communities come together. Through this, the power of communities is enacted in charting their course by cultivating unity and togetherness through agency and discourse. Discourses of togetherness challenge common stereotypes that see communities in conflict as enemies who cannot co-exist peacefully. The role of language in challenging such stereotypes is critical (Hall 1997). Additionally, the excerpts align with the seventeenth recommendation of McGoldrick and Lynch (2006), which urges journalists not to wait for leaders to initiate peace solutions but instead to facilitate discourses that aim to build cohesion between communities.

Although there are positive stories on the unity of various communities and leaders as shown

above, journalists should not let down their guard in practising conflict sensitivity. In the following excerpt, an editor warns that news stories should not fuel conflicts. The first and seventh caution by McGoldrick and Lynch (2006) support the views of the editor on the need for news reports not to fan conflicts:

Whenever we file stories about conflicts, we try as much as possible to make sure that we are not fanning up the conflict rather we should be making peace between the two conflicting sides. Besides that, we tell our reporters when they are filing their stories, they should be careful and we are careful as well on our side as the editors. If I am not careful, if I'm reckless, it means that I'll allow every other statement as it is which may fan the conflict though we should be promoting peace (Editor 1, interview 22nd January 2025).

By using the word “reckless”, the editor shows the behaviour of a person who is not careful or considerate in using inflammatory words in reporting a story. Despite the editor's caution, mistakes still slip through, contradicting the journalistic value of accuracy.

In the following excerpt, a news source talked of a victim in a revenge mission shot with ammunition, though he later said it was an arrow, thus causing confusion which the reporter or editor did not clarify. The mention of “ammunition” indicates that a firearm was used in committing the murder, while in reality, bows and arrows were used. Language used in any communication constructs meaning (Hall 1997); hence, words in news reports ought to be clear, enabling audiences to understand. A clear understanding of media texts would aid journalistic efforts to de-escalate conflicts and promote peace, especially in multi-ethnic regions like the Kerio Valley. Since decoding of information in radio news happens as the broadcast goes on, clarity is required in the use of words to avoid confusion that cannot be corrected instantaneously. Clarity also aids in creating understanding, especially for people in remote locations who may not have access to other sources of information. For this reason, they likely rely on the media to interpret complex issues for them (Tawanda and Mbwirire 2020).

While acknowledging possible differences in the meaning of words across communities, cultures, and contexts (Hall 1997), the news source in the excerpt below was speaking English; hence, there is no chance of a difference in the contextual meaning of the word “ammunition”. Therefore, the mix-up here ought to have been corrected by journalists during the news reporting process. The following excerpt demonstrates this:

There is a young man called Fana Chepkong'a from Kiter, thugs waited for him at night

and shot him at his home with ammunition. He was found outside his home and was shot with an arrow on his back, he was shot with an arrow till he died (Chief Officer in Charge of Security, Elgeyo Marakwet County, news story transcript).

Nevertheless, it is encouraging to note that journalists are aware of the impact of peace stories that can aid in conflict de-escalation, as shown in the excerpt below:

People in remote areas or in the villages will tune to listen to radio and if I put priority in stories about peace, they will know the benefit and the importance of living in harmony with [other] communities and not engaging in conflicts (Editor 2, interview 16th January 2025).

The excerpt above demonstrates the communicative power of radio in promoting peace among communities in conflict. Peacebuilding and conflict de-escalation go hand in hand with the promotion of human rights, which I discuss in the next theme.

Theme 5: Human Rights Violations

As it is well established in previous scholarship and illustrated in the previous theme, the media plays a vital role in protecting, raising awareness of, and fostering debate about human rights issues in a conflict (Dias 2013). An informed population can demand the protection of human rights that are under infringement. Journalists, on the other hand, must be aware of possible human rights issues to report on them. The journalist participants identified mass eviction, killings, injuries, interrupted learning, loss of property (livestock), starvation, inaccessible health care and rape as part of those infringements faced by communities in Kerio Valley.

One is mass eviction of families from these conflict areas, injuries that come with these attacks. We have 17 schools, 10 are permanently closed because of this conflict. We have the health sector, rape and defilement and it is so wrong, these rights are very fundamental (Reporter 2, interview, 20th January, 2025).

If your story is on human rights, if your story is like building peace. If your story is like exposing the ills, then it qualifies to be aired here...I mean killing and whatever and if there is any human rights violation, it has to be reported (Editor 2, interview, 16th January 2025).

When there is an attack somewhere and people are displaced, first of all, they will encounter difficulty in getting food so their rights [to nutritious food] has been infringed. And then the children might not go to school so their rights [to education] have also been infringed (Reporter 1, interview 17th January 2025).

As demonstrated in the three excerpts above, journalists are aware of human rights issues arising from the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley. This awareness is critical in questioning the powers of authorities and perpetrators to stop the infringement of human rights.

The tone in the first excerpt one is one of anger, concern, and sadness at the infringement of various human rights, which can be a motivator for their coverage. In the second excerpt, the editor talks of reporting on any violation of human rights. Although such reporting is important, it may come too late after an infringement has happened since the reporting in this aspect is episodic, meaning that it is event-driven. Therefore, journalists ought to adopt pre-emptive thematic reporting on possible human rights violations to minimise the number of victims who may suffer them. Thematic reporting also reduces falsehoods, unreliable or scanty information at any stage of a conflict, which can lead to desperation among audiences, making them susceptible to manipulation (Tawanda and Mbwirire 2020). In this scenario, local-language radio can act as an early warning system on possible human rights infringements, potentially leading to timely interventions by concerned stakeholders. The editor in the second excerpt shows a resolve to report on stories that touch on human rights using the words “it has to be reported”, a move that is important in their protection and promotion. With regard to the third excerpt, the words “first of all” indicate that the reporter is aware of how human rights are interlinked, demonstrating that the infringement of one right has a ripple effect, leading to the infringement of others.

Through the discussion above, the importance of human rights in news reports is indicated as one of the factors that influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding by local radio journalists. Such reportage is key in the promotion and protection of human rights in conflict situations. The next theme discusses the safety and security of journalists operating in Kerio Valley.

Theme 6: Safety and Security of Journalists

This theme has been presented in an international conference and is currently under consideration for publishing in a refereed journal.

Violence against journalists is now a reality, especially for those reporting in conflict zones such as Kerio Valley, creating a problem in the current practice (Tejedor, Cervi, and Tusa 2022). The problem stems from journalists' inability to freely gather, analyse, and report on the much-needed information from conflict areas, enabling their audiences and stakeholders to make informed decisions (Adebayo, Florence and Olumide 2024). Admittedly, conflict reporting can be a daunting undertaking that puts journalists' health and lives at risk (Kibet 2015).

The safety and security of journalists in the field are necessary for the freedom of the media, freedom of expression, and democracy, which are vital components of human rights and peace reporting (Høiby and Ottosen 2019). Without the watchful eyes of journalists, human rights violations committed by parties to conflict or by governmental security apparatuses can go unnoticed and unreported. I discuss the various risks under three sub-themes: human-related, environmental-related, and psychological-related.

Sub-Theme 6.1: Human Related Risks - “I will come after you and your family!”

Journalists and security personnel share a symbiotic relationship in conflict situations (Kibet 2015). Journalists need security officers for information, since they are privy to details such as the number of casualties or livestock stolen from their intelligence networks. On the other hand, the work of journalists is important to security personnel in communicating their actions as well as intentions to the public. The communications is intended to garner legitimacy and support, more so in controversial and potentially divisive exercises like curfews and disarmament programmes.

The information sought by journalists could be on the number of casualties (often downplayed by security personnel), injuries and possible human rights violations. Both groups can at times be embedded, exposing journalists to danger while creating friction over what to report and what not to, since security personnel are interested in the hegemonic ‘official line’ while journalists would prefer factual reporting based on their own independent news-gathering techniques. The friction was evident in an incident where security personnel were engaged in a gunfight with suspected bandits who had attacked a school in Baringo County while a security meeting was taking place nearby, as shown in the following excerpts by the study’s participating reporters:

Media houses are not that funded to access these places, it is very difficult. So, the only way you can access those areas is using security apparatus. In many cases, when there is an attack from the bandits we join the convoy of the police at least so that they can give us that security and back up in case anything happens (Reporter 2, interview 20th January, 2025).

We were in one of the armoured vehicles and we went to the school where the children were lying down and there were gunshots from the other side, from the bushes, and now the security (personnel) were shooting at the opposite direction. So the bandits were shooting towards the school, the police were shooting towards where the bandits were, and we captured all these moments live on video. So they [police officers] said we acted

a drama (Reporter 1, interview 17th January, 2025).

The first excerpt shows that inadequate resources hamper journalists' ability to cover stories in Kerio Valley, forcing them to rely on security personnel for transportation to conflict areas, compromising their safety and independence in newsgathering. The second excerpt shows the brazen attacks that bandits can carry out and the dangers that journalists face, confirming the assertion by Kibet (2015) that the lives of journalists covering conflicts are at risk from parties in conflict.

Although the incident was captured on video, the police later arrested one of the journalists on charges of 'faking' a story, calling it "acting a drama". The words "acted a drama" suggest an enactment of a false and harmless event, thereby downplaying the accuracy and magnitude of the attack. The accusation by the police painted journalists as peddlers of false information, thereby delegitimising their power to shape narratives about the conflict. This incident suggests that security personnel's impunity threatens media freedom, a key component not only in conflict reporting but also in building democratic governance in a country (Frey 2023). Besides, access to information is a human right in itself as provided for in Article 35 of the Kenyan Constitution.

The incident not only showed the physical danger that can be experienced by journalists but also the suspicion of disinformation, a deliberate distortion of otherwise true information (Aimeur, Amri and Brassard 2023), which can be an impediment to professional reporting of conflicts. In such scenarios, journalists may feel intimidated, frustrated and demoralised as demonstrated below:

The bandits know that you have been calling them bandits, and now police are saying that you are almost calling us [the police] bandits. So, you are at loggerheads, and it put us in a crossroad with security apparatus for a very long time. We are still reconciling [with] them because we told them, look, we have a duty and you have a responsibility also....sometimes it is not easy to work in such an area....everything is sensitive here (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025).

The words "loggerheads" and "crossroads" allude to discourses of conflict, disagreement, and ideological struggle between journalists and security personnel, who must reach an agreeable decision, since their varied roles are important to resolving the Kerio Valley conflict. On the other hand, "reconciliation" and "responsibility" signal a recognition of the need to restore a damaged relationship by addressing past wrongs.

The behaviour of the security personnel in the excerpt above is probably due to uncomfortable spotlights that journalists shine on their activities, which may include failures at preventing attacks, negligence or possible human rights abuses. Makayoto (2024) revealed that Kenyan security agencies violated the rights of terrorism suspects through enforced disappearances and killings in its counter terrorism efforts. Security agencies may intimidate or harass journalists to prevent them from reporting on such incidents, showing their dominance and misuse of power in conflict situations. It also shows a desire to maintain their dominance through arbitrary arrests and harassment.

Threats, harassment and intimidation from security personnel can result in under-reporting by journalists due to time constraints and fear of upsetting their guarantors of transport and security in hostile areas (Høiby and Ottosen 2016). This dependency on security personnel arguably threatens peace journalism's pillars of truth and people orientation, as revealed by Reporter 2:

...these security apparatus have limitations because you are going with police officers who are supposed to protect you from harm and bring you back safe. At the same time, there are atrocities that are committed by these security forces. Will you really objectively report on what the police have failed to do [or done] and they are the people who took you there? (Reporter 2, interview, 20th January, 2025).

The quote above shows the need to train security personnel not only on human rights but also on freedom of the media as provided for in Article 34 of the Kenyan Constitution. Through such training, security personnel would appreciate the crucial role that journalists play in communicating accurate information in a conflict, which may lead to its de-escalation.

Risks also come from news sources or leaders who may become uncomfortable with media reports that expose their activities related to the conflict, threatening their power, legitimacy and possible dominance. Such sources can resort to threats and intimidation to dissuade journalists from truthful reporting that paints them negatively in the eyes of the public. Such behaviour stems from intolerance of media freedom by government officials and political leaders, which has been on an increase in the recent past (Nyabuga 2016), as is explained by a reporter and editor:

I remember we went to a peace meeting led by a cabinet secretary in Chemolingot and when we went there, the youth there asked for a particular online platform ran by one of our journalists. They asked his name. Where is so and so? You tell him to stop writing

negative stories about us and we are watching. You know those statements are not just statements they are verbal threats (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January 2025).

You could find that maybe a certain leader on the ground is partly concerned about it [the violence and subsequent reporting of it]. You don't know how they are involved and then if the reporter now reports in a manner that this leader doesn't like or finds it like “unamchomea kura” [you are spoiling his potential votes during elections] then they'll pursue the reporter on the ground. So, they even threaten, others we've had to evacuate and take to other places. Others eventually decided to quit reporting in the area and chose other beats. You know threats, which are serious threats. Someone tells you I'll come after you and your family. I know where your family is, I know where your children are...(Editor 1, interview, 22nd January, 2025).

Journalists who are caught in the political web that accompanies the conflict, and who have threats levelled against their family, can fail to report information that implicates suspected perpetrators of violence. Failing to report on information about warmongers, either out of direct fear or reluctance to disrupt the dominant political structures, undermine the truth pillar of peace journalism. The truth pillar calls for the exposure of truths on all sides, as well as for the prevention of any cover-ups (Galtung 2003). The use of the phrases “stop writing negative stories about us” and “we are watching” communicates a threatening discourse. The statements demonstrate the media's communicative power that exposed ills arising from the conflict, questioning the power of perpetrators and delegitimising them in the public's eyes, forcing them to resort to threats. Thus, fear and threats become a factor influencing the reporting of stories in conflict situations. However, it is evident that despite the dangers that journalists face, the study interviewees maintained a discourse of perseverance, viewing their work as a responsibility to their audiences to get the story out there, thereby contesting and challenging the dominance of the political class (Van Dijk 2015). Their resilience is demonstrated in the excerpts below:

I go there with the risks that are there sometimes... It is not a guarantee that you will come back. But you go there knowing that you have a duty and responsibility to get the story. Journalism is a calling... (Reporter 2, interview, 20th January).

I have gone to a place where the bandits have been, and you never know if they will come back and you need to cover that story. You are not so sure if you [will] come back alive, or maybe if the persons [bandits] will attack you and maybe you lose your life. So it is a responsibility that you need to do, you just go (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025).

Despite the need to go to the conflict area to report on various stories, journalists are denied access, especially during security operations to root out bandits or during curfews and disarmament exercises conducted by the government. In this case, the media failed to fulfil its

role as an information-disseminating institution (Aporbo 2023). This was evident in the explanation from an editor:

Especially when the KDF (Kenya Defence Forces) came to [Kerio Valley], we were not given space to cover the progress of the operation.... We could not get any information from the ground. We tried getting permission, but we were told by the government that place is now under operation and we cannot report anything from that place (Editor 2, interview, 16th January, 2025).

Kibet (2015: 28) points out that security operations can at times be “tactful, reactive and secretive”, which may explain why journalists are at times denied access to operational zones. However, in the event of denial of access to such areas, stories of victims go unreported as well as possible human rights violations by groups in conflict or from the security personnel themselves. Denial of access to conflict areas lead to a dependence on official government communication that does not reflect the true situation on the ground. Such deficiency is due to heavy censorship meant to preserve the hegemonic official line as part of governmental media relations management strategies (Bhowmik and Fisher 2023) aimed at preserving their power and authority. The goal of such communication is to preserve the power and authority of government in Kerio Valley, denying journalists the opportunity to question it through independent reporting.

In other instances, threats do not end with journalists but extend to their sources, who are intimidated into silence. As previously stated, news sources are important to journalists since they are crucial in providing their lived experiences and the context of a conflict. Intimidation of sources is detrimental to peace journalism that requires exposure of activities of warmongers and peacemakers in communities to aid audiences in making informed decisions to value non-violent responses to conflict (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005). At times, this intimidation can result in death as reported below:

When sources want to give information, they are being threatened that if you give the media the information we will come for you. For example, a teacher somewhere was shot because he was mostly active in giving information from the ground to the media about the attacks so he was targeted, attacked and killed (Editor 1, interview, 22nd January, 2025).

As demonstrated above, there may be sources who are willing to give information to journalists on the conflict but are afraid to do so out of fear for their safety, making it a factor that determines the coverage of such stories. Journalists have a duty to win the confidence of such sources by maintaining their confidentiality and protecting their identities, a practice expected

of them in the industry.

The next section discusses risks emanating from the environment in Kerio Valley.

Sub-Theme 6.2: Environmental Related Risks - “He got lost for almost two days and was found up a tree”

Kerio Valley, being a semi-arid and rugged rural area with a poor road network, makes movement difficult and tedious. Mobile telephone coverage is also poor or non-existent in some areas, which makes communication unreliable. It is also inhabited by dangerous wildlife that includes elephants, hyenas and poisonous snakes that pose considerable risks to journalists operating in the area. In one incident, as per a study participant, a reporter was lost on assignment for two days and survived a possible hyena attack by climbing a tree. The unfortunate incident confirms the slow violence effects of underdevelopment arising from the conflict. In a developed area, it would have been easier to call and locate the lost journalist. The words “hyenas milling around”, “fall down” and “become a meal” communicate discourses of danger, fear and desperation. The excerpt below captures this:

One of my colleagues got lost during one of the coverages that we went to do between the border of Turkana and Baringo. He got lost for almost two days and was found up a tree. The guy stayed up there watching hyenas milling around the tree hoping that this guy might fall down and become a meal (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025).

Kerio Valley is also geographically vast, necessitating considerable travelling time to move from one area to another when gathering news stories. Journalists from small media houses are more disadvantaged since they may lack transportation to conflict areas, forcing them to hike lifts from rival media houses or NGOs that can affect their objectivity in reporting. Such scenarios are part of structural challenges that are beyond the control of individual journalists. Transport providers to news sites thus exercise power over journalists, thereby compromising their editorial independence. Unavailability of reliable transport is a major concern to journalists who need quick access to conflict areas to report accurately on what took place and to meet the news deadlines. By using the words “volatile”, “geographically difficult to access” and “can’t walk alone”, the reporters establish the unpredictable and challenging terrain as factors that influence their reporting of news stories in the Kerio Valley conflict, as shown below:

If you are going to Tiriokwo, and we leave here (Kabarnet town) at 5am, we will get there at 12 pm. That is almost seven hours eight hours and then come back and this is

a very volatile area, so sometimes it is geographically so difficult to access this place and the dangers that come with it (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025).

Because you can't walk alone, you walk with friends [from other media houses]. Some have cars that they can carry you along and then at times we can depend on the NGOs in case they are doing something... when they are visiting those places we can also go with them (Reporter 2, interview, 20th January, 2025).

In their adherence to meet timeliness as a news value, combined with the inaccessibility of the locations, journalists may conduct hurried reporting of stories devoid of adequate research and interviews. As such, news stories may have errors, lowering the accuracy and quality of information disseminated (Bekidusa 2024). Hurried reporting results in news stories that are inadvertently devoid of adequate information, more so from victims of the violence, compromising the people pillar of peace journalism. Therefore, journalists ought to balance between the speed of dissemination of information and their accuracy (Bekidusa 2024). This calls for patience and restraint before disseminating unverified information.

Despite the various challenges that journalists face in accessing the vast and often dangerous territory of the Kerio Valley, their work should “stand for truth on all sides” (Galtung 2003: 179), which ought to be reported no matter how uncomfortable it may be, enabling audiences to make informed decisions on a conflict. Such reporting helps in achieving change by engaging multiple voices and perspectives, ensuring that all sides in a conflict receive equal coverage in active and latent conflicts (Hyde-Clarke 2012).

However, the discomfort journalists feel is often extremely psychological, as discussed in the next sub-theme.

Sub-Theme 6.3: Psychological Related Risks - “I should never have gone there”

Journalists encounter psychological risks in their coverage of the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley. Psychological risks can be considered as part of slow violence (Nixon 2011) that needs to be focused on in news reports as invisible effects under the truth pillar of peace journalism.

In their day-to-day coverage of conflicts and violence, journalists are likely to experience “perpetual and cyclic exposure to trauma” (Radoli 2024: 293) resulting from deaths and injuries to victims. This can affect their psychological health over time as a form of slow violence

because of images that remain in their minds, reminding them of bad experiences. Such effects can go unnoticed or ignored, aggravating the psychological well-being of journalists, as was shared by a reporter:

There was an attack at a certain village in Baringo South where seven men were killed at once. We went there and the bodies were still lying on the ground, because it took like more than 12 hours before the police officers came to carry them..... It is something that is still fresh in my mind because of the state of the bodies. The people were shot and you could see holes in the body, maybe on the head... (Reporter 2, interview, 20th January, 2025).

The journalists shared that being subject to such encounters causes a reluctance to go back to the dangerous areas if they are given a choice, making past trauma a factor that determines whether current possible traumatic stories are covered or not. Use of the words “fresh in my mind” signifies an enduring memory and that the reporter is still ‘haunted’ by this event long after it happened. The sentence “see holes in the body” paints a graphic discourse of fear that can be traumatic to journalists who witness such events. Frey (2023) argues that this untreated trauma is commonplace for journalists in Africa, a situation that is also evident in Kerio Valley. When journalists are not willing to go to insecure places due to lasting trauma, the flow of accurate information from the field is affected. The reporters’ role in facilitating the dissemination of relevant information within a community is thus called into question.

Without debriefing and counselling, reporters likely suppress their emotions; their response to these events, and often is a coping mechanism as is evident in the excerpt below:

We were from a place called Kapedo and there's a stretch called Kapedo Bridge that is notorious [for attacks]. This is where a whole platoon of police were ambushed and killed by the bandits. So, I remember this particular day we met a group of young people with guns and we never stopped. Fortunately, nobody shot at us and we drove at almost one hour in a place we usually drive for around three or four hours. We used one hour to Kabarnet, nobody talked to each other until the following day (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025).

That “nobody talked to each other until the following day” signifies discourses of fear and psychological intimidation they felt, which may affect how and if they discharge their duties in conflict areas. Although journalists are thus not immune to what they encounter in the field, they can also often display resilience in their work. Resilience is a personal resource that journalists are expected to have and use to cope and bounce back from traumatic or stressful situations that they encounter in their work (Simunjak 2023). This can involve awareness of possible dangers in the field and the preparations needed to counter them (Frey 2023). The

emotive account below evokes a sense of duty and resilience despite the very human, emotional response to scenes of violence that are “still fresh”:

When you are in the field, you are a human being as much as you are a very good journalist. Sometimes when you are covering these events, you see bodies that are still fresh, and sometimes when you do these things, it tends to carry away your emotions, sometimes as much as you want to be strong, it can be visibly seen that you're stressed (Reporter 2, interview, 20th January, 2025).

The words “visibly seen that you are stressed” show that journalists at times display physical traits such as irritability and drawn faces that communicate inward stress felt emanating from stressful working conditions. Bekidusa (2024) found that journalists in Kenya exit the profession for various reasons that include unfavourable working conditions and stress, which affects their mental well-being, hence the urgent need to address their mental health. Such departures, especially by experienced journalists, can be detrimental to critical beats like human rights and peace reporting. It may also serve to preserve unchallenged existing domination, thereby denying the audience quality interactions that ought to occur through local-language radio (Omondi 2016).

The dangerous and stressful situations arising from the violence in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley discussed above result in slow violence that occurs over time, out of sight (Nixon 2011). Victims and journalists experience these slow temporalities of violence as shown in the excerpt above. Through the people and truth orientations of Peace Journalism theory, the effects of slow violence need to be made visible or represented by humanising stories. The following excerpt shows this slow violence suffered by a victim at the hands of bandits who had earlier shot him as a child, causing permanent blindness. In this particular case, the victim continued suffering the violence slowly through blindness until his unfortunate killing by other bandits many years later.

There is this teacher that I even did a feature about him. He was shot when he was still a kid. And at that encounter, he was with his father in the fields and then the bandits killed the father and drove away all the animals, and then they shot at him in the face. He lost his sight. All his life since his childhood, he lost his sight completely. But despite the challenges he was encouraged and he went to school. He studied, went for teacher training and then he became a teacher. Unfortunately, like a year ago, he was shot and killed by the bandits (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025).

The excerpt above, though representing a discourse of victimhood, also shows resilience by the late teacher, who, despite his struggles with earlier injuries sustained from the bandit attack, went on with his education and eventually joined the teaching profession.

Journalists who encounter tragic events in the field can also suffer their consequences long after exposure to them, which is a form of slow violence occurring out of sight (Nixon 2011). Although Nixon does not mention psychological risks directly, he recognises the challenge of “giving symbolic shape to formless threats” dispersed over lengthy periods necessitating the employment of “creative ways” of representing them more so in the local-language radio stations (Nixon 2011: 14). Such formless threats represented through pictures that “fade” and “at times recur”, as shown below, signify a continuous threat hampering the health and work of journalists if left untreated, making it another factor that influences the coverage of human rights and peace stories. It is encouraging to note that some stations organise counselling sessions for their staff, though not on a regular basis:

I have spoken about the deaths of people, the trauma that can come from the experience that you'll have there like the death of the seven people... Through the assistance of the station, I went for counselling and maybe after, like a week or two, the picture faded away, but at times, it recurs (Reporter 2, interview, 20th January, 2025).

The only counselling I remember we went through is after 2007 post-election violence that were done by the USAID and that was 2008. That is the only counselling that we went through but on this region, none (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025).

Although peace journalism calls on journalists to focus on invisible effects that can manifest themselves as trauma (Galtung 2003), it does not account for the need for counselling to journalists covering traumatic situations, thereby overlooking an important aspect of functional and safe journalism. Counselling is a critical intervention for the psychological health of journalists, which the study participants recognised as crucial but not regularly implemented. In this case, media owners and managers ought to give support to their journalists (Frey, 2023).

Conclusion

The chapter showed the data analysis process guided by the six steps of reflexive thematic analysis as established by Braun and Clarke (2020) and critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 2015). The chapter was organised according to themes generated from the data that deal with factors the Kass FM and Alpha Radio reporters believe are influential in their reporting, especially in the context of peacebuilding and human rights. The deeper meaning of these factors was facilitated by conducting critical discourse analysis and interpreting their shared views in light of the study’s theoretical framework; peace journalism (Galtung 2003; McGoldrick and Lynch 2006; Nzibo 2020); representation theories (Hall 1997) and the slow

violence concept (Nixon 2011).

The findings show that human interest and consequences of the violence for the community, fight for resources and sacred land, constructedness and credibility of news sources, peace building and conflict de-escalation, and security of journalists guide the selection of narratives used in reporting on human rights and peacebuilding in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley. It also showed that power and access to the media are significant factors in what is reported, as politicians, government officials, and security personnel make up the bulk of the news sources journalists interviewed in the said reports. The chapter argues that, instead of ensuring a variety of sources and being guided by empathy, these factors should be factored into the reporting.

Journalists also demonstrated awareness of human rights issues and peace journalism practices, which they employ in some instances in their reportage. This was evident in acknowledging the need to prioritise stories that affect people, which are key to highlighting human rights infringements and potentially aid in showing the slow violence effects on them. By conducting a critical discourse analysis perspective, the study found that language choice is important in the representation of human rights and peace in the Kerio Valley conflict. CDA revealed the presence of words such as “ancestral places” that show the spiritual connection of communities to land. Other words, such as “make news,” which referred to politicians as regular news sources, support the constructedness view of news. Possible stereotyping was also seen through the words “cause a stir”, which can construct other communities as aggressors. The study established the presence of the following discourses in the in-depth interviews: humanising discourses, “othering” discourses, unity and cohesion discourses, conflict discourses, discourses of fear, discourses of stress, and discourses of victimhood. These discourses are ideological struggles to enact, maintain, and question elite dominance, which is challenged only in minimal cases.

The analysis also showed how politicians used discourse to exert power and dominance, as well as to employ delegitimising strategies against journalists when news coverage paints some news sources in a negative light. It then established that the safety and security of journalists is a key factor in gathering accurate, verified information from the conflict zone. In order for peace journalism to work in conflicts like the one in Kerio Valley, the psychological welfare of journalists must be taken into account by the industry and media houses themselves.

The next chapter discusses possible improvement of conflict news reporting within the peace journalism framework. However, this discussion is not a theme, but recommendations on how best local-language radio stations can report human rights and peacebuilding within the peace journalism framework in Kenya and other conflict contexts.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RETHINKING PEACE JOURNALISM REPORTING BY LOCAL-LANGUAGE RADIO STATIONS

This chapter addresses the third and final key research question: how human rights and peacebuilding ought to be framed within peace journalism in Kenya and similar contexts. I achieve this through a synthesis of data from the radio reportage (news and feature stories) discussed in Chapter Six and the in-depth interviews with participating journalists discussed in Chapter Seven. The interpretation of the integrated data was guided by my chosen theoretical lens: Peace Journalism, Representation, and the Slow Violence concept. The analysis in this chapter was also aided by relevant findings from past scholarship on peace and human rights reporting and my knowledge of realities on the ground.

Conflict Sensitivity: “...those are extreme words, they provoke anger⁴.”

Peace journalism gained traction in Kenya after the infamous 2007/2008 post-election violence (see Ismail and Deane 2008; Njigua and Manyengo 2017). While the study participants have engaged in peace journalism practice in their duties, they all agree that they and the media in general ought to do more to report on human rights and peacebuilding in conflict situations, specifically in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley. They emphasised the need to practice conflict sensitivity in their reporting. Conflict sensitivity is achievable through the choice of story angles that foreground peace and the use of specific words that are not inflammatory to represent a conflict or people in it, shaping how individuals and communities view each other (Chiluwa and Chiluwa 2022). In this sense, insensitive words can provoke anger and exacerbate conflicts (Doll 2025). Therefore, adopting conflict sensitivity is important for local-language radio journalists and, indeed, the media in general that reach multi-ethnic audiences, as is the case in Kerio Valley, where there may be cultural or political sensitivities. Through this effort, peace journalism is upheld as suggested by a participating reporter below:

As much as this person understands what peace journalism is, there are some words that they throw in between and they think it's ok. By using words like war, genocide, massacre or atrocities those, are extreme words, they provoke anger. So peace journalism is more of tolerance and not necessarily speaking, giving the way they are, but having both sides and dissecting and understanding the basis of why things were started instead of saying this community has raided this community, please give us a background...(Reporter 2, interview, 16th January, 2025).

⁴ Reporter 2, interview, 16th January, 2025

Not only do insensitive words exacerbate conflicts, but journalists must be aware of stereotypes as used by news sources. Stereotypes can distort the social reality of individuals and communities when used in media reports (Avraham and First 2010), as previously discussed in Chapter Six. Negative stereotypes ought to be contested by journalists (Hall 1997). A participating reporter reflects on stereotypes:

You don't stereotype either side. There are some words that we can't allow to go on air. For example, if a person from this one community, like say, community 'A', refers to the other community as the 'troublemakers', it can't be used because it is not the whole community, but persons within the community, so we can't generalise that it is the whole community that has a problem. At times when you go to the field, people will use different words and language, but as a person, I will get rid of the words that can create more conflict (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025).

When local-language radio stations practice conflict sensitivity, they promote cultural coherence and tolerance, thereby aiding peace efforts and fostering the much-needed intercultural coexistence appropriate to multi-ethnic societies (Ghofrani 2024). Thus, it is important to avoid words that promote stereotyping, such as “troublemaker”, as shown above in news reports, since local-language radio can shape prejudiced beliefs, norms and behaviours of communities in conflict (Omondi 2016).

Source Selection and Narrative Power: Prioritise Victims – “...victims are the ones who will suffer the most⁵...”

The accuracy and impact of news stories depend on sources and the narratives chosen by journalists. Based on Hall's arguments on the relationship between representation and power, these choices determine whose voice is included in the news reports. This study established that journalists do have access to a variety of sources, including residents of the Kerio Valley. However, the news sources are predominantly drawn from the elites (politicians and security personnel), and arguably, elite power appears to be perpetuated in the Kerio Valley conflict. By extension, this marginalises the voices and experiences of ordinary people. Drawing sources from elites in the society prioritises their ‘grand narratives’ that ought to be countered by including a variety of sources, and more so, the ordinary ones. Having sources at different levels of society mitigates against a ‘grand narrative’ since audiences are exposed to a variety of perspectives. Voices of ordinary people can reveal the effects of slow violence (Nixon 2011)

⁵ Editor 1, interview, follow-up interview, 1st February, 2025

in the conflict and help journalists avoid one-sided reporting (McGoldrick and Lynch 2006). Lastly, the inclusion of local voices in news reports can foster communities' ownership of peacebuilding processes (Orgeret and Tayeebwa 2016).

Conflict victims face different challenges, which ought to be prioritised in news reports. One editor suggested that the media should give victims time to talk about their problems and possible solutions. Thus, the representation of victims in news and feature stories recognises their importance in humanising stories, thereby agreeing with the people pillar of peace journalism (Galtung 2003). In this sense, journalists ought to be empathetic to the circumstances of their sources and tell their stories from their point of view in what Linje Manyozo (2016) terms 'borrowing their tongues'. In such a case, local-language radio provides a platform where communities in conflict can engage with each other to build consensus towards peaceful resolution of conflicts as demonstrated below:

...if the source of conflict is not aired or not well articulated, it may not be fully solved, so the problem will tend to continue. The victims are the ones who will suffer the most, because here we may report like scarcely but the real truth on the ground is actually different... (Editor 1, interview, follow-up interview, 1st February, 2025).

... especially the victims given a chance to present their views because some of the victims already have the solutions for the problems they are facing about the human rights violations (Editor 2, interview, 16th January 2025).

In fulfilment of the above, local-language radio stations offer a platform through their various programmes for the construction and dissemination of narratives and discourses by victims of the conflict to their audiences (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Hanitzsch, and Nagar 2016).

Maintain Balance and Fairness: “...you need to listen to all the conflicting sides⁶...”

Conflict reporting requires balance and fairness in the sources interviewed, yielding a variety of views. Balance and fairness are news values that ensure stories are covered on all sides, thereby eliminating bias and the marginalisation of some voices. While these suggestions are not new to journalists, their emphasis underscores their importance in the representation of conflicts, where stories that promote peace and cohesion are reported, thereby toning down ethnic differences (Teresa 2011). Balance and fairness are critical to local-language radio that has previously been accused of partisan reporting, leading to conflict escalation as witnessed

⁶ Editor 1, follow-up interview, 1st February, 2025

in the post-election violence of 2007/2008 in Kenya (Ismail and Deane 2008). As argued previously in Chapter Seven, balanced reporting helps journalists avoid portraying a conflict as affecting only one or two parties (McGoldrick and Lynch 2006), which may lead to conflict escalation (Adebayo and Makwambeni 2019).

A balanced news story also helps create understanding among audiences of the conflict and its contextual issues, such as culture, limited resources, and the fluid nature of boundaries, as established in the Kerio Valley context. Such reporting may call for analysis-based reporting that avoids a generic “he said, she said” that merely repeats possible self-serving positions taken by news sources. Through analysis-type reporting, audiences benefit from rich, diverse content while having the opportunity to interrogate narratives in the reports, potentially preventing themselves from manipulation by news sources through their discourses and actions that can perpetuate untruths. In this case, peace journalism bears similarities with most aspects of what would be considered as objective reporting (Doll 2025). An editor shows this through a comment on feature story production:

Packaging features is usually hectic because you will not just depend on one source. You need to have different sources in a conflict; you need to listen to all the conflicting sides, all of them, so that you do not put into consideration the cries and lamentations from one side (Editor 1, follow-up interview, 1st February, 2025).

The failure of local-language radio to provide balanced stories can lead to communities that are dominated seeing the dominance of other communities over them as normal, thereby making it easier to normalise further infringement of human rights (Van Dijk 2015). Normalisation comes from repeated narratives about the conflict by local-language radio, and thus, how they report it becomes how it is known. This is why it is important for local-language radio journalists to consistently report balanced news stories that expose audiences to a variety of views, minimising the effects of propaganda and misinformation that can escalate conflicts. Balanced stories align with the truth pillar of peace journalism, which ensures that the views of all parties in conflict are represented and ought to be applied across all conflict contexts.

Expose Interests: “...it curtails the media; exposing them is the right thing to do⁷.”

News reporting follows industry and in-house procedures that ensure that news values such as objectivity, fairness, timeliness, truth and accuracy, among others, are followed (Tesot 2021).

⁷ Editor 1, follow-up interview, 1st February 2025

However, the study participants are alive to influences that come from external forces such as government, media owners, politicians and advertisers who may have interests in a conflict and the way it is covered. The interests mentioned are part of the political economy of the media that arguably influence their editorial decisions and independence. Such interests inhibit the independence and freedom of the media to carry out its watchdog role in society, which is key in human rights and peace reporting. In this case, various groups in the society (Hassan 2018) can manipulate local-language radio to achieve favourable coverage and thus exercise their power and dominance.

In other instances, such interests lead to threats against journalists who refuse to follow the desires of such external forces, as discussed under the theme on safety and security of journalists in Chapter Seven. By revealing such threats in media reports, local-language radio can expose, question and delegitimise the powers of such interested parties in the eyes of the public through the communicative power of radio. Such reporting would help in relocating the identities of such players in the conflict from their private to the public realms (Ge and Wang 2018), exposing them to scrutiny and possibly dissuading them from interfering in journalistic functions.

When external forces intrude on the sanctity of the journalistic profession and compromise its editorial independence, bias in conflict reporting becomes inevitable, potentially escalating the conflict. Thus, the advice of Wolde and Woldearegay (2024) to be wary of community elites and other groups with selfish interests is appropriate in this situation. In most cases, elites are sources or subjects of news on local-language radio (Van Dijk 2015), and thus the inclusion of varied ordinary voices is a deliberate and critical journalistic act to break their dominance in news reports. Therefore, if peace journalism is to succeed, maintenance of editorial independence of the local-language radio and the media in general is always key. The excerpts below show this:

When we are working as editors, there could be some interest between the media owners and maybe the conflicting area. You don't know what is happening so now there comes in the house policy. When the house policy doesn't agree with you as an editor, that is where you will be economical when you are reportingthat's where conflict comes in and you are now like tied as an editor... (Editor 1, follow-up interview, 1st February 2025).

The situation of the editor above communicates a dilemma between following the media house policy and bending to the interests of media owners. In such scenarios, the inability of

journalists to freely gather, analyse and report conflict information independently is affected, denying their audiences an opportunity to make informed decisions on it (Adebayo, Florence and Olumide 2024). An editor reflects on the dilemma below:

You have to follow the media law and ethics, you have to stand by it and that's the law so no one should push me....If today I have a raw story from a conflict area, it's upon me to judge using the media law if I'm going to release it to be aired... (Editor 2, interview, 16th January 2025).

Vested interests from various stakeholders have a bearing on what kind of stories journalists cover in a conflict. Failure to freely gather information threatens the truth pillar of peace journalism. Nevertheless, journalists should be guided by the applicable media laws when discharging their duties in various conflict situations as demonstrated here:

There is a lot that journalists can do in exposing those elites and reporting the real thing on the ground, but as I said, you are gutted by those interests. Be it the leadership interest, be it business interest, be it the media owners' interest, it curtails the media; exposing them is the right thing to do (Editor 1, follow-up interview, 1st February 2025).

The work of journalists can expose the interests of elites in society in conflict, thereby prompting them to seek support from their editors and employers against any legal implications arising from such reportage, as shown in the following section.

Play Your Watchdog Role: Beware of Threats – “...I followed all the media law... stand with me⁸...”

Although the study participants discussed following media laws in reporting the Kerio Valley conflict, they are wary of the consequences that controversial reports can have on their physical safety, as previously discussed under human-related risks they face in their duties. The risks come from news sources that become uncomfortable with media reports that may expose their involvement or that of their business and political associates in the conflict. Such behaviour stems from government officials' and political leaders' intolerance for media freedom, which has increased in recent years (Nyabuga 2016). Other threats also come from news sources that may not be happy with the reportage and take individual journalists or media houses to court, potentially leading to huge fines. Such sources may view the reporting as targeting them, even when the content is true (Wolde and Woldearegay 2024). In this case, journalists who are caught in the political web that accompanies the conflict are threatened and fail to report

⁸ Editor 2, interview, 16th January, 2025

information that implicates suspected perpetrators of violence, hindering their watchdog role and challenging the truth pillar of peace journalism. Based on this, an editor expressed a desire for support from media managers and owners, which will give them more courage to report on the conflict and expose community elites who may be fuelling it. Since the freedom of the media is guaranteed in the Kenyan constitution under Article 34, various stakeholders such as the government, the Media Council of Kenya, the Editors Guild and the Media Owners Association should be at the forefront to ensure that it is respected in recognition of the important role that the media plays in democratic governance. This is why participating journalists called for support from their employers and managers against perceived harassment from news sources through litigation that journalists may find expensive to fight against in courts of law:

If my station will not stand with me for something I reported for the station, something truthful then I'm in trouble and they leave me alone to go to the courts and fight? Stand by me because I am your employee, you trust me, I followed all the media law and ethics to the letter then someone should stand with me to the end (Editor 2, interview, 16th January, 2025).

Through such support, journalists can be emboldened to play their watchdog role effectively, ensuring that peace journalism is upheld and that peace is maintained and human rights promoted. However, under such harassment, journalists may be deterred from reporting on sensitive stories, potentially compromising their watchdog role in society. Hence, failing to report on information about warmongers, either out of direct fear or reluctance to disrupt the dominant political structures, may challenge the truth pillar of peace journalism. The truth pillar calls for the exposure of truths on all sides in conflict, as well as for the exposure of attempts at any cover-ups (Galtung 2003).

Respect Media Freedom: “...they will do their work without fear⁹.”

Freedom of the media has an impact on a country's democratic governance and should be jealously guarded. The study participants called for respecting the media's freedom to report courageously on the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley. Free media is key to exposing ills, protecting liberty and truth, thereby occupying its true position as a fourth estate and a champion of human rights and peace (Joseph 2024).

Journalists need more freedom without fear to express and report the right things on the ground. If they are given the free will, if they are supported, they will do their work

⁹ Editor 1, follow-up interview, 1st February, 2025

without fear (Editor 1, follow-up interview, 1st February, 2025).

When the media occupies its rightful place, it can shape political and social discourses on a conflict (Omondi, 2016), creating an understanding of it, possibly leading to its transformation and stoppage. Such discourses shine a spotlight on the players in the conflict, its causes and context, enabling the audiences to consider and respond to it in a peaceful manner (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005).

Promote Reconciliation: “Now is the time for them to embrace peace and live together as one people¹⁰...”

With relative calm experienced in the Kerio Valley and a notable reduction in raids, journalists recognise the need to continue coverage of and from the area, which aligns with the peace journalism theory that emphasises stories of reconciliation and reconstruction within a solution-oriented approach (Galtung 2003). Continuous coverage is a form of thematic reporting that covers every stage of the conflict, enabling the media and their audiences to monitor its progress. Thematic reporting reduces falsehoods, unreliable or scanty information at any stage of a conflict, which can lead to desperation among audiences, making them susceptible to manipulation (Tawanda and Mbwirire 2020).

It is also an opportunity to highlight peacebuilding efforts from various stakeholders, such as the one in which a Cabinet Secretary in Chapter Six was captured, using emotional appeal to entreat the residents of Kerio Valley to stop the conflict. Emotional appeal is, according to Van Dijk (2011), a subjective construct used by speakers to construct and elicit an intended reaction from their audiences through language. Such peacebuilding efforts by news sources ought to be highlighted by local-language radio, thereby influencing audiences' perceptions and actions (Tayeebwa 2017). In this way, the media can monitor the progress of peace efforts, helping keep the conflict in the public limelight and ensuring stakeholder access. This is also a chance to represent the slow violence (Nixon 2011) effects of the conflict on communities and individuals through human-interest stories as shown below:

Now that we have peace and calmness in most parts, the better way we can do is to visit each community and then they talk about the experience and the challenges and how the conflict has affected them. Then after, sense will come in that maybe there is no need to have this conflict in the first place, yeah, because if each community can listen to what that community has gone through, they have the sense and I think it will be a

¹⁰ Reporter 2, interview, 20th January, 2025

better way and a reason to maintain this [peace] (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025).

By airing peacebuilding stories, local-language radio can encourage togetherness and cohesion of various communities in Kerio Valley. Through such, there is enactment of the power of communities in charting their course by cultivating unity and togetherness through agency and discourse. Discourses of togetherness challenges common stereotypes that sees communities in conflict as enemies who cannot co-exist peacefully. In this sense the advice of Stuart Hall (1997) to the media to challenge negative stereotypes is fulfilled. Such discourses in media reports recognises the efforts of journalists to initiate conflict de-escalation efforts instead of waiting for leaders to initiate them (McGoldrick and Lynch 2006).

I think it is a time now they understand the importance of peace. They can reflect amongst themselves that we have been fighting for so long and we haven't got any benefits. Now is the time for them to embrace peace and live together as one people though from different communities... (Reporter 2, interview, 20th January, 2025).

The notable reduction in violent raids which may be attributed to the intensified “*Operation Maliza Uhalifu North Rift*” provides a conducive atmosphere to pursue peacebuilding initiatives which ought to be reported by local-language radio stations and more so those led by ordinary community members. Local peace initiatives can gain acceptance from the communities in conflict ensuring their success. By foregrounding local peace initiatives, the media is enacting the power of the community to chart their own destiny through agency.

Specialised Training: “I advocate for building the capacity of journalists¹¹.”

Although Kenyan journalists have undergone training in various journalism schools, which may include aspects of peace journalism, there is a need to conduct specialised and regular training on it to enable them to report effectively. The said training should go beyond the tactics of reporting and writing news stories to incorporate the notable evolving nature of conflicts in various contexts (Doll 2025). The training ought to go hand in hand with mentorship to foster a deeper understanding of peace journalism, leading them to consistently embrace it in their reporting of conflicts (Kabeya and Ngwenya 2026). Such training would be beneficial to journalists, especially those covering the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley, which continues to evolve and now has more devastating consequences. The training would enable local-language radio journalists to adopt new reporting strategies, such as the inclusion of slow

¹¹ Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025

violence stories in line with the Peace Journalism theory and the Slow Violence concept (Galtung 2003; Nixon 2011). The excerpt below captures the views of a reporter on the training:

I advocate for building the capacity of the Journalists. How you cover these things so that it doesn't really degenerate further into conflict but rather highlight and enlighten people on the real issues on the conflict so that somebody who comes in to meditate or resolve this issue are able to understand these things from the perspective of the other side (Reporter 1, interview, 17th January, 2025).

The training would also enable journalists to understand the contexts of conflicts, what drives them and the hidden forces behind their escalation. It would also improve journalists' capacity to operate in volatile areas, enabling the reporting of timely, verified information.

Changing Perceptions: “...we want to change people's minds about Baringo¹².”

In all the efforts above, local-language radio and the media in general have the responsibility to represent the conflict area and the communities involved in a positive light to build a positive image of the area. A starting point would be to show the good things that are happening in various areas, as illustrated through the following excerpts:

The media should continue highlighting their stories about what's happening there. Right now, we can highlight more about the good things that are happening because when there is peace, there is calmness people will engage in different things, they will go to the farm, they will keep their livestock. So now at this moment that we don't have the conflict so much, then we can focus on such Stories (Editor 2, interview, 16th January, 2025).

For a long time, Baringo has been known for lack of peace but to be honest, that insecurity covers a very small territory. So we want to change people's minds about Baringo. We want to explain to people in lots of words, that there are so many good and beautiful things and beautiful places in Baringo (Reporter 2, interview, 20th January, 2025).

Such alternative stories from the Kerio Valley and surrounding regions can go a long way toward changing how audiences perceive the conflict. Local-language radio news is ideal for this quest because it is persuasive in nature, resulting from careful language choice and the use of words to create positive discourses that are linguistically accessible to people with minimal literacy skills (Alo and Ajewole-Orimogunje 2013). Positive stories can be complemented by those that showcase victims' resilience in the face of tragedy. As such, local-language radio plays a positive role in shaping multi-ethnic societies that promote human rights and peace (Adebayo and Makwambeni 2019).

¹² Reporter 2, interview, 20th January, 2025

Conclusion

The chapter directly addressed the third research question on possible ways to improve human rights and peace reporting by local-language radio stations, and combined these findings with synthesised findings from Chapters Six and Eight, guided by the Peace Journalism theory. It proposes conflict sensitivity in reporting, balance and fairness, empathy, specialised training in conflict reporting, media freedom, adherence to Kenyan media laws and promotion of reconciliation among communities in conflict. In this sense, peace journalism ought to be prominent in media reports, recognising the communicative power of radio to shape narratives and discourses on the conflict, thereby transforming how audiences view it. Adherence to the suggestions above could encourage more stories reported from a peace journalism lens and may potentially enable radio audiences to consider non-violent responses to conflicts, leading to their de-escalation and eventual stoppage. The next chapter presents the study's conclusion.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter concludes this thesis by providing a synthesised summary of the study's major findings and its contribution to knowledge, highlighting the gaps filled in local-language radio reporting of human rights and peace in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict. Its aim was to give voice to the Kenyan experience in media reporting on human rights and peacebuilding through a peace journalism lens, as reported by two local-language radio stations, Kass FM and Alpha Radio.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify what narratives and discourses the selected news and feature stories use in reporting the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict;
2. To examine the factors that influence the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict;
3. To assess and provide suggestions on how human rights and peacebuilding reporting can be framed within the peace journalism framework in Kenya and similar conflict contexts using local-language radio stations.

Based on the understanding that reality and its representations thereof are multiple and constructed (Gray, 2021) and that news is a construction and representation of events by journalists (Fourie, 2018), a qualitative approach was adopted. The qualitative design facilitated data reporting in a narrative format. Data were collected through an analysis of 53 radio news and feature stories and in-depth interviews with two purposively selected reporters and two editors. Data was analysed using the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke 2020) and the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Van Dijk 2015) methods.

The study adopted a constructivist paradigm, in which reality is multiple and constructed subjectively through a researcher's perceptions and interpretations (Croucher and Mills 2021). Thus, the multiple nature of reality aligns with my ontological beliefs that there is no single reality (Creswell and Poth 2018). Epistemologically, this study was founded on the idea of co-creation of knowledge by researchers and participants; hence, the deliberate preservation of participants' voices through excerpts, that allowed for the active construction of meaning from

narratives. Through such narratives, language use and specific word choice were analysed to indicate the presence or absence of peace journalism practices and power displays enacted or challenged through it.

Synthesised Summary of the Analysis

This section provides a synthesised analysis of the study's findings, highlighting the salient points and new knowledge produced in the context of the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict. Theoretically, the analysis was guided by peace journalism (Galtung 2003), representation (Hall 1997), and the concept of Slow Violence (Nixon 2011).

The first research question sought to examine the narratives and discourses that the selected news and feature stories aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio used in reporting the Kenyan Kerio Valley Conflict. The findings showed that news sources and journalists described livestock thieves and their activities using criminalised terms such as terrorists, terrorism, bandits, banditry, crooks, criminals, cattle thieves, outlaws and cattle rustlers. These terms were found to be derogatory, dehumanising and promoting hate speech, leading to the creation and maintenance of stereotypes on individuals and communities. Such stereotypes influence how communities view one another, leading to conflict escalation and the infringement of human rights (Doll 2025).

The analysed radio reportage demonstrated aspects of peace journalism through the peace, truth, people and solution orientation. Such instances included the airing of human-interest stories, such as the lived experiences of displaced women in theme five of Chapter Six, which supports the people pillar and was also appropriate for showing the slow violence effects of the conflict. Another example is the airing of a unity and peace discourse, aptly represented through the deployment of the family metaphor, which encourages communities to view each other as relations, thereby aiding in building cohesion among them. The unity and peace discourse supports the peace and solutions pillars of peace journalism that can be applied with varying success in the Kerio Valley context.

However, there are many instances in which journalists allowed inflammatory statements to be aired in news stories, thereby escalating conflict and creating unfavourable conditions for peaceful conflict transformation and resolution. An example of one such statement that demonstrated its inflammatory nature and appeared to support the extrajudicial killing of

suspected bandits is the “*mambo ni matatu*” statement. If such statements are not challenged through peaceful media discourses, they can lead to anger and retaliation, escalating the conflict. In this regard, peace journalism (Galtung 2003) fell short in its conflict sensitivity. Thus, it can be concluded that the local-language radio used peace journalism lenses inconsistently in reporting on the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley. In this sense, journalists reporting the Kerio Valley conflict need to practice consistent conflict sensitivity in their reporting to avoid such statements and potentially aid in their peaceful resolution.

The study established that there are human rights infringements on communities in Kerio Valley that include killings, displacements, injuries, interference with learning activities and lack of adequate food and water, leading to loss of dignified living among the populace. Infringement of human rights resulted in frustration and living in fear among residents due to the seeming inability of the government to tackle the conflict. In the reportage analysed, some news sources used victim discourse to express their frustration and to show how they have been neglected by the government. Examples of victim discourses include the displaced woman in Theme 5 in Chapter Six, whose experience was included by the reporter to show the desperate situation she was in due to a lack of basic necessities. Others are the displaced man and the MCA in theme three (Chapter Six), who talked of their personal losses in the conflict due to theft of livestock and deaths of family members. Inability to afford necessities demonstrates the inequalities that displaced people in Kerio Valley face, thereby constructing sustenance as a symbol of power and privilege (Oburumu and Forteta 2024).

On the other hand, some speakers, such as the Chairman of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and the unidentified member of parliament in theme two (Chapter Six), adopted a conciliatory tone in their discourses and attempted to build unity among residents as well as that of political and religious leaders, aimed at achieving peace. In both instances, the speakers deployed the family metaphor in their lexical persuasions to communicate their positions to their audiences. Through the family metaphor, residents were encouraged to strive for peaceful co-existence as one people bound by close relations. The argument above supported the people pillar of peace journalism, which journalists should use more in their reporting of the conflict.

The second research question examined factors influencing the selection of discourses on human rights and peacebuilding reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict, as discussed

during in-depth interviews with purposively selected news reporters and editors. An analysis of the findings showed that human interest and consequences for the community, fight for resources and sacred land, the constructedness and credibility of news sources, diverse voices and verifiability, peacebuilding and conflict de-escalation and safety of journalists are factors that influenced how human rights and peace stories were reported by Kass FM and Alpha Radio. Reflecting on the question I posed in Chapter Seven concerning the dynamic and dual consideration for factors that drive the Kerio Valley conflict, reporters seem to understand them as both the profane and sacred. The profane signifies a desire for economic accumulation of wealth, which can exacerbate conflicts in places with scarce resources, while the sacred shows the spiritual connection that communities have with land. However, they do not include it in their stories, missing the opportunity to explain context and hidden factors that drive the conflict. Such factors include an indistinct division between the living and the dead, limited resources such as water and pasture and speculative presence of hidden wealth in the form of minerals and oil. Thus, communities fight for the land to protect their spiritual heritage and expand their territory, anticipating benefits from compensation arising from displacements to facilitate mining activities. Inclusion of such factors in news stories would foster a better understanding among audiences, thereby operationalising the practice of contextual peace journalism in Kerio Valley conflict reporting.

Human-interest stories that focus directly on people's lives, such as displacement, injuries, and killings, are given prominence by journalists. Human-interest stories go hand in hand with the people pillar of peace journalism. However, findings showed that such stories do not go deep enough to reveal the slow violence effects, which occur out of sight over lengthy periods (Nixon 2011), including disenfranchised families, underutilised land, poisoned soils, and lost investment opportunities that result in poverty (Pain and Cahill 2022). Slow violence reporting relates to the people and truth pillars of peace journalism (Galtung 2003), which are key to visibilising the effects of violence on individuals and communities. The slow violence concept, though not adopted yet by journalists covering the Kerio Valley conflict, has the potential to reveal the true magnitude of the conflict by showing its invisible effects on populations over time.

The study's outcomes also indicated that journalists prioritise spectacle when reporting on the conflict, thereby highlighting the fight for resources as a factor influencing the selection of discourses in news and feature stories. Reporting on fights among communities is a

concentration on the spectacle, an aspect of war journalism, leading to the neglect of other stories that do not involve many people and have less immediate visible impact, such as peacebuilding stories whose progress may appear to be slow. Thus, it can be concluded that reporting on stories that show aspects of slow violence is not intentional but a consequence of sensational reporting.

Politicians appear to be given priority as news sources and in news features, confirming Van Dijk's (2015) assertion that elites are either subjects of news as sources or directly affected by it. Focusing on elites in society leads to the marginalisation of ordinary voices, and thus, the news fails to report on the perspectives of victims of violence, coupled with a shallow approach to human rights reporting (Dias 2013).

The presence of peacebuilding and human rights content in some stories was encouraging, showing the potential role that local radio can play in reporting on inter-ethnic conflicts. Through such reporting, local radio can educate its audiences on human rights issues, creating the necessary conditions for their promotion and protection. The said reporting can assist the wider society in understanding and appreciating human rights and peacebuilding activities through local-language radio, where their voices count, thereby building trust in news reports and the media in general. Yet, the poor safety and security of journalists hamper such reporting in an accurate and timely manner. The safety issues I classified as physical, environmental, and psychological affect the flow of independently verified information from the conflict zone. The absence of verified information gives rise to rumours, misinformation and propaganda, leading to conflict escalation and thereby challenging the peace journalism pillars of peace, truth, people and solution.

In view of the above, the peace pillar can work in the context of the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict when journalists foreground stories that call for unity and peaceful coexistence among affected communities. By adopting conflict sensitivity in their reportage, journalists can tone down on inflammatory statements of news sources and challenge negative stereotypes that create favourable conditions for peaceful co-existence among communities. The people pillar can also work through humanising conflict stories, as discussed in Chapter Six. The people pillar can also help show the slow violence effects of the conflict that may not be visible at a glance. The solution pillar can also work in the Kerio Valley context, but is not widely used by journalists because of their news-gathering techniques, which prioritised the spectacle. For this

pillar to succeed, journalists ought to be at the forefront, offering solutions that may lead to de-escalation and a halt to conflict. On the other hand, the truth pillar may not work, as the Kerio Valley is not readily accessible to journalists due to the human, environmental, and psychological risks discussed in Theme 6 of Chapter Seven. Truthful reporting is key in countering propaganda and stereotypes, creating understanding to audiences, giving them an opportunity to make informed decisions on it.

Contribution to New Knowledge

This section presents the research gaps identified in Chapters One and Two that this study addressed, thereby contributing new knowledge on human rights and peacebuilding reporting by local-language radio stations in contexts similar to those of the Kerio Valley conflict. As Miles (2017) posited, identifying and addressing research gaps is the basis for conducting any study. This study filled theoretical, practical and knowledge gaps. It is therefore crucial to demonstrate how the study addressed the research gaps discussed below.

As previously stated, radio is a key source of information in Kenya, and more so for local-language broadcasters, which can reach audiences with minimal literacy skills (Okinda 2017). The reach of radio is not limited to language alone; it also extends to the deeper penetration of its signals into far-flung and remote areas, as is the case in Kerio Valley, making communication swift and timely. Despite this reach, inadequate research on how local-language radio reports on human rights and peacebuilding in the Kenyan context, specifically in the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in the Kerio Valley, was noted (Elega et al. 2022). This study contributed empirical findings on this aspect, showing how Kass FM and Alpha Radio reported on this conflict through a discussion of themes generated from analysed radio news and feature stories, as well as from transcripts of in-depth interviews with selected journalists (reporters and editors). Integration of data from content analysis of human rights and peacebuilding radio reporting with in-depth interviews of journalists behind the production of content yielded novel results showing the narratives and discourses used in the coverage of the conflict that enact, sustain or question the power and dominance of elites in societies. It also showed the factors that influenced coverage of conflict and how this coverage can be improved through a peace journalism lens. Through this analysis, the role of local-language radio in reporting on violations, creating awareness, advocating for and promoting the protection of human rights and peacebuilding was established. In this case, this study has contributed to the extant literature in radio reporting of human rights and peacebuilding in the sporadic inter-

ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley as per specific new knowledge areas discussed below.

Methodological Contribution

The study combined both human rights and peacebuilding journalism, departing from the usual practices of studying them separately (see Shaw 2011; Biwott and Mberia 2019). Human rights and peacebuilding reporting are key emerging areas of journalism practice in Kenya, particularly through the lens of local-language radio stations, which can address local problems ignored by mainstream media (Manje 2023). Therefore, the study of the two areas of human rights and peace reporting was crucial for their theoretical development and practical application, as this study demonstrated. Integration of data from content analysis of human rights and peacebuilding radio reporting with in-depth interviews of journalists behind the production of content yielded rich results that showed the narratives and discourses used in the coverage of the conflict that enact, sustain or question the power and dominance of elites.

The combination of the RTA (Braun and Clarke 2020) and CDA (Van Dijk 2015) methods was unique, allowing for the analysis of themes that reflexively drew on the researcher's experience and training as a journalist. The analysis showed how language was used by various news sources, conflict players, and journalists themselves to create, sustain, or challenge power and dominance. In this case, the combination of the two methods yielded novel and nuanced findings that emphasised the role of local radio as a medium between texts and audiences. Other studies on peace and conflict in Kenya used different methodologies. For example, Cheeseman, Maweu, and Ouma (2019) used a comparative analysis to examine how Kenyan Newspapers covered the 2007 and 2013 elections through the lens of peace and democracy. In another study, Biwott and Mberia (2019) used descriptive methods to study the role of radio in conflict management in West Pokot County. Thus, the combination of RTA and CDA was unique in this sense.

Theoretical Contribution

Theoretically, the study combined Peace Journalism (Galtung 2003), Representation (Hall 1997) and the Slow Violence concept (Nixon 2011) to explain nuances of the reporting of human rights and peacebuilding in the conflict by the two radio stations. The study noted the presence and absence of peace journalism practices in the media texts and, where present, how they had been used in reporting the conflict. It also showed the strengths and limitations of Peace Journalism theory in studying conflicts, hence the introduction of the constructivist

theory of representation and the slow violence concept to complement it. The combinations above were innovative, enabling a comprehensive study of the reporting of human rights and peace in the Kerio Valley conflict. Additionally, the combination created a link between theory and practice, potentially leading to increased peace journalism stories by local-language radio stations.

The study showed that human rights and peacebuilding are complementary, and studying them together allowed for refining existing scholarship to capture this aspect. It also allowed for the examination of the feasibility of peace journalism in the Kerio Valley context, considering the safety and risks that journalists faced in discharging their duties, as discussed in Chapter Seven of this thesis. Despite the risks mentioned, this study argues for consistent use of the peace journalism practise by local-language radio and the media in general in their news reports on conflicts. In this case, journalists should examine the context, including the historical background of the conflict, the unresolved issues driving it, reporting on grassroots peace efforts, and giving a voice to those marginalised in media reports. Through the Representation theory, narratives used in reporting the conflict were analysed, revealing how power is enacted or challenged through discourses arising from the words and phrases of journalists and news sources. In this sense, the study included humanising discourses, stereotypes and “othering” discourses, unity and cohesion discourses, discourses of conflict, disagreement and ideological struggle, discourses of fear, discourses of stress and discourses of victimhood.

The Slow Violence concept (Nixon 2011) highlighted the effects of the conflict on communities that have been affected out of sight over lengthy periods, and suffered by both news sources and journalists covering the Kerio Valley conflict. The slow violence concept initially applied in environmentalism scholarship (see Nixon 2011; Davies 2019) to show effects of wars, conflicts and pollution has also been applied in the field of criminology to explain white police brutality against black people in the United States of America (see Kramer and Remster 2022). Therefore, journalists ought to adopt this concept in their reporting of conflicts to show such effects which may not be visible in the immediate. The physical violence emanating from the conflict, such as shootings and slow violence, operates in what I argue as loops of influence where physical violence can cause slow violence, and this slow violence may then exacerbate the dissatisfaction felt by groups or communities, perhaps leading to more violence.

Practical Contribution

Regarding the practical knowledge gap, the study critically reviewed the reporting of the conflict through a peace journalism lens. It noted the presence of conflict sensitivity in some reports, as evidenced by words that encourage peace and unity among various communities. There was also an absence of it in the news and feature stories aired by Kass FM and Alpha Radio, where insensitive, stereotypical words were used. The study then analysed suggestions for improving how local-language radio stations can use peace journalism in reporting on human rights and peace. Conflict sensitivity, balance and fairness, specialised training in conflict reporting, media freedom, and the promotion of reconciliation among communities in conflict were emphasised as strategies that can aid in this. In this sense, peace journalism ought to be prominent in media reports, recognising the communicative power of radio to shape narratives and discourses on the conflict, transforming how audiences view it and possibly leading them to consider non-violent responses.

The study also established that the safety and security of journalists, which are both physical, environmental and psychological, are paramount in the reporting of human rights and peace, and they must be considered in the Kerio Valley conflict and other similar conflict contexts. The specialised training mentioned should be provided by media houses to their employees as part of their induction process and periodically as refresher courses, given the dynamic nature of conflicts and their reporting. Media training institutions, such as universities and middle-level colleges, and industry associations, such as the Media Council of Kenya and the Editors Guild, can also offer them to raise awareness and ensure adherence to reporting on human rights and peace.

In view of the foregoing, the study's findings are beneficial to practising journalists on best practices in the reporting of human rights and peacebuilding in the Kerio Valley and similar conflict contexts, using the peace journalism framework. On the other hand, journalism and communication trainers will benefit from the study's theoretical aspects, helping them develop and review curricula that adequately prepare journalism students for transition to the industry to report on human rights and peace. Such curricula should emphasise human rights reporting (see JHR 2022) and address emerging issues such as trauma and mental health experienced by journalists who cover stressful and potentially traumatic stories on a regular basis. Trauma experienced can be physical or online (see Kakooza and Kazibwe 2025). It should also address journalistic reporting conventions to go beyond the 'he said, she said' surface-level reporting

and emphasise analytical reporting that excavates historical and underlying issues driving conflicts. By emphasising analytical reporting, journalistic tactics move beyond writing and reporting to address the changing dynamics witnessed in various conflicts around the world (Doll 2025). Training that goes hand in hand with mentorship fosters a deeper understanding of peace journalism, leading journalists to consistently embrace it in their reporting on conflicts (Kabeya and Ngwenya 2026). Through this, conflict sensitivity, which is key in reporting of conflicts from a peace journalism perspective, is addressed.

Study Recommendations

The study recommends that local-language radio consistently adopt peace journalism in reporting conflicts to encourage audiences to consider and value non-violent responses (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005). Peace journalism reporting would be appropriate in the Kerio Valley context, a region inhabited by diverse communities with cultural practices and political sensitivities that require careful reporting to encourage cohesion by promoting similarities while diminishing differences. In such reporting, journalists deploy conflict-sensitive language with the implementation of the four pillars of peace, truth, people and solution orientations. For example, in the people-oriented section, stories about ordinary people would be reported, which are more likely to resonate with the majority of community members. Such stories also gain acceptance within the involved communities, improving their chances of success in achieving peace and cohesion. Thus, foregrounding ordinary voices calling for peace in news and feature stories becomes the norm rather than the exception.

Journalists should also adopt the concept of slow violence to represent the invisible effects of conflicts that occur out of sight over lengthy periods in their reporting (Nixon 2011). Although such effects are not easy to convey in media reportage, local-language radio should find ways to present them to its audiences. The adoption of the slow violence concept will reveal the true magnitude of conflicts, especially long-standing ones like the one in Kerio Valley. In addition, through slow violence reporting, attention of various stakeholders is drawn to such conflicts, building the necessary support for their transformation and eventual stoppage.

The study also calls for the assurance of journalists' safety and security, as they are important for human rights and peacebuilding reporting in conflict situations. The assurance should come from the government in terms of freedom of the media to conduct independent reporting in conflict zones, which is key in ensuring the flow of accurate and verified information. Thus,

governmental agencies should stop the unnecessary harassment and intimidation of journalists as part of their commitment to democratic governance that recognises the critical role of the media as a fourth estate in disseminating information.

Media owners and managers should be wary of journalists' mental health, as it affects how they perform their duties. In this case, they should provide conducive working conditions for journalists and provide the necessary socio-psycho support, especially for those going to or returning from risky, potentially traumatising assignments. Socio-psycho support will help journalists build resilience, enabling them to perform optimally on risky, potentially stressful assignments. Even so, journalists should take necessary precautions when covering potentially risky assignments, including wearing bulletproof vests and helmets, carrying identification, and seeking help when they feel they are not ok.

Media trainers, on the other hand, should incorporate human rights, peace and trauma in their curricula to prepare journalism students for the potentially stressful and risky assignments they will face in the course of their careers. Since most practising journalists graduated without these trainings, the situation can be mitigated through short courses offered by media houses themselves or by media organisations such as the MCK, the Editor's Guild, and the Media Owners Association.

Recommendations for Further Study

While the study focused on the sporadic inter-ethnic conflict in Kerio Valley, future research can examine other conflicts to determine how issues around them are represented through the peace journalism lens and the slow violence concept. Such studies would determine the types of conflicts, how peace journalism practices have been deployed, if any, and how the effects of slow violence from the conflicts are included in news reports. Hence, this thesis calls for advancing empirical research on broadcast media and the slow violence concept, and for moving forward the discussion of its relevance and applicability in Kenya and other conflict contexts. Since traumatic experiences among journalists appear to be common but inadequately addressed, it would be useful to explore them on a wider scale, bringing the discourses around them to the attention of media owners and managers so they can assist their employees who are experiencing them.

In relation to the scope of a doctoral study, the study sampled four journalists for the in-depth

interview and the two local-language radio stations. A larger project could be addressed by increasing the empirical sample to attain more varied views. The study recommends that future studies investigate this phenomenon using a longitudinal approach that extends the study period to the pre-February 2023 period, when the *Maliza Uhalifu North Rift* security operation began, to determine how the conflict has been covered over time. Building on the finding that language is key to enacting, maintaining, or challenging power and dominance, future research could examine television coverage of the conflict to allow analysis of the discourses, pictures, and graphics used in reporting it.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethical Approval Certificate- HSSREC/00008126/2025



14 January 2025

Gilbert Kiprotich Langat (224196900)
School of Applied Human Sc
Howard College Campus

Dear GK Langat,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00008126/2025

Project title: Human rights and peacebuilding media reporting in the Kenyan Kerio valley conflict: Local radio perspectives

Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 04 December 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 14 January 2026.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)
/nng

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix 2: Research License - NACOSTI

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 193104	Date of Issue: 13/January/2025
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
<p>This is to Certify that Mr., GILBERT KIPROTICH LANGAT of University of KwaZulu-Natal, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Baringo, Nairobi on the topic: HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACEBUILDING MEDIA REPORTING IN THE KENYAN KERIO VALLEY CONFLICT: LOCAL RADIO PERSPECTIVES for the period ending : 13/January/2026.</p>	
License No: NACOSTI/P/25/414958	
193104 Applicant Identification Number	Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
	Verification QR Code 
<p>NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.</p>	
See overleaf for conditions	

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Gilbert Kiprotich Langat, a PhD student at the Centre for Communication, Media and Society in the School of Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Below are my contact details, my supervisor and the institution.

Researcher	Gilbert Kiprotich Langat	+27-31-2602298/5/ +27-31-2602298	224196900@stu.ukzn.ac.za
Supervisor	Prof Lauren Dyll	+27-31-2602298	dyll@ukzn.ac.za
Department	Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS)	+27-31-2602505	ccms@ukzn.ac.za
Institution	University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)	Howard College Campus, Mazisi Kunene Ave, Glenwood, Durban, South Africa.	www.ukzn.ac.za
UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Committee	Chairperson, UKZN HSSR Committee	+27312604557/3587/8350	HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research into Human Rights and Peacebuilding Media Reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley Conflict from the perspectives of local-language radio stations Kass FM and Alpha Radio.

The aim and purpose of this research is to assess how radio has reported on human rights and peacebuilding in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict. The study will enroll two participants in Kass FM (one editor and one reporter) and two participants in Alpha Radio (one editor and one reporter). It will involve face-to-face in-depth interviews which will be recorded with a digital audio recorder. The duration of your participation if you choose to enrol and remain in the study is expected to be three months where follow-up interviews and clarifications may be conducted if necessary. Each interview will take approximately one hour.

The study will not involve any risk on your part because anonymity will be maintained without your name being mentioned. We hope that the study will be beneficial to your radio station and the broadcast media in Kenya at large in human rights promotion and peace journalism in conflict situations.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number HSSREC/00008126/2025).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at the details provided above or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any stage of the study without suffering any consequence. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please notify the researcher on the

contacts provided. Your participation in the study may be terminated if you are unavailable or if you change your work station in the course of the study.

There is no cost on your part for participating in the study. There will be no monetary payment but a non-monetary souvenir will be given as a token of appreciation. Your name and any information given will be treated confidentially and will be used only for this study. Data will be stored securely for five years as per the policy of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Your participation in this study will be highly appreciated.

CONSENT (Edit as required)

I, have been informed about the study entitled “Human Rights and Peacebuilding Media Reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley Conflict: Local Radio Perspectives” by Gilbert Kiprotich Langat.

I understand that the purpose of the study is to assess how the media has reported on human rights and peace-building in the Kenyan Kerio Valley conflict specifically by Kass FM and Alpha Radio. The procedures of the study is through face to face in-depth interview.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and I have given answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without suffering any consequence.

I have been informed about unavailability of monetary payment but a souvenir will be given as a token of appreciation.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at [REDACTED] 5/+ [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED] or 224196900@stu.ukzn.ac.za

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview

YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness
(Where applicable)

Date

Signature of Translator
(Where applicable)

Date

Appendix 4: Gatekeeper Letter- Kass FM



30th May 2024

Prof. Lauren Dyll

School of Applied Human Sciences

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Dear Madam,

RE: GATEKEEPER PERMISSION FOR GILBERT LANGAT STUDENT NUMBER 224196900

The above refers.

We confirm that Gilbert Langat is a registered student, currently studying for his PhD degree and has been granted permission by us to engage news reports and feature studies. We will do our best to assist him in all that he requires.

Please accord him any assistance he may require as he goes about his studies.

Dr. Julius Langat

Chief Executive Officer

KALEE LTD.
P.O. Box 25636 - 00603
NAIROBI, KENYA.
TEL: 2737655 / 2875146



Kalee Limited, Jamii Towers, Hospital Road, Upperhill
Website: www.kassfm.co.ke

Appendix 5: Gatekeeper Letter- Alpha Radio



P. O Box 76698-00508
Yaya Towers,
Nairobi, Kenya
radioalphakenya@gmail.com

08/10/2024

Gilbert Kiprotich Langat - 224196900
Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS)
School of Applied Human Sciences
College of Humanities
Howard College Campus
University of Kwazulu-Natal
Dear Gilbert Kiprotich Langat (Student) and Prof Lauren Dyll (Supervisor)

Gatekeeper Permission to Conduct Research

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct your PhD on *Human Rights and Peacebuilding Reporting in the Kenyan Kerio Valley Conflict? A Local Radio Perspective* provided ethical clearance from your institution is obtained before data collection commences.

It is noted that you will be gathering data and constituting your sample by collecting 25 news and feature stories aired from February 2023 to February 2025.

We also note that you will conduct face to face interviews with one reporter and one editor. Data must be collected with due confidentiality as stipulated in the informed consent form to be provided to participants. It is agreed that Alpha Radio will have approval on the afore mentioned confidentiality terms prior to conducting the interviews.

SAM ROBERTS NYACHIRO

CEO

ALPHA RADIO KENYA.



Appendix 6: Interview Schedule for News Reporters (Kass FM and Alpha Radio)

1. When did you join this radio station?
2. How would you describe your typical day as a news/ feature story reporter?
3. How long have you reported on the Kerio Valley conflict?
4. What do you think are the drivers of the conflict at the Kerio Valley?
5. Do you pitch your own news/ feature stories on the Kerio Valley conflict? Please explain. And if not, how are they assigned?
6. What would you say is the most important story that you have reported on the conflict and why?
7. What do you understand by the terms human rights and peace journalism?
8. Do you think you make conscious decisions in your work based the principles of the above? Please explain.
9. What may encourage/discourage editors and reporters in being guided by these principles?
10. Are you aware of the term Slow Violence? [Note: If the interviewee does not, I will explain it as the effects that one suffers over time as a result of the conflict]
11. Do you report on them in association with the conflict? If so or if not, please explain.
12. What themes/topics have you used in reporting on the Kerio Valley conflict? Why did you choose the themes that you have mentioned?
13. Who are your sources for human rights and peace stories in the Kerio Valley conflict?
14. What challenges have you faced in your reporting of the Kerio Valley conflict?
15. In your experience generally, do you think human rights and peacebuilding stories have been given prominence by the media in the coverage of the Kerio Valley conflict?
16. What would you say is the best way to report on human rights and peacebuilding in the Kerio Valley conflict?
17. Do you have any further comments/stories you would like to share?

Thank you!

Appendix 7: Interview Schedule for News Editors (Kass FM and Alpha Radio)

1. When did you join this radio station?
2. How long have you edited news and feature stories on the Kerio Valley conflict?
3. What do you understand by the terms human rights and peace journalism?
4. Do you think you make conscious decisions in your work based the principles of the above? Please explain.
5. What may encourage/discourage editors and reporters in being guided by these principles?
6. Are you aware of the term Slow Violence? (Note: If the interviewee does not, I will explain it as the effects that one suffers over time as a result of the conflict)
7. Do you report on them in association with the conflict? If so or if not, please explain.
8. What themes/topics does your station use in reporting on the Kerio Valley conflict? How do you choose the topics that you have mentioned?
9. Do you assign reporters specific stories to cover on human rights and peacebuilding in the Kerio Valley conflict? If so or if not, please explain.
10. Which topics do you propose and why?
11. How often does your station air news/feature stories on human rights and peacebuilding in the Kerio Valley conflict?
12. What editorial choices guide you when choosing human rights and peacebuilding story or a feature?
13. Have you been threatened or intimidated due to your station's coverage of the Kerio Valley conflict? Please explain.
14. In your experience generally, do you think human rights and peace stories have been given prominence by the media in their coverage of the Kerio Valley conflict?
15. What would you say is the best way that local-language radio stations can report on human rights and peacebuilding in the Kerio Valley conflict?
16. Do you have any further comments/stories you would like to share?

Thank you!

Appendix 8: Certificate – Introduction to Research Ethics



Zertifikat Certificat Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants

Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Gilbert Langat

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

Module 1 (2023) - Introduction to Research Ethics

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2024/05/07
CID : d8qjct00E

Professeur Dominique Spumort
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator

APPROVED BY
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[REV : 20230117]

Appendix 9: Certificate – Research Ethics Evaluation



Zertifikat Certificat Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants

Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

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[REV: 2023017]

Appendix 10: Certificate – Informed Consent



Zertifikat Certificat

Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants

Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

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Module 3 (2023) - Informed Consent

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of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

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GD : FUCHQOWI

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Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator

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