Media Portrayal of Women Leaders in Kenya: A Contextual Analysis of Narratives of Female Politicians and Print Media

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ABSTRACT: The main objective of this study was to establish how the media portrays women leaders in Kenya, with a focus on the narratives of female politicians and newspaper articles. Specifically, the study investigated the frames used by media to cover prominent women leaders in Kenya and analyzed the consequences of the media framing of women leaders on their political and public leadership. To achieve the objectives, the study addressed three research questions; first, the experience of prominent women leaders with regard to media coverage, secondly, frames used by media to cover prominent women leaders in Kenya, lastly, the effect of media framing of women leaders in Kenya on their political and public leadership. The research adopted a qualitative research design. The study targeted women who have served at the national level in an appointive or representation position in two Kenyan presidential regimes of Uhuru Kenyatta or Mwai Kibaki. The theoretical foundation of the study is agenda setting and media framing. Data was collected by conducting key informant interviews, using open ended questionnaire as a tool, and reviewing existing documentation. The data collected was analyzed and the findings presented through narrative analysis procedures. Document analysis undertaken corroborated the findings of the study. The study found that the experience of women in leadership with media coverage is negative. The findings of the study point to biased, skewed coverage with a manipulated slant or angle of presentation. The study concluded that media is not wholly to blame for the negative experience or opinion held by women in leadership, that there are other factors at play including how the women engage or do not engage the media. The main frames used to cover women in leadership are; patriarchy, family relations, sexuality and appearance, propaganda and controversy, and lastly, gender reflective terminologies and tags. The impact of this framing is a sub conscious withdrawal from media engagement as a shield against negative media coverage. The study found that media portrayal of prominent women in leadership boils down to individual engagement with the media houses and media content management. It is the contention of the study that media does not propagate the gender narrative on purpose, but as a social construct that lays emphasis on the supremacy of the male gender as is advanced in patriarchal societies. The study concluded that the negative portrayal of prominent women in leadership is a clear indication and indictment that the media in Kenya has opted to embrace gendered lenses.

I. INTRODUCTION

There have been studies undertaken that look at the coverage of women in media, their participation in media, and comparative coverage compared to men in similar positions. There are not many studies that focus on how the women in leadership in Kenya were covered. This approach was justifiable because women have made progress in securing key positions in Kenya in the recent past. Initial efforts were therefore geared at advocating for women to be accorded access to media platforms and coverage. Media houses in Kenya have made significant and dedicated efforts to ensure that women receive adequate press coverage. This therefore is not a problem. The issue to be addressed is how these women are covered, and what lenses the media want us to use in consuming content related to their positions in public leadership. How are women leaders in Kenya portrayed? Are they subject to gendered media frames?

Problem Statement

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 and subsequent progressive legislation have secured the policy and legal environment for women. However, against this backdrop of bold structural and institutional framework, a number of the women appointed to senior positions have since fallen by the wayside in the midst of a torrent of pervasive and personalized media coverage. Despite the women scaling up the leadership ranks as a result of

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both merit and affirmative action, there have been some media and society continue to view public leadership as a preserve of men.

While visibility of women has increased, structural and systematic gendering in media coverage has continued to take place. Women in leadership attract many media comments and profiles that emphasize gender, age, hair, marital status, motherhood and even physical size. Questions have been raised as to whether it is a case of stereotyping, where journalists revert to stereotypes to explain and interpret actions of women or are there general institutional constraints that contribute to this skewed reporting. It is also debatable if the media portrays women in public life more negatively than it does men in similar situations.

This study is significant in that its findings will provide an opportunity for media actors to reflect on the impact of how they portray women leaders, and how this hinders their general development. This introspection will present an opportunity to re-evaluate their framing options and possibly, their editorial policies.

Research Questions
1. What has been the experience of prominent women leaders with regard to media coverage?
2. What frames have been used by media to cover prominent women leaders in Kenya?
3. What is the impact of media framing of women leaders in Kenya on their political and public leadership?

Scope andLimitation Of The Study
Thisstudy was limited to media coverage of prominent women in public and political leadership. In particular, the study targeted women who have served at the national level in an appointive or representation position in president Uhuru Kenyatta (2013-2017) or former president Mwai Kibaki (2003-2012) regimes. Their perspectives were captured by conducting in-depth interviews with the women, who sampled purposively. The study chose anonymity of the women respondents to avoid any reprisals from any party.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW
Excerpts ofMedia Headlines On Leading Women In Kenya
When the president of Kenya under the jubilee coalition took over power in 2013, one of the first things done was to nominate for appointment an 18-member cabinet, of which 6 were women. One of the leading media houses, *Capital FM*ran a story headlined; "Defence gets female nominee, Raychelle Omamo" (*source: allafrica.com april 25, 2013).*There was no reference of "…gets male nominee or man appointed to head the powerful docket of…"

In March 31, 2014 *The Standard*newspaper subsidiary '*Nairobian*' run an opinion piece titled 'understanding Rachel Shebesh'. In the article, the author describes her; "Nairobi Women RepresentativeRachel Shebesh is an eloquent, if combative speaker and political brawler. At full throttle, her hair literally 'stands out' like the mane on a lion. She leans forward, jabs a finger in the air and lets it rip". The description pays attention to her feminine traits (or lack of) and her leadership style.

In April 25, 2015, the *Daily Nation* newspaper published a well-researched article on the impressive academic credentials and professional achievements of Monica Juma, currently the cabinet secretary, foreign affairs. The insightful write-up was headlined... "the many hats of Monica Juma, new 'iron lady' pushing Uhuru's agenda" towards the conclusion of the article the author writes '…the mother of two who is married to professor Peter Kagwanja' in reference to her husband who is a respected policy analyst and government advisor. While it is possible to argue that the reference is appropriate in the context of a human interest story, comparatively, there are hardly many instances where when reporting on men in leadership their family information is offered.

In the 2013 presidential candidate and Narc-kleader Martha Karua was profiled on online political news platform '*Tuko'*on September 22, 2015 with the headline; "'10 quick facts about Martha Karua, Kenya's iron lady". In one of the facts, the author describes her as "only 'man' in PNU" (PNU was the part government coalition that led Kenya from 2007-2012).

These examples of media application of gender profiling when framing their reportage are not intended to draw conclusions. Theywere a probe as to whether the concept of gendered media coverage does exist, and if so are there examples in Kenyan media where one can easily pick out gendered frames without applying any statistical analysis. From the foregoing, the indication of gender profiling is evident and this strengthens the basis of the study trying to establish further, based on evidence, how media in Kenya frames women.

Theoretical Framework

The agenda setting theory dates back to 1972 and is attributed to Maxwell Mccombs and Donald Shaw(Shaw(1979). The theory advances the central role that media lays in shaping the audience perception of issues. The theory advances the premise that media does not reflect the society, but rather, determines to the society what issues are important and need to be paid attention to. The theory assumes that the media sets the agenda, i.e. what people will think about or should think about. In this theory, media assumes the role of a gatekeeper, sieving what goes into news content. By giving prominence to specific issues, the media unconsciously shapes the audience to automatically consider the profiled issues as the most important ones.

The agenda setting theory is useful to the extent that it hinges on the persuasive and predictive role of the media in determining societal priorities. The theory has also contributed to the media effects comprehension. However, the main weakness with this theory is that it assumes that large numbers of, or the entire societies focus on what is happening in the media, and secondly, that they will find what is covered by the media as critical enough to be prioritized. The agenda setting theory shares several points of convergence with the framing theory. In some instances, framing has been presented as a sub set of agenda setting.

Media Framing

Ryan K, (2013) describes framing as the process of selecting what information to include and what to exclude in communication of a topic, person or event. Framing theory considers how the news media cover events and issues, and how individuals make sense of events and issues drawing partially on media representations.

Media can be said to frame events and issues in the same way as a photographer frames a photograph, choosing what aspects to highlight or draw attention to, and what parts to leave out (Capella and Jamieson, 1997). Framing in news stories is almost as old as the invention of the printing press. O'Donnell, (2013) states that media has been used as a tool through which to influence how the public views the news of the day. He further asserts that media use four tools to influence public perception; language, style, structure and images. This is what he refers to as 'framing'. He defines framing as 'the construction of public perception (by media)'.

Gender theorists have used the framing approach to explore the framing of women politicians and issues. Schlehofer, *et al* (2011) views framing as a subtle persuasive influence where certain aspects of information are selected and communicated in such a way as 'to promote a particular moral evaluation, problem definition and causal interpretation.'

Ryan (2013) defines media frames as 'stereotypes that society holds for a specific gender that is then applied to all members of that gender by the media. This confines those members to a specific role or type of coverage that is not necessarily appropriate or accurate'. She further describes frames as 'use of words, images, phrases and presentation styles'

O'Donnell (2013) analyzed the effect of framing on the audience. He advances the theory that though information presented by this media may be factual, how it is interpreted depends on the reporting style advanced. This deliberate presentation is more likely to have a more powerful effect on the audience than opinion pieces penned through editorials.

Media content affects government policy and public opinion. O'Donnell (2013) found that studies indicate that issues that are profiled as important by media houses will be considered important by the public, and will become agenda for public discussion. He states that frames are intended to be applied to certain issues to create a context but socio-political influences often result in skewed presentation or framing.

Diana and Winfrey (2009) outlined four major frames of professional women. These are the portrayal of women as seductresses or sex objects, mothers, pets or iron maidens. All these frames undermine the ability of women. Ryan (2013) observed that despite Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton presenting themselves differently, having differing ideological and political persuasions, they were both subjected to gender bias in media. The lack of both candidates' success has been attributed to the gendered media coverage they received.

Gender Sereotyping ofWomen in Leadership and Politics

In November 9, 2003, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*described Pelosi as 'the mother of five said yesterday that her party needed to offer and alternative agenda rather than merely working against bush' (gibbon, 2005). It is unclear why the newspaper chose to emphasis on Pelosi as a mother, and not as a party leader expressing a party strategy.

Carrol and shreiber (1997) examining media coverage of members of the 103rd congress in 1992 found that in comparison to male politicians, the media tended to focus more of their coverage of on elected women's appearances and personal lives, than on their positions and legislative actions. The clothing, make up and hairdo of powerful female public figures is scrutinized obsessively, often attracting more interest in their views and positions on vital issues. On the contrary, less or no attention is paid to clothing and appearance of male politicians or leaders.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research

The research adopted the use of a qualitative study approach using in-depth interviews and document analysis, to seek further knowledge and understand how media in Kenya frames women in public leadership. It was intended to provide insight into the wider issue of media framing and to facilitate understanding of the wider issue of women in political leadership.

Research data was collected by the use of key informant interviews. The interviews were in-depth and used semi structured questionnaires in order to explore the key themes around the media framing theory. Key informants were identified and selected from key women leaders in society. The interviews enabled the research to undertake a deeper analysis of the issue of how media frames women leaders in Kenya, with specific reference to their personal experiences and narrations, thus ensuring that the research is not subjected to unsubstantiated generalizations.

The study sample was selected based on their experience and upper hand knowledge of the study topic. They included women in leadership who in the past were subjected to gendered media coverage. The study began by segmenting the various categories of women leaders. Respondents were drawn from the senate, and national assembly, to represent the highest political leadership of women in the Kenya. The key respondents were purposively sampled since they were deemed to be subject matter experts who have been involved in the gender debate and have an in-depth understanding of the study focus on media coverage of women political leaders.

Data Analysis And Presentation

The data collected was subjected to qualitative content analysis. This is the textual analysis which does not have predetermined categories. The categories were derived inductively from the data analyzed. Qualitative content analysis has been defined as latent level analysis because it is an interpretive analysis that seeks to understand the deeper meaning in the data.

The textual analysis of the content tried to understand the possible interpretations from a cognitive perspective. It should be noted that the document analysis was focused on major newspapers content and pictures due to wider accessibility to citizens, and also for their greater influence on shaping the national agenda. The data collected is presented in a thematic manner, modelled along the research questions parameters and using a deductive approach based on the literature review. The findings from the analysis were presented along standard themes that were identified as cross cutting during coding. This implied identifying broader patterns of meaning within the collected data. Each theme was defined, together with the theoretical perspective. There was a comprehensive analysis of what each theme links to the data collected. The research findings, analysis and interpretations were presented using the narrative method of presentation. This included direct quotes from the respondents as well as paraphrasing the responses into findings.

Study Findings

In presenting the findings, the study captures the critical incidents that were narrated and the content that relates to the overall conceptual framework. From the interviews, the responses were clustered into four recurring themes: i) biased coverage versus strategic engagement, ii) gender priming and labeling; roles and identity, iii) social constructivism and profiling of women and iv)mediaexpectations; a gentleman's club? These themes were derived from both the study objectives and from the field work data.

Perception Of Biasness In Media Coverage Of Prominent Women Leaders

All the respondents interviewed were of the opinion that prominent women leaders are subjected to biased media coverage not only in Kenya but globally. The respondents gave examples of their own experiences, and examples of others that had been captured in both local and international media coverage.

At a global perspective, respondent 1 agreed that media stereotyping applies to prominent women leaders. She gave the example of the ongoing U.S. 2016 presidential elections campaigns media coverage. She felt that the media made the health of democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton a campaign issue by drumming it up. This is as opposed to the inappropriateness of trump's campaign messaging which she felt was not framed as inappropriate, but normal. Respondent 2 stated that media framing through gendered lenses was a global phenomenon. Again citing the example of Hillary Clinton, she noted that the media preferred to focus on her vulnerabilities including describing her health and face as 'frail'. The use of these words is intended to portray weakness of the female gender in leadership.

In the local context, all the respondents interviewed had either experienced media bias or knew a colleague who had. In particular, the respondents each referred to the media coverage of the events that led to the sacking of former deputy chief justice of Kenya, Nancy Baraza over her altercation with a security guard in

2012. Respondent 1 referred to the media coverage as: 'the lynching' of Nancy Baraza is an example of media bias in coverage of prominent women in leadership. She compared this with the media coverage of President Uhuru Kenyatta and his Deputy William Ruto who in 2012 were campaigning for leadership, but also had an ongoing case at the Hague over the 2007-8 post-election violence related charges, popularly known as the 'ICC case'. She observed that in the coverage of the ICC case, media tended to make a villain of anyone who offered a clear analysis and perspective on the issue, yet in the same vein continued to glorify anyone who made a villain of Nancy Baraza.

From the interviews, the study found that media is discriminative to women and does not convey or recognize the hard work or development agenda undertaken by women. Citing her own example respondent 5 narrated how despite owning one of the mainstream media houses, she experiences bias.

> "…even my own media house is biased against me and will
> sometimes not cover me unless I prompt them." (Respondent 5,
> October 10, 2016)

The study also found that prominent women leaders are not adequately covered, and in some instances the coverage is skewed or slanted to present the peripheral aspects rather than the core issues. One of the respondents commented on a saga that generated media interest in 2015 over a weighbridge confrontation with officials; she stated that: 'media publishes what sells that is, "when a man bites a dog and not when a dog bites a man".' the respondents noted that even in instances where media houses thought an event qualified for coverage owing to the seriousness of the issue, the coverage was still inadequate where women leaders are involved. In particular, respondent 4 cited an instance where she purposely engaged local media house that transmits in Hindi to discuss an issue on citizenship for the Asian audience. Her objective was to provide civic education on citizenship in order to empower and educate the audience. The media house declined as it expected to be compensated for airing the content.

Mcquail, (2007) when discussing the media effect of social constructivism asserts that this is the most significant media effect, where the media constructs meanings out of content. The media then offer this content to the audiences. Mcquail argues that media construct social formations and frame images of reality in predictable ways. The audiences then mix their own view of reality with what is presented to them to form an opinion. According to Mcquail, the media are not just transmitters of content; they are also selectors of content and therefore construct what people should think about. This results in 'public identity and definition'. The constructivism approach can be applied to media influence with regard to public opinion and social attitudes. Ryan(2013) backs this school of thought by stating that media is a reflection of public norms and hence it tries hard to project and stick to those norms in order to sustain the audience. This theory brings to fore the study findings on the role of media in propagating negative narratives on women in leadership. It supports the position of the study that these narratives are disempowering and negatively affect the women leaders. The assertions by Mcquail provide a strong backbone for the contentions of this study that media does not propagate the gender narrative on purpose, but as a social construct.

The experiences narrated and captured in this study point to the media's discriminative attitude towards women in leadership, especially the failure to recognize the hard work or development agenda of women leaders. From the study, this scenario can be alluded to media's focus on peripheral issues around women as opposed to core issues. However, given the study findings that not all the women had a negative experience with media coverage, there is need for women leaders to interrogate what others have done right and replicate the same.

Perceptions Of Media Bias In Stereotyping Women In Coverage Content
The study established that media exhibits bias in the content it uses to describe and project when covering women leaders. When giving their views, all the respondents pointed a finger on the role media plays in the stereotyping of women in its content.

The study found that women in leadership are often disadvantaged by how the media frames the narrative on their engagement with the public. Respondent 1 gave an example of her own experience when contesting for presidency in 2012-2013. She stated that the media (mis)framed her campaign message by setting the narrative on her based on the 'electability of a female candidate' as opposed to the issues her campaign platform were hinged on.

> "The media set the agenda and decided that the probability of me winning was nil
> and that voting for me would be a 'wasted vote'. The media then went on to frame
> the 2013 general elections as a 'two horse race', with media describing me as 'a
> good candidate who cannot win', purportedly because Kenya was not ready for a
> female president. This stereotyping obviously had an impact and twisted the
> outcome of the elections!" (Respondent 1, September 23, 2016)

The respondents demonstrated that prominent women in political leadership are subjected to stereotyping and gendered lenses in media coverage. The media has used statements that portrayed this. Respondent 1 gave an example of the headline 'women seats are useless' that has been repeatedly used to discuss the 47 seats that are occupied by county women representatives in the national assembly. This, she said, has resulted in the watering down of the public perceptions of the importance of women leaders in parliament, and the principle of equality in representation it addresses.

> "Media uses propaganda to frame the gender agenda. Even the popular cliché that 'women are their own worst enemies' is actually a creation of the media aimed at propagating gender stereotyping. This is because the Kenyan media is set on the patriarchal society we live in" (Respondent 3: October 6, 2016)

As a further emphasis on the application of gender stereotyping in media content, respondent 1 gave an example of a news article covered in a local daily captioned 'four common mistakes women leaders do', she noted that the media frames women as having bad morals. This story was pitted against the sterling public record of the performance of the women that were depicted in the article.

Linkage Between Media Bias And The Relationship Of Prominent Women Leaders With The Media

In the justification of the study, the study argues that past researches on this topic have tended to focus more on quantity rather than quality of media coverage of women in leadership. This position is echoed by campus (2013) in Laher(2014). Campus found that while women leaders are more visible in media now than in the past, the framing of the content remains distorted. Laher(2014) discusses the stereotypes women in leadership undergo. That women are subjected to deep stereotyping, and in particular fashion is a consistent theme in most of the typologies. Laher gives examples on media focus on Angela Merkel's cleavage and Hillary Clinton's Botox treatment and argues that from this kind of stereotyping media communicates that there is nothing more important to talk about women. Laher concludes that framing reinforces gender stereotypes pertaining to women in leadership, a finding that this study lends itself to. Mcintosh (2013) pushes the argument further by stating that women in leadership face more media scrutiny. This, she says, is 'attributed to the media's adherence of gender stereotypes that favor men over women in positions of power.' she singles out clothing, hairstyle and demeanor as aspects that overshadow women leaders' opinions on policy issues and development agenda. Research on stereotypes suggest that men, generally, are perceived as possessing genetic traits, such as being bold, rational, and unemotional, whereas women, generally, are perceived as possessing communal traits, such as sensitivity, empathy, and passivity (Banaji, Hardin and Rothman 1993; Diekman and Eagly 2000; Sczesny et al. 2004). Laher, (2014) while reviewing the book *woman president: confronting postfeminist political culture* notes that when media capitalizes on the body and appearance of women leaders by discussing and critiquing, it waters down their abilities. These assertions by Mcintosh and Laher are in direct congruence with the findings of the study that media coverage in Kenya tends to veers off from core issues or agenda reporting on women in leadership.

The study found that to a large extent, the biased coverage that women political leaders have is based on how they engage with the media house. The respondents observed that not all the blame of skewed media coverage can be heaped on the media houses. The study established that women in public leadership needed to better engage with the media positively, provide information and personal perspectives when needed. However, all the respondents reported the financial reciprocation that was expected by media practitioners in exchange for fair and quantity coverage. The respondents viewed this expectation of monetary gain as unprofessional with the exception of one respondent who preferred to perceive it as 'facilitation'.

> "The introduction of bribery expectations in media engagement makes it harder for women to engage with the media as they are naturally less inclined to this approach". (Respondent 5, October 10, 2016)

All the respondents alluded to the personal responsibility that women in leadership have to undertake in engaging with the media. The respondents noted that media framing of women in leadership boils down to individual engagement with the media houses and media content management. Respondent 2 in particular was of the view that women leaders needed to learn the 'politics of engaging with the media'. The respondent singled out two prominent women; Joyce Laboso and cabinet secretary Amina Mohammed as examples of women who enjoy positive media coverage. Respondent 2 referred to Amina's skills in managing the media, her positive attitude, cheery nature and private personal space as the reasons behind this. On Laboso, Respondent 2 noted that she engages the media positively and is unafraid to give her side of the story, resulting in balanced media coverage. Case in point was the media coverage of her husband's origin, which was used politically to insinuate that she was an outsider. Rather than defend herself, she set the record straight. The impact of this was that her attitude and openness gave the media a balanced narrative, but also effectively killed what was a politically insinuated sexist agenda.

The study found that giving of financial reciprocation did not necessarily result to positive media coverage. Giving her personal experience with media, Respondent 4 narrated the events of her campaign trail in 2011-2012. She noted that for the media to cover her given that she did not have a big public profile, she often facilitated them, i.e. offered financial compensation, but even then the coverage still remained poor.

While responding to the interview question on 'if it matters how the media chooses to cover prominent leaders', all the respondents were in agreement on the negative impact that media bias has on women leadership. One of the respondents noted that the impact of this was that women leaders shy away from media engagement yet they need it. Respondent 2 observed that prominent women leaders shy away from engaging the media and tend to retreat after bruising negative coverage.

"Women leaders need to balance their engagement with the media, as media can make or break you.In my opinion, women politicians in the 11th parliament have underperformed when it comes to positive engagements and have tended to shy away. Women leaders need the media as a platform to propagate their agenda. Women have to work twice as much to be recognized half as much". (Respondent 3, Oct. 6, 2016)

The study found that when media lacks positive content on women in leadership, it tends to focus on their vulnerabilities and personal relations. Biased coverage is further aggravated by the fact that women leaders sometimes seek sympathy coverage rather than stronger visibility and media engagement. The respondents were of the view that women need the media, hence need to set the agenda and provide the right content. Respondent 4 notably differed with the other respondents and stated that in her view women leaders were victims of their own circumstances and should not always blame the media for negative or biased coverage.

The study findings that prominent women leaders tend to shy away and withdraw from intensive media engagements can be attributed to the theory of the spiral of silence as a subset of media effects theory. Proposed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1974, it can be said that women fear isolation and therefore opt to withdraw. They may fear that the media will victimize them and continue to give more skewed coverage if they voice their dissent or offer divergent opinions to what the media portrays. According to the theory, the media dictates majority opinion. The women leaders are therefore guided by the prevailing opinions in their society. Kiamba, (2008) underpins the underlying problem that the patriarchy presents for women in leadership. Kiamba asserts that due to the inherent patriarchal structures in African society, women in leadership are still assigned a secondary place by prevailing customs and culture. Due to this assigned status, Kiamba argues that women find it difficult to dislocate from this culture and be ostracized. The scholar goes further to state that cultural attitudes are hostile to women in leadership. The assertion by Kiamba and the spiral of silence theory advanced by Neumann explain and put in perspective the study findings that rather than engage media, most of women in leadership shy away or withdraw. Rather than draw attention to themselves by confronting or disputing media content they prefer to stay away in what is perhaps an unconscious conformity to embedded socio-cultural norms.

It is clear from the study findings that the quality of media coverage of prominent women leaders is questionable. This is based on varying perspectives. It is questionable in terms of the content. The findings of the study point to biased, skewed coverage with a manipulated slant or angle of presentation. The contention of the study that media presents peripheral aspects rather than core issues when covering women brings to fore a weighty matter for refection from the media practitioners standpoint. Certainly questions of ethos can be raised and addressed.

One could also argue that media is not wholly to blame for the negative experience or opinion held by women in leadership. The study found that there were other factors at play including how the women engage or do not engage the media. This needs to be interrogated further. Questions on monetary demands by the media for positive coverage also require an in-depth look. Perhaps, as was reflected in some of the study findings, women are responsible for the bad experience? Do they provide the content as fodder for the skewed coverage? There is clearly a multiplicity of factors that, with further probity, will reflect a mixed bag of reasons behind how media covers women. That said, the study reached the conclusion that to a large extent, the experience of women in leadership with media coverage is negative.

Gender Specific Trends In Media Engagement Of Women In Leadership
The study found that the respondents expressed the notion that the gender approach is deeply engrained when media engages women in leadership. The popular captioning of media television or radio programs as 'women in leadership' was in itself a manifestation of gender-based framing, the study established. This is the case where when media programs that are centered on women are aired or published, they will be associated with the female gender. One of the respondents noted that similar programs targeting her male colleague are not captioned 'men in leadership' but rather as 'leadership'. The respondent was full of chagrin at the specific set of questions that are unrelated to media discussions that women leaders engaging the media are subjected to.

"Whenever I am a discussant in media panels, there are questions that these
interviewers always ask women panelists without fail and they really irritate me;

'how do you balance family and work?' 'are you married?' 'do you have a family?'
how come they never pose those questions to men in leadership? Why?!"
(Respondent 3, October 6, 2016)

The study established that the trend of constituting of 'women only' panels was construed as propagating of gender stereotyping. Some of the respondents noted that they do not accept invitations to appear in women only panels. The adoption of common social media trends by main stream media houses, such the popular 'Women Crash Wednesday' (WCW) theme where media engages women leaders specifically on Wednesday, is an approach that entrenches stereotypes attached to women according to Respondent 3. This is because the WCW is intended as a social media platform for men to share pictures of women that they are attracted to.

Women in leadership have not optimally used media as a platform to propagate their agenda as there is a sub conscious withdrawal as a shield against negative media coverage. The skewed coverage as depicted by the study findings leads to the trivialization of the qualities and agenda of women in leadership. Furthermore, the distraction of audiences and distortion of focus on the key agenda negatively impacts on how women leaders are viewed by society. There have been discussions about reducing the load carried by the donkey carried in mainstream media. Where the donkey is the tax payers and the load is the high number of representatives in national assembly. The reduction would be through enacting legislation that would reduce the number of representatives. One of the targets for the reduction would be the seats set aside for women. One can argue that this may be a direct outcome of how women in leadership are portrayed.

ThroughMedia Lenses; Frames And Tags

When asked what aspects the media focuses on when covering prominent women leaders, all the respondents were of the same opinion that the demeanor and personality of a woman are the main focus aspects. The study found that the media tends to focus on relational aspects of prominent women leaders and applies use of harsh terminology when describing women in the coverage. Respondent 1 gave examples of the tags used to describe women. For instance, where a man is described as 'strong, the woman is 'abrasive'.Where the man is 'assertive' the woman is 'aggressive'. She equated the tag 'unsmiling' that is often used in media to depict women leaders as 'not feminine'. Regarding media coverage on her, Respondent 1 said that media tended to focus on her mood, with trivial sentiments about how she does not smile often and her general demeanor.
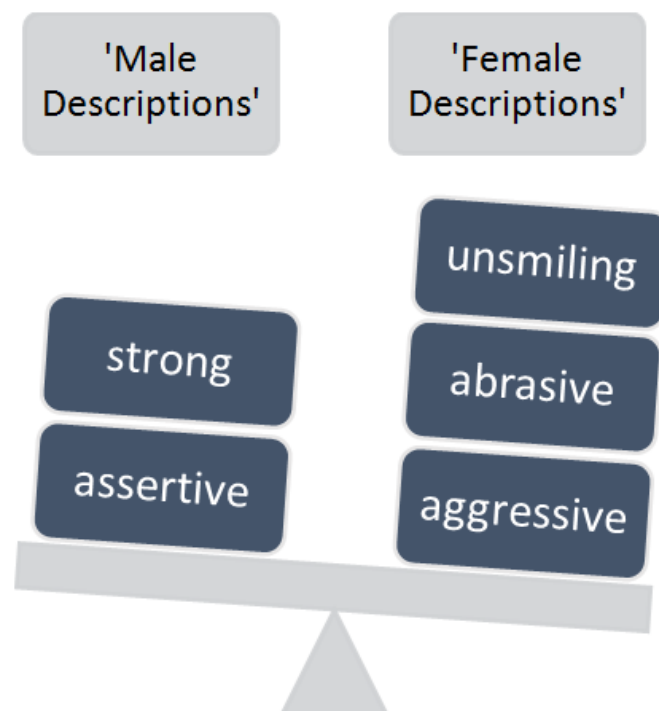

Figure 1:Use of Gendered Descriptive Terminology

All the respondents were of the view that when media covers prominent women leaders, the scope of coverage widens to incorporate the parents, children, family and friends of the subject. For respondent 3 this expanded scope is in stark contrast to media coverage of men, whom the respondent opines, are framed as individuals. Citing the 2015 Jubilee cabinet corruption allegations Respondent 3 noted that the media dragged

former devolution cabinet secretary's Anne Waiguru's children and personal relations into media limelight unnecessarily. This was not the case for her male colleagues. This, according to Respondent 3, is how the media sets the agenda for the audience.

In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. Mcquail (2007) states that agenda setting influences the rank order of public awareness of issues. That is to say that media will determine and weight issues and this sets the pace for how the audience interacts with content. Lazarsfield et al (1944) refers to agenda setting as the power of the media to structure issues. The study was therefore on point by establishing that prominent women leaders are subjected to biased media coverage not only in Kenya but globally, and that that media is discriminative to women and does not convey or recognize the hard work or development agenda undertaken by women.

In 1976, the late baroness thatcher, then opposition leader, opened a speech by parodying the inevitable media reporting of her "red chiffon evening gown, softly made up face, and fair hair gently waved"[1]. This quote from an article in *the guardian*newspaper lays to rest the question of the frames used by media to cover women. Four decades later, the frames have remained pretty much the same.

Other frames used in media coverage of women in leadership identified in this study are; sexuality and appearance, propaganda and controversy, and lastly, gender reflective terminologies and tags.

Media uses propaganda and controversy to frame coverage of women. The study isolated some of the terminology used as captions that demonstrate this. For instance 'women seats are useless' or 'women are their own worst enemies' are phrases that the respondents referred to in alluding the use of propaganda. One would argue that by depicting the 47 seats set aside for women in the Kenyan constitution as useless, the media sends the wrong message to its audience. Using the assumption that the main consumers of media are the men, this messaging may have a spiral effect and shape the narratives around the role or importance of women in leadership. Media has a role to play in ensuring that audiences receive and interpret content correctly.

Media frames issues using gendered terminology and tags. For example, when running a televised interview with a female politician or civil servant, the caption below the screen reads 'women in leadership'. Around elections time there are several media articles that are captioned 'female candidate'. To put this into perspective, there are hardly captions like 'men in leadership' or 'male candidate'. This according to the study findings cements gender stereotyping. The media has an option of covering women in leadership without necessarily qualifying them as women, but rather, laying emphasis on the 'leadership' aspect. This provides an even playing ground and the audience interpretation of content is not clouded by the gender aspect.

However, there is a caveat to this discussion, looking at the framing decision from the perspective of the media practitioners: it's what sells, it's the story, and it's what makes news.

Media's Sexualizing Of The Women In Leadership
The study found that media coverage and content has led to the sexualizing of prominent women in leadership.This in turn has led to the trivialization of their leadership qualities and agenda. When answering the interview question on the impact of media coverage on how society perceives women leaders, the respondents were unanimous that media coverage veers away from constructive coverage of women in leadership, resulting in distraction and distortion of focus on the key agenda. The study established that the media is keen to take up controversial stories on women leaders, especially those related to sexuality. All the respondents were in agreement that media houses use diversionary tactics when reporting issues and focus more on juicy scandals.

> "When media was reporting on Anne Waiguru corruption allegations,
> rather than focusing on the accuracy of the adequacy or inadequacy of the claims on
> her lack of accountability, they used the frame of her supposed personal closeness
> to president Uhuru Kenyatta. This lost focus on the substantive issue which was on
> accountability and management". (Respondent 1, September 23, 2016)

The respondents gave several examples of their own experiences or the experiences of their colleagues to further illustrate media's sexualizing of women in leadership. Respondent 1 gave an example of how during the 10th parliament one media house took a picture of women parliamentarian legs and used it in a popular column, inviting readers to identify the owners of the legs. The respondent also narrated other stereotyping experiences during the 2013 elections period including the presidential debate. She explained how the media analysis following the televised debate centered on her choice of outfit and how wrong it was. She singled out a vernacular radio station that described to its audience, her outfit as having a low cut neck, which according to the media house exposed 'a lot of flesh'. By focusing on her dressing, the media house in question distracted the

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[1]The power of the media: putting women in the frame (The Guardian, May 2, 2013)

audience from the quality of her participation in the presidential candidates' debate and issues she tabled as her election agenda.

Respondent 1 observed that the trend of focusing on 'side shows' of prominent women leaders goes a long way back. The respondent gave an example of the late Nobel peace laureate Prof. Wangari Maathai divorce in the 1980s, which was discussed in gory details in the media, purportedly because she was being divorced on grounds of adultery.

> "Wangari Maathai was repeatedly captioned in print media in the 1980s as a 'divorcee'. The impact of this tag was not lost on her; as a member in the sixth parliament she said; let us not discuss the anatomy below the belt, but what is in between the ears" ((Respondent 5, October 10, 2016)

From the examples the respondents gave during the interview questions, the study established that not only does the media propagate the sexualizing of women in leadership, it continues to perpetuate this by repeatedly referring to long past incidences in remotely related current occurrences. Citing her experience with this, respondent 3 observed that the media keeps on focusing on a statement she made about breastfeeding in the senate in 2014 up to date whenever an unrelated story about her is published.

Mcquail (2007) defines priming as when media foreground the criteria for assessing public figures. The priming theory advances that mass media by making some issues more outstanding than others impacts on how prominent people are judged. Priming refers to ''changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations'' (Iyengar &Kinder, 1987, p.63). Priming in mass media is an outcome of agenda setting or a dependent variable. First the media will decide what to say, then how to say it.

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) further argue that what the mass media 'primes' is what the public use to judge their leaders. According to the findings of the study therefore support this theory. By focusing on the relationships that prominent women leaders have, or their family status or even how they dress, talk and look, the media sets the stage for its audience on what to think. The implication therefore is that the core agenda or issues that should ideally be communicated take a back seat.

The media in Kenya has propagated the sexualizing of women in leadership by laying emphasis on dressing, attitude, demeanor and physical attributes e.g. legs, and cleavage. The idea that a media house can discuss the dressing of a presidential candidate to the ninth, including details of color and depth of the cut of neckline at the expense of conveying the ideas and agenda the candidate presented during the debate. The study also established that not only does media propagate sexualizing of women in leadership, it continues to perpetuate this by repeatedly referring to long past incidences in remotely related current occurrences. A glance at media content confirms this, especially with the use of hyperlinks drawing audiences to link to related content that is characteristic of digital content. The media frames used to cover women in leadership cross-pollinate therefore, making it difficult to erase their digital footprint.

One can deduce that this kind of framing is a global media malpractice or else find solace in knowing that the framing of women depending on their physical appearance is not limited to the Kenya media scenario. 2016 U.S presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has since 2007 been the subject of discussions in what has been termed as the 'cleavagegate'. The '*Atlantic*' newspaper[2] described Hillary Clinton's near paranoid view of the media, and her lack of trust of the media. However the newspaper justifies this by stating the 'journalistic fixation on her clothes' and 'on her appearance overall, whether on her makeup or her hair or her contact lenses' explains why she is wary and rightly so. Interestingly, the women may themselves be proponents of the characterization of women leadership attributes along gender lines. The fact that one of the respondents in the study alludes to the 'smiling and cheery' nature and attitude of Amina Mohammed as the reason the latter enjoys positive media coverage is a clear pointer to this.

Social Constructivism And Profiling Of Women In Leadership

The study found that the media propagates patriarchal coverage by setting the narrative that if women achieve anything good then they are like men. All the respondents were of the view that these narratives were disempowering and negatively affected women leaders. The study established that media does not propagate the gender narrative on purpose, but as a social construct. The respondents noted that the media is not entirely to blame as it an extension of society and society tends to perceive women from gendered lenses. According to the respondents, the impact of skewed media framing of prominent women leaders further entrenches the misplaced societal propaganda of women as underdogs and inadequate.

The study had sought to establish the effect of skewed media coverage on how society perceived women in leadership. However, from the responses to the question, the respondents were of the view that it is society that determines and dictates how the media perceives women, and that it is not the other way round. The

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[2]Why the Pantsuit? (The Atlantic, August 2, 2016)

study closed the loop on this because some of the respondents noted that the Kenyan society is a big consumer of media and tends to believe a lot in what is aired or presented as gospel truth.

"Skewed media coverage of women is an extension of societal patriarchy that places favor on men and disadvantages women. Unfortunately, it is we women who propagate and buy into this narrative of the supremacy of the male gender". (Respondent 1, September 23, 2016)

Using her own example with her experience on framing, Respondent 1 said that the phrase that referred her to the 'only male in Kibaki Cabinet' was an insult to women. (*Daily Nation'*columnistClay Muganda described (the respondent) as being "the only man in Kibaki's Cabinet" because of her willingness to stand up for president Mwai Kibaki in the aftermath of the 2007/2008 elections standoff

Mcquail (2007) has stated that the mass media institution is part of the structure of society. Based on previous research (tuchman, 1978), one of the factors that influence the media's choice of frames for content is social norms and values. The studies conducted establish that the frame building of the media as the independent variable has an impact on the audience framing as the dependent variable. Mcquail (Ibid) notes that the content of media largely supports reigning social norms and conventions. He argues that it is difficult for media to drift far from status quo. Mcintosh (2013) asserts that media messages communicate content that is tailored to match what already exists in society. The narratives that media communicates both overtly and covertly are a continuity of what that audience already knows and perceives as normal. Scheufele (1999) explains that people tend to favor the facts that are brought to their attention through frames, and the way an event is framed by the media can affect how audiences understand the event. The arguments put forth by the scholars are a reflection of the study findings that gendered media coverage and stereotyping of women in leadership is a continuation of societal perspectives of women.

The cross findings from this study that on one hand society influence media on what to convey about women in leadership, and on the other hand that it is media that influences society what to think of women leaders are both correct positions. Mcquail (2007) has argued that mass media and society continuously interact and influence each other. He concludes that the interdependency between media and society is so intertwined, that both mirror and mould each other. Laher(2014) puts this relationship between media and society into perspective. She states, 'patriarchy is alive and well in the media. Making the role of women in (leadership) a continual mediation between their designated gender and their desired role as a leader in society'. Ndlovu &Mutale(2013) have argued that due to the influence of patriarchy, men continue to influence societal processes. They discuss the prohibitive cultural attitudes against women that are reflected in how the media cover women in leadership. The two scholars accuse the media of gender based discrimination based on the latter's selection and portrayal of stereotypical content of women. Quoting an external source, Ndlovu and Mutale (Ibid) lay emphasis on the critical role of media in determining how society perceives women leaders, and media's role in shaping the values of society with regard to women leadership. The way media covers women could be attributed to how the journalists are socialized towards women leadership and they use this frame of mind to perceive and report on women (Gamson &Modigliani, 1987). The findings from this study that media is discriminative to women and does not convey or recognize the hard work or development agenda undertaken by women lend credence to this school of thought.

Capella andJamieson (1997) have put forth the argument that news frames activate certain 'inferences, ideas and judgments' concerning politicians. Laher(2014) discusses media framing of women in power from the perspective of societal construction of males and females. Males are constructed as 'dominant, assertive and leaders', while women are 'passive, submissive, followers'. According to Jaher, the net effect of this is that women in leadership are viewed as outsiders who present themselves outside the expected gender hierarchy, hence the increased media scrutiny. Laher argues further that media's distortion of women leaders causes attrition of the visibility their skills and leadership values, resulting in unequal playing field in competed processes of leadership. The foregoing arguments put forth by both Laher, Capella andJamieson buttress the findings of this study: that women in leadership in Kenya have been subjected to stereotyping and gender lenses.

The study established that the media in Kenya has been dead set in defining women in leadership through the 'woman and her tentacles' frame. By 'her tentacles' the study means her family, her husband, her lover, her children, all of which are the appendages the media finds a way to attach to content and coverage of women in leadership. In the analysis of the findings, the study attributes this kind of framing to the social constructivism of women's roles and gender identity. However, the respondents in the study reported to be irked by the intimate questions of media practitioners with regard family status and work life balance. Questions such as 'are you married?', 'how do you balance being a leader and being a mother?' were distracting and intended to veer the audience away from the gist of the discussions. This study find brings to question is men in leadership are subjected to probity on their 'tentacles' or 'appendages'.

Media and the Man's Club Question

The study found that media propagated patriarchal coverage by setting the narrative that if women achieve anything good then they are like men. Asked about how the media covered them, the respondents were of the view that positivity in media was reserved for men. That media exposes women but protects men. That media coverage is skewed to protect men even where they are wrong.

"Male privilege and entitlement is perpetuated by media and socially entrenched. While men are portrayed in a special way, women are disparaged and attacked mercilessly. Women in leadership tend to bear the brunt of this more because they are perceived to occupy male space and their inclusion is treated as a favor not a right." (Respondent 1, September 23, 2016)

The study established that media also judges women in leadership harshly if women engage the media as women; there is a silent expectation that women in leadership should engage as if they were men. Respondent 2 emphasized that men in leadership get less skewed coverage because they team up and support each other, and media loves team players. The respondent noted that media coverage is sometimes unfavorable to women because they are inaccessible and do not engage. The personalities and attitudes of women leaders provide fodder for gendered coverage according to Respondent 2. She opined that men have better skills in engaging with media contacts. In particular Respondent 2 pointed out that the women are more unlikely to provide lunch and transport for media crew, a term that is loosely referred to as 'facilitating' media. On the other hand, men are more likely to facilitate the media and hence get fair and adequate coverage.

"Women in leadership have exposed themselves and made themselves vulnerable to skewed media coverage. Men in leadership and in media on the other hand support each other and end up with positive coverage. Negative behavior is capitalized by the society, and there is a delicate balance of being a woman and a leader". If the balance of media reporting is to tip in favor of women, we have to find a different approach to engage media and change their attitude towards us. In the end, it all boils down to the individual". (Respondent 3, October. 6, 2016)

Respondent 2 referred to the public altercation between Runyenjes member of parliamentCecily Mbarire and Embu senator Lenny Kivuti that played out in media (on September 18, 2016). In this case the media portrayed Mbarire as the one on the wrong. The respondent was of the view that the media emphasized on the issue because it played out against the two genders. Respondent 2 was of the view that if the exchange involved two men then it would not have sparked response and protest as it did.

The findings pointed to the all familiar terrain of the place of women in the hierarchical setting of Kenyan society. Firstly, as regards to patriarchy; the study found that when women achieve anything good then the media likens them to men. We are all too familiar with the 'only man in Kibaki's cabinet' later revised to 'to the only man in Uhuru's cabinet' phrases. These were coined by the media ostensibly to elaborate the quintessential leadership qualities displayed by Martha Karua and Amina Mohammed in executing their roles as cabinet secretaries. One would be tempted to state that patriarchy is embedded in the Kenyan society hence women in leadership should 'accept and move on' as it were. However, in my opinion media houses stand challenged to come up with more catchy phrases and tags to celebrate achievements of the women in leadership.

That said, the findings of the study that women can better engage with media, and not shy away needs to be emphasized. For leadership to be successful, a partnership between the media, its audience and its subjects has to be forged. There is need for women in leadership to communicate back to media, respond to queries and understand better the role of media in society. The media can be both ally and foe: in my opinion women in leadership should embrace both sides of the sword.

Document Analysis

Findings of the study were validated in order to gauge their applicability to another context. A document analysis was conducted using purposive sampling of online articles published by mainstream media. The articles were selected from the search results of the key words 'women + leaders + Kenya' to validate the study and in line with the project scope.

The online newspaper articles analyzed corroborated the study findings that media were biased in their coverage of women in leadership. The coverage is often skewed and laced with gender stereotypes. In one of the articles, the writer begins by stating: *"ever heard of the saying, it is a man's world? Well, let me take you through a journey of women representation in high decision-making positions in the country then you will confirm that this is indeed the case in Kenya.'*this immediately displaces the women in leadership as they are deemed to be occupying a male space. The same writer concludes the article with the words *"there is also a society stereotype where there is the perception that a woman member of parliament cannot represent them well' capital news* (September 25, 2008)

A further look at the portrayal of women leaders in the articles, agrees with the study findings that the women faced stereotyped and sexually innuendos even in illustrated media coverage. One publication caricatured the women leaders as masseuses in an aircraft, yet the women depicted were on official duty. This

points to the sexualizing of women in leadership. Again, the women in demonstrated that they were unhappy with the content as was reported. *"I want to demand an apology to all the lady members of parliament because we are here in our own right. We did not come here to massage anybody… we are here as members of parliament; and we want gender sensitive media, not people who look at us from the waist down and not the waist up." Capital News*(May 22, 2013) from this statement, it can be deduced that women leaders point a finger at the gender insensitive and gendered media portrayal.

Figure -2Cartoon Depicting Women Leaders As Masseuses

The findings of the study concluded that the women in leadership rarely confront the media over negative coverage for fear of further reprisals. However, it is interesting to note that through the documents analyzed there were instances where the women leaders used the same media to protest their portrayal. This was executed through press conferences or press releases, and as in the excerpt below, by penning protest articles.

The document analysis also corroborated the study findings that media attributes certain tags and labels when describing women. For instance the study showed that the female equivalent of assertive is aggressive. One of the articles reviewed stated; '*but things are bound to change if the aggression with which women are campaigning ahead of the 2017 general election*rather than to be depicted as working hard the women are associated with strong and violent tags. Again, the media was found to associate good or outstanding performance to maleness. This is no wonder that when the women excel, it is termed as 'shocking'! *'Homa Bay woman representative Gladys Wanga, for instance, shocked many when she beat men to be elected the county's orange democratic movement chairperson.' The Standard*(September 2, 2016).

The study concluded that media frames women in leadership through gendered lenses. The document analysis established that indeed the media does apply these frames in their coverage. Portrayal of women through patriarchal lenses was most evident. One writer ruthlessly tears into the presidential ambitions of a woman leader. He states; '*No Kenyan man would ever willingly agree to be under a woman.' '… Do you expect the same men to vote a woman to be the most powerful 'man' in the country?'* the writer continues to entrench and acknowledge a further stereotypical depiction of women; *'women, like fire, are known to be good servants but bad leaders. I know this is stereotypical thinking but just look at our female leaders, ask a friend who has a female boss the hell they go through.'*the writer concludes by casting aspersions on the marital status of the subject by quipping optional salutations and openly expressing his gender biased lenses; *'so Miss/Mrs. Presidential aspirant…'I would like to end my tirade by stating categorically that Kenya is not ready for a female president.' The Standard*(30th August2016)

Figure -3Cartoon Depicting The Unequal Treatment Of Women And Men Leaders

The documents analyzed corroborate the finding that media lays emphasis on physical appearance and attributes of women in leadership, often veering away from the core issues. However, the attributions cannot be wholly blamed on the media as in some instances the media reported what was stated verbatim. This analysis does not contradict the findings as it was stated that media framing and labeling is a reflection of societal perceptions of women. It has been said that the leadership of a society is reflective of the values of the society it represents. Some of the discussions held in national platform analyzed were subjective. One of the male leader's states; *'"when you look at some of the women here, the hair on their head cost almost Sh10, 000. These women have money," Capital News (April 21, 2016).* The media also propagated further the assertion that women who had been elected to the senate were nothing more than 'flower girls.' *'...It's unfortunate we have nothing but flower girls who just can't stop clutching on their male party leaders' coat tails for political survival'(The Standard,* August8, 2016).Perhaps framed differently, the story would be progressive, thatis, adiscussion on the legal roles and limitations of nominated senators. By framing the senators as flower girls, the media trivializes and jeopardizes the role of women leaders. It also loses an opportunity to educate the audience of gaps in representation legislation.

To sum the discussion on the frames used by media to depict women, the following is an excerpt describing in glowing terms serving cabinet secretary Amina Mohammed. The article is captioned: **'***Amina Mohammed: Acting like a lady but thinking like a man'*. It goes on to read*: '.... Brilliant, beautiful, stylish, articulate and yet unassuming, she breathes remarkable freshness and class into the boring business of government. A sharp dresser, often with ascarf loosely tied around her neck and dimpled smile, she brought to the Cabinet the rare combination of beauty and brains.'The Standard,* August8, 2016). The audience is denied information on the reason why she is an outstanding performer, her diplomatic experience, her academic qualifications and leadership qualities. The framing points to the aesthetic qualities, hence creating gendered lenses for the audience's perception of what a good female leader should be.

The study findings show the consequences of the negative portrayal regarding how society perceives and views women in leadership. From the documents analyzed, it is clear that women leaders are embarrassed and feel undignified from the skewed media coverage. The article alluded to earlier penned by a woman politician *(Star,May. 22, 2015)* concludes by making an observation that perhaps the objective of skewed, negative portrayal of women leaders in media coverage is aimed at meeting editorial policies and expectations. ʿ*at this point, the author of the story celebrates. He has managed to please his masters whose key objective is to embarrass the female legislator and to portray women as not designed for leadership.'*this is done at the expense of the societal perceptions of women leaders. As a result of status of women leadership is weakened. This corroborates the study findings that women in leadership will shy away and withdraw from engaging. The

article concludes with clear indictment of media houses and an even worse predicament for the future of women in leadership in the next generation. *'women are demotivated from running for office because of threats, questions on their marital status and sexuality.'* *'theseattacks do not help young girls who would one day want to be the martha karuas or Wangari Maathai's of this world. You kill the dreams of your own daughters by the cowardly acts.'*(*Star,* May 22, 2015).

IV. CONCLUSION

The study successfully investigated the frames used by media to cover prominent women leaders in Kenya and to analyze the consequences of the media framing of women leaders on their political and public leadership. The study findings were corroborated by the triangulation process and the study concluded that the portrayal of prominent women leaders in Kenya by the media is negative, biased and skewed with gender stereotyping.

The study found that to a large extent, that prominent women leaders view as biased media coverage on them. From the study findings, it emerged that gendered lenses and stereotyping of women in leadership is deeply woven in media coverage. The study findings pointed to the fact that media coverage is sometimes unfavorable to women because they are inaccessible and do not engage. However, the study deduced that this coverage is based on how the women engage with the media house, and secondly, a continuation of societal perspectives of women. It was the contention of the study that media does not propagate the gender narrative on purpose.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that media houses should introspect on the current practices around framing of women in leadership. The editorial policies should have specific guidelines on managing and conveying content on the female gender. In the absence of this, media houses will unconsciously continue to apply gendered lenses in their coverage of women in leadership.

The study recommends that women in leadership should embrace the role of media in society. For their leadership to be successful, a partnership between the media and the women leaders needs to be forged. There is need for women in leadership to communicate back to media, respond to queries and understand better the role of media in society.

Lastly, the research recommends two further researches to be undertaken in order to fully complete this study: a study on the audience perspective and interpretation media portrayal women in leadership and secondly, an investigation into the editorial policies on framing of gender. With women and leadership as a case study.

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