NEWSPAPER FRAMING OF DEVOLUTION AS A NEW DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT IN KENYA, 2013 - 2017

BY

JIMMY OCHIENG

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Communication, Cinematics & Creative Arts in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Communication Studies

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY - AFRICA

Summer 2019
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Student’s Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college, institution or university other than the United States International University in Nairobi for academic credit.

Signed:______________________       Date:______________________

Jimmy Ochieng (ID No 649136)
Approval Page

This thesis has been presented for examination with my approval as the appointed supervisor.

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Prof. Valerie P. Adema,
Ag. Dean, School of Communication, Cinematic and Creative Art
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By

Jimmy Ochieng
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The realisation of the dream of completing graduate school would not have been possible without the many supportive and helpful hands God sent my way. To start off, I am very grateful to my mother for instilling the importance of education and always reminding me to save some money so as to be able to acquire an education that befits the lineage from which I come.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Kenyans who voted for a devolved system of governance to actualise their dreams of a just, equal, equitable and developed society.
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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CORD: Coalition for Reforms and Democracy
CDF: Constituency Development Fund
CDB: County Development Boards
COG: Council of Governors
EU: European Union
HIV/AIDS: Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
KADU: Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU: Kenya African National Union
KNLS: Kenya National Library Services
NARC: National Rainbow Coalition
MCA: Member of County Assembly
MDGs: Millennium Development Goals
MP: Member of Parliament
SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals
TV: Television
UK: United Kingdom
UN: United Nations
UNDP: The United Nations Development Programme
US: United States
USIU-A: United States International University-Africa
Abstract

The present research investigates newspaper framing of devolution as a new development concept in Kenya from 2013 to 2017. Specifically, the study examines five things: (i) The frames which newspaper journalists used in the four-year coverage of devolution; (ii) Through the lens of attribution of responsibility frame, who were the most blamed actors for the problems that faced the new development concept of devolution; (iii) Whether the coverage of devolution was framed more from an episodic or thematic perspective; (iv) Whether the coverage was more negative or positive; and (v) The major sources of news in the coverage of devolution stories. Using a six-constructed weeks sampling, the research content analysed 565 news stories from two national newspapers - Daily Nation and The Standard. The findings indicate that conflict was the most dominant frame (40.2%) followed by economic consequences (21.3%) and development (16.5%) in the coverage of devolution. Members of the county executive tier (39.0%) were the most blamed actors for the problems facing devolution. The coverage of devolution stories was overwhelmingly episodic (98.6%) and journalists used a more negative tone (53.0%) in news stories. Lastly, members of the county executive (41.2%) were the major sources of news for stories touching on devolution. Therefore, generally the findings exhibit the dominance of the political elite on devolution discourse which resulted in conflict as the most dominant news frame. Journalists reflected the conflict between the two antagonistic coalitions that straddled the political arena: the ruling Jubilee Coalition and the opposition Coalition for Reforms and Democracy. Most importantly, the impact of the heavy reliance on the political elite as news sources was felt through the predominant episodic coverage of devolution, which meant reduced attention to substantive development issues.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background to the Study

Historically in Kenya, the party in power and that in the opposition have debated governance issues in a polarised atmosphere. The successive ruling parties consistently argued for the need of the centre to control the development process, especially the allocation of resources. On the other hand, opposition parties increasingly argued for the devolution of political and financial power.

The Kenyan opposition has, over the years, insisted that centralisation undermines democracy and development (see Bates, 2008). The country’s five-decade (1963-2013) experiment with centralisation under a powerful presidency witnessed abuse of power, systemic marginalisation and exclusion of people along ethnic lines, unbalanced distribution of resources, poverty, inequality and lack of participation (African Union Panel of Eminent African Personalities, 2014).

In the terminal years of colonialism, the debate about democratic development revolved around two camps. The first camp championed a centralised system of governance, which they argued was critical in uniting a young country that was emerging from the vagaries of the colonial period. They posited that development was unlikely to succeed in the absence of a strong centre. The second one advocated for a semi-federal system of government, famously referred to as Majimbo. They argued it would safeguard the interests of the minority ethnic groups who risked being further marginalised and exploited by the dominant tribes. The Kenya African National Union (KANU), which
enjoyed the support of the main ethnic groups, advocated for a centralised system of government. The Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), which revolved around the small ethnic groups, espoused the ideals of a semi-federal system.

Fearing that this debate would delay independence, KANU opted to adopt the Majimbo constitution but with no intention of implementing it. KANU won the subsequent election and formed government in 1963. Within one year of independence, KANU abolished Majimbo and coerced KADU to dissolve and join government (Getzel, 1970; Ghai & McAuslan, 1970; Oyugi, 2005), thereby establishing a one-party state that lasted until 1991 when the country returned to a multi-party state.

In between 1964-1991, a single-party system emerged in which discourses on development revolved around how the national government would be at the forefront of ensuring growth reaches the citizens at the local level. During this period, the country experimented with different variants of decentralisation as tools of development. However, all these initiatives had the [un]intended effect of increasing central control and reducing opportunities for citizen participation. The emphasis was on political control rather than on political participation.

The first mode of decentralisation to be introduced was the development committee, which was expected to stimulate and coordinate development at the local level (Republic of Kenya, 1965). There was also Harambee (a self-help movement), where citizens pulled their resources together to build schools and hospitals with the government coming in to support the running of those facilities. This was intended to give citizens a voice in decision-making about local-level development. The Special Rural Development Programme introduced in July 1970, covered six administrative divisions and operated for
six years before it wound up in 1976 due to opposition by senior staff at the national level (Oyugi, 1981).

District planning was introduced in 1972 to strengthen the district as the hub for the planning and implementation of development. However, the respective ministries, rather than the local government ended up implementing the formulated plans (Cohen & Hook, 1986; Oyugi, 1990). The second President of the Republic of Kenya, Daniel arap Moi, introduced the District Focus for Rural Development, in 1983, where he granted district administrators the power to initiate and administer development initiatives (Cheeseman, Lynch, & Willis, 2016). This he, argued, would empower citizens “to participate in development planning, implementation and management” (Kanyinga, 2016, p. 158).

The return to multi-party politics in 1991 would re-awaken the Majimbo debate, with the ruling party, KANU, at the time dominated by minority groups, arguing that a federal system was the only one that could secure the interests of small ethnic groups. The transition from KANU to the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in 2003 saw the country change the party in power for the first time since independence. The regime of President Mwai Kibaki introduced the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in the same year to transfer more funds to the local level through the allocation of 2.5% of the national revenue to members of Parliament (MPs) to enable them to develop their constituencies (Cheeseman et al., 2016).

The debate on a review of the constitution dominated political processes in the country between 1992 and 2010. The first referendum to amend the constitution in 2005 failed after the opposition managed to convince Kenyans to vote against the draft
constitution which had removed key provisions which provided for a federal system of governance.

The second referendum to revise the constitution in 2010 succeeded for two important reasons. First, the violence that erupted after the 2007 election led to the formation of a coalition government. This brought together the major political stakeholders, and thus, made it easy to mobilise the masses to vote for the draft constitution (see also Kasfir, 2015). Second, the draft constitution embraced a devolved system of government, which created 47 county governments with substantial political, fiscal and administrative powers.

The interest to study the discourse on devolution was influenced by two key reasons. First, the researcher’s interest in the workings of devolution in the country. Second, and more specifically, a desire to understand why the voices of the critical stakeholders in the discourse on devolution were missing in the news. This was triggered by a survey conducted by Afrobarometer (2015), which revealed some disturbing statistics regarding public participation: Only 3.0% of Kenyans participate in county affairs, and 8.0% find it difficult to participate in key county activities and to access information on county budgets, legislation, and project plans.

The background provided above helps the reader to appreciate the importance of studying how the discourse on development evolved within the context of a devolved system of government. For the simple reason that the debate on development in the country remained polarised and contested between 1963 and 2010. Thus, the introduction of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, which empowers subnational units of government as key agents of development, raises the question whether the discourse on development has
become less polarised and more participatory. This question can be best answered through an examination of how the media framed devolution so as to determine whether or not journalists played their key role in the gathering, dissemination and packaging of development-oriented information.

**Development, Communication and Newspaper Framing**

Seers (1972) argues that the term development is treated as a synonym for improvement, which Montgomery (1966) avers is “an aspect of change that is desirable” (p. 259). Based on this, Seers (1972) stipulates that to determine whether a country is developing or not, the critical questions to ask are: “What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality?” (Seers, 1972, p. 24). He goes on to argue that a decline in all of these is synonymous with a period of development but if any of the above gets worse, “it would be strange to call the results development” (Seers, 1972, p. 24).

Roger (1976), writing three years after Seers (1972), seemed to espouse similar thoughts as he asserted that development is a “type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce higher per capita incomes and levels of living” (p. 18).

A globally accepted definition of development is the one produced by the United Nations (UN), which put together a team of 24 individuals drawn from both the developed and the developing worlds. The team, which was led by the Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland, embraced the term sustainable development to mean “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Conference on Environment and
Development, 1987, p. 43). It is to this literal meaning of maintaining development over time that this research restricts itself to.

Devolution is a variant of decentralisation that is considered to be more comprehensive as it represents power-sharing between central and sub-national governments. The other types are deconcentration, delegation and privatisation (Hyden, 1983; Rondinelli, 1981; United Nations Centre for Research and Development, 1981). As a concept concerned with making governance inclusive, decentralisation, Landau and Eagle (1982) argue, is the undoing of centralisation. That is, it reverses the concentration of power and authority in a single head or centre by sharing it with subordinate units.

Devolution is a system of governance that cedes significant political and economic powers to constituent political units (county governments). Oyugi (2005) concurs with Rondinelli (1981) that devolution involves the transfer of political power and resources to lower level units who are granted the authority to plan and manage public functions. Therefore, the transition from a centralised to a decentralised system of governance is expected to deliver development at the local level through the involvement of Kenyans in identifying the problems that affect them, prioritising their responses to the problems, and participating in the crafting and implementation of the solutions to address these problems.

In pursuant of the ideals of devolution, Article 174 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) stipulates the main objects of devolution include to: (i) Promote socio-economic development; (ii) Recognise the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their development; (iii) Ensure equitable sharing of national and local resources; (iv) Promote democratic and accountable exercise of power; and (iv) Give powers of self-governance to the people and strengthen public participation (Republic of Kenya, 2010).
These objects encapsulate most of the definitions of what constitutes development both from a broad as well as a communication standpoint (Mefalopulos, 2008; Melkote, 1991; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001; Rogers, 1976; Seers, 1972; Servaes, 1995).

The emergence of development journalism in the mid-1960s introduced a new perspective which challenged journalists to be constructive in the manner in which they report news and to gear such reporting toward development ends. This was coming at a time of a paradigmatic shift in development communication from a dominant to an empowerment/alternative paradigm. The dominant paradigm placed an emphasis on the message. The message was seen as stimulus, which on its own was considered to be sufficient enough to persuade target audience and generate desired responses as it is interpreted and decoded (Schramm, 1954). The alternative paradigm places an emphasis on a participatory approach, as it sees development as a product of collaboration and engagement of all stakeholders, and communication as an essential tool for facilitating dialogue among stakeholders (Melkote, 1991). This saw a paradigm shift from a focus on informing and persuading people, to one on facilitating exchanges between stakeholders so as to resolve a problem.

To quote McQuail (2005), development journalism is concerned with “reporting on ideas, programmes, activities and events, which are related to an improvement of the living standards of people” (p. 245) or what Adebayo (1990) considered the practice of “gathering, packaging and disseminating development-oriented news and information” (p. 45).
Newspapers, in the context of development, are generally expected to support development initiatives by the dissemination of messages that encourage the public to support development-oriented projects (Servaes, 1995). With the embrace of participatory development, newspapers were challenged to take the lead in “providing technical information about development problems and possibilities……and circulate information about the self-development accomplishments of local groups so that other such groups may profit from others’ experience and perhaps be challenged to achieve a similar performance” (Rogers, 1976, p. 141). Okigbo (1991) argues that the newspapers’ key role in development includes providing access to a wide variety of people, determining the people’s needs for development information and programming for those needs, supporting horizontal and vertical flow of information, and raising their awareness and adoption of new methods that promote development.

Therefore, the manner in which newspapers frame stories on devolution plays a critical role in advancing or stagnating the achievement of sustainable development. Newspapers play an important role in defining and framing devolution (as a new development concept) for the public including offering possible causes and solutions for various challenges (Kim, Carvalho, & Davis, 2010). Newspaper coverage of devolution draws attention to challenges, therefore, helping set the agenda for policy makers and the general public.

The concept of framing has been used extensively to explore the ways in which media present problems to the public. Entman (1993) states that media framing essentially involves selection and emphasis of certain aspects of an issue to promote salience among the audience. Tewksbury and his colleagues (2000) argue that “frames can imply policy
options or implicit answers to questions of what should be done about issues” (p. 804). Tweksbury et al. (2000) further contend that the frames “may shape individuals’ opinions and policy preferences by stressing certain elements of a broader controversy” (p. 805).

Framing of development matters because newspaper coverage can affect the way the public reacts to issues such as poverty, extreme hunger, child mortality and malaria (Kim et al., 2010). Newspaper description and depiction of an issue can influence the manner in which the public and decision-makers respond to the given issue (Wallack, 1994). The capability of the media to shape the way citizens learn, understand or think about an issue (Jamieson & Walderman, 2003), compels political actors to compete to influence the media’s choice of frames that are advantageous to their courses (Shah, Kwak, Schmierback, & Zubric, 2004). Thus, newspapers are expected to mediate this competition so as to ensure that the discourse about such an issue is done in an objective and informative manner.

**Statement of the Problem**

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) encompasses devolution as a framework for decentralised governance in the quest for democracy and development. Subsequent to the 2013 General Election, devolution as a new development concept became a mainstream topic in Kenya. Citizens, the national government, county governments, professional groups, academia, business community and other stakeholders were seized of devolution as a concept and its associated consequences as a development issue, thus, making it a political issue.

Thus, it became important to understand the manner in which newspapers framed devolution, since the media are expected to play a key role in the manner in which
Devolution is implemented by: (i) keeping citizens informed about its implementation and activities; (ii) providing the requisite information to enable their participation; and, (iii) reporting on the successes and best practices emanating from different counties. Thus, help counties to share experiences and adopt best practice.

The Kenyan case, however, demonstrates that newspapers covered devolution in a manner that tended to evoke emotive and divisive discourses (Bwire, 2017; Bwire, 2018). Newspaper coverage of devolution has been accused of focusing on the theatrics at the expense of providing useful information on devolution, which is given limited space, rarely makes it to the front page and does not assess performance (Bwire, 2017; Bwire, 2018).

While this observation seems to project the reality, there is no statistical evidence to back such a claim. Hence, the need for a study on how newspapers framed devolution to ascertain whether the frames they used disadvantaged a policy-focused narrative on development. While there is extensive academic research on framing, there is a dearth of studies on the framing of decentralised systems of governance across nations, including Kenya.

Founded on framing theory, this research examines the extent to which newspapers framed devolution from 2013-2017. When newspapers cover politics, public affairs, governance and development issues, they provide more than just facts (Brewer & Gross, 2010). Among the issues they highlight are the frames that shape how the audience understand a given topic through “packaging them with a centralising idea” (Gitlin 1980, p. 3). Thus, an examination of the dominant frames used in the coverage of devolution demonstrates how newspapers defined the discourse on the concept of devolution.
Purpose of the Study

Following other framing studies, which seek to explicate how newspapers shape public debates, the current research examines newspaper coverage of devolution in Kenya. Therefore, bearing in mind the influence journalists have on devolution by reporting on its programmes and activities, this study investigates the newspaper framing of devolution in Kenya between 2013 and 2017. Specifically, the study examines five things: (i) The frames which newspaper journalists used in the four-year coverage of devolution; (ii) Through the lens of attribution of responsibility frame, who were the most blamed actors for the problems that faced the new development concept of devolution; (iii) Whether the coverage of devolution was framed more from an episodic or thematic perspectives; (iv) Whether the coverage was more negative or positive; and (v) The major sources of news in the coverage of devolution stories.

Objectives of the Study

The study has four key objectives.

1. To examine the frames which newspapers used in the four-year coverage of devolution. Relatedly, through the attribution of responsibility, establish which actors were the most blamed for the problems facing devolution.
2. To analyse whether the coverage of devolution reflected an episodic or thematic frame.
3. To scrutinise whether the coverage of devolution was framed positively or negatively.
4. To investigate the major news sources in the reporting of devolution.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The media are a key player in shaping public discourse on topical issues such as devolution, hence the need for the current study. Kenyans did not know what to expect with devolution considering the first attempt at such a revolutionary decentralisation of power was nipped
in the bud immediately after independence. Across the country, Kenyans were expectant of the fruits of devolution with many believing they will now be in a position to determine the manner in which resources are exploited at the local level. Therefore, an understanding of how the news media covered devolution will help to unravel the central organising ideas through which the newspaper journalists shaped the stories on devolution.

From the standpoint of framing concept, how newspapers covered devolution is important for three reasons. First, media frames are critical in individuals’ understanding of events and issues, especially of a new form of governance the country is experimenting with. Second, news frames are vital in the manner in which issues and events are presented in media because they communicate a particular perceived reality (Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 1980). Third, debates on topical issues such as devolution are largely influenced by the nature of newspaper reporting because it informs the public by making meaning and sense from issues of national interest. In addition, media coverage of devolution can compel policy-makers to direct all necessary efforts to support its implementation.

The study is significant for three important reasons. First, the study will help policy-makers, practitioners, students, academicians, politicians and other actors understand the role of the media in engendering a polarised discourse on development, especially now the country is experimenting with a new form of governance. Second, there is a dearth of studies on framing of decentralised systems of governance. Hence, apart from adding to the literature on framing of decentralisation, the research will also add to the growing literature on framing, and thus, strengthen the concretization of the theory. Lastly, the research will help identify the key actors associated with the frames journalists use in
framing devolution, and as such appreciate the forces that drive the discourses on devolution.

**Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study applied a quantitative, content analysis of two national English newspapers (*Daily Nation* and *The Standard*) for a four-year period starting from 27 March 2013, when the governors were sworn into office to the start of the official campaign period for the 2017 General Election on 28 May 2017, signalling the end of their first-term in office.

There are three key limitations of this research that future investigations should seek to ameliorate. First, it focuses on Kenya’s two leading newspapers – *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* – at the expense of two other important print media: *The Star*, which majorly focuses on political news; and *The People Daily*, which is a free publication and with a wider reach. Second, the study does not include broadcast media and social media, which are also key players in framing politics and governance in the country. Third, the study did not include a qualitative aspect, which would have helped to better understand the reasons behind journalists’ obsession with the conflict frame, and whether they comprehend the philosophy and principles of development journalism.

**The Newspaper Landscape in Kenya**

The development of the print media in Kenya can be categorised into four phases: the colonial era (1895-1962), the post-independence era (1963-1990), the multi-party era (1991-2000), and the new media era (2002 – present) (Ireri, 2019). Majority of newspaper publications which were started during the first phase have since closed office. The pre-colonial print media started with the *Taveta Chronicles* published in 1895 by Reverend Robert Stegal of the Church Missionary Society, the Church of Scotland Mission’s *Kikuyu*

There were also 56 African-owned newspapers. However, the main ones which exceeded 2,000 copies of circulation included Kenya Africa Union’s Sauti ya Mwafrika (1945), Henry Muoria’s Mumenyereri (1945), Indian-owned Habari (1945), Achieng Oneko’s Ramogi (1945), Bildad Kaggia’s Afrika Mpya (1945), Mwalimu (1945), Gikuyu (1946), Mutai (1946), W.W. Awori’s Radio Posta (1947), Afrika (1949), Mugambo wa Muembe (1952), Rongo ya Ameru (1952), Kamuingi Koyaga Ndiri (1952) Kimuru (1952), Hingurira (1952), Urutagwo Mwiruti (1952) and Gikuyu na Mumbi (1952) (Gadsden, 1980; see also Frederiksen, 2011).

The post-independence period saw an increase in politicians’ interest in publishing newspapers. Hilary Ng’weno, a renowned journalist, established Nairobi Times in 1977 as a weekly newspaper a year before President Moi got into power. In 1983, KANU acquired the paper and renamed it Kenya Times. It was the third largest newspaper in the country up to 2002, but would subsequently close down, in 2010, due to financial challenges. Ng’weno had earlier on established the Weekly Review in 1975 to focus on political and economic issues before it closed shop in May 1999 due to financial constraints. Others include: then weekly newspaper, The Star, owned by Magayu; the weekly Financial Review established in 1986 and owned by Peter Kareithi who had acquired it from Ng’weno; the Economic Review, established in October 1992 by Peter Warutere and Nixon Kariithi, but which went
out of circulation shortly after the 1997 General Election. It gave birth to *The Analyst*, which was started in 1998 with the same editor, Macharia Gaitho; *Finance* which was started in March 1984 by former MP Njehu Gatabaki; and *The Post on Sunday*, which Tony Gachoka started after leaving the *Finance* (Kadhi & Rutten, 2001).

*The Standard*, the country’s second largest selling newspaper was the first to be established in 1902 by Alibjai Mulla Jevanjee as the *African Standard* before changing hands six years later due to the prevailing political situation in the colony. The new owners – Anderson and Mayer – renamed it the *East African Standard*. In 1996, the newspaper was acquired by President Moi (Kadhi & Rutten, 2001; Makokha, 2010).

The Aga Khan is the principle shareholder in the Nation Media Group under which *Daily Nation* is housed, which he started in 1960, about three years before independence, and rose to remain the dominant newspaper in the country. The Kiswahili *Taifa Leo* (which was started by Michael Curtis and Charles Hayes in 1958 as *Taifa* and acquired by Aga Khan in 1959), *Business Daily*, and *The East African*, a weekly edition that covers the entire East Africa, also belongs to this group. There have been reports in the media that President Uhuru Kenyatta’s family is keen to acquire a majority stake in the Nation Media Group (BT Reporter, 2018b).

*The People* traces its origin to an opposition presidential candidate in the 1992 General Election, Kenneth Matiba, who established it as a weekly newspaper on 14 February 1993. It became a daily paper on 1 December 1998 and changed its name to *The People Daily* (Kadhi & Rutten, 2001). The current president, Uhuru Kenyatta, acquired the paper in 2010 with recent media reports indicating the Deputy President, William Ruto, is interested in acquiring it (BT Reporter, 2018a). Patrick Quarcoo’s and William Pike’s
Radio Africa Group started the *Nairobi Star* in 2007, renamed it *The Star* in 2009, and launched it as a political newspaper in 2016 (Star Editor, 2016). In 2014, South African Times Media Group acquired a 49 per cent stake in Radio Africa Group after investing US$18.6 million (KES 1.58 billion) (Teche, 2014).

There are four important daily newspapers in the country: The *Daily Nation*, which is an equivalent of *The New York Times* and sets the agenda for the country (Onyebadi, 2008); *The Standard*, which is the second most read newspaper in the country; *The Star*, which is 10 years old and mostly covers political issues; and, *The People Daily*, which is the only free newspaper in the country. A GeoPoll conducted in February 2015 showed that *Daily Nation* has a 40% share with a readership of approximately 4,379,400 per day, while *The Standard* has a 20% share with a readership of 2,223,500 per day. *The People Daily* had an 8% share (Elliott, 2015).

The above profile of the print media clearly shows that, apart from the *Daily Nation*, politicians own the majority of newspapers as they are keen to control the narrative about public discourses in the country. Most importantly, most of the print media are, directly or indirectly, aligned with the major political dynasties (Nyanjom, 2012). The Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims, though not a politician, is a major investor in banking, education, insurance, health and hospitality sectors in the country, and is normally received as a Head of State in his visits to Kenya and elsewhere in the continent (Makokha, 2010). While the owner of *The Star* is a Ghanaian, the chairman, Kiprono Kittony, comes from an influential family in Kenyan politics. He is also the immediate former chairperson of the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2012-2019), which was
established to protect the commercial and industrial interests of the business community in Kenya. The patron of the organisation is President Kenyatta.

It can, therefore, be argued that the politico-economic elite’s ownership of the print media in Kenya is instrumental in determining the manner in which they shape the ebb and flow of news in the country. Curran and Seaton (1997) have argued that the politico-economic elite use the print media to further their political and economic interests by controlling the overall editorial, strategic and political direction of the newspapers. This situation is not unique to Kenya as countries in the developed world such as the United Kingdom (Rupert Murdock’s influence in the The Sun and The Times) and Italy (Former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi’s influence in the Hersant media empire) grapple with the politico-economic elite’s influence in the media (Tunstall & Palmer, 1991).

The nature of ownership of print media in Kenya has made it a challenge for newspapers to embrace ideological leanings, and instead, are compelled to align themselves with the considerations of the politico-economic elite who own them, which interests are normally defined through ethnic and commercial interests (Ireri, 2016). Thus, while the coverage of the media in the West mirrors ideological standpoints, in Kenya, media coverage mirrors ethnic standpoints.

**Definition of Terms**

The terms used in this study are defined below.

**Devolution as a new development concept:** ‘Devolution as a new development concept’ refers to the changes brought about by the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution, whose objects encapsulate the participatory and collaborative nature of development in the
empowerment paradigm. It promotes socio-economic development, recognises the right of communities to manage their own affairs and further their development, promotes democratic and accountable exercise of power, gives powers of self-governance to the people and strengthen public participation (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The new development concept was operationalized after the 2013 General Election, in which Kenyans elected governors and Members of Country Assemblies (MCAs) to oversee devolution at the county level in collaboration with the national government.

**Development Communication:** Public participation in the development process is the cornerstone of the 2010 Constitution. This is what Kenyans had in mind when they endorsed devolution through the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution. Devolution seeks to enhance people’s participation in making decisions affecting them and recognises their right to manage their own affairs and further their development. Therefore, in this research, development communication means the systematic use of communication to facilitate development through participatory consensus building. That is, the involvement of Kenyans in identifying the problems that affect them, prioritising their responses to the problems, and their participation in crafting and implementing solutions to address these problems.

**Development Journalism:** Simply put, the use of newspapers to promote devolution for the greater good. That is, the gathering, packaging and dissemination of devolution news so as to facilitate dialogue amongst stakeholders.

**Framing:** The media, through repetition and consistency, elevates an issue’s importance by selecting and emphasising it over other equally important issues, stipulates
what is relevant about the issue and how it should be interpreted and debated, and thus, influence how people think about it.

**Plan of the Study**

In five chapters, this study investigates newspapers framing of devolution as a new development concept in Kenya, 2013-2017.

Chapter one sets the stage for the study by giving a background on devolution, development, development communication and framing, so as to provide the foundation for the problem statement. It further outlines the study’s purpose, objectives, rationale, significance, scope and limitations.

Chapter two proves why framing and development communication/journalism are the best theories to help understand newspaper coverage of devolution through an elaboration of their assumptions and review of relevant literature so as to lay the ground for the formulation of the research questions. Based on the theoretical framework and the literature review, that chapter develops the conceptual framework that guides the research.

Chapter three details the research procedures employed to collect data and the justification for the choice of the methods used. It provides the research’s population, sampling procedure, and units of analysis. Most importantly, it details the operationalization of the variables under examination as well as the conduct of the pilot study and the inter-coder reliability test.

Chapter four presents the findings and statistical evidence in light of the research questions, while the last chapter contextualises the results of the study within the broader discourse of framing and development communication/journalism studies. The chapter
ends by revisiting the research’s purpose, findings and limitations, and proffers recommendation and areas of future research.
CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on two theoretical foundations: development communication/development journalism and framing within media coverage. Development communication/development journalism seeks to provide the media with a platform to participate in development. It is concerned with what is covered and how much coverage is given. Framing, on the other hand, provides the media with a platform to drive the narrative on development. It emphasises how the media covers development and how it suggests we should think about it.

Development Theory

As with any social concept, the meaning of development is contested. It means different things to different people, and has evolved, over the years, as individuals and scholars have wrestled with finding a meaning that accommodates everyone. Melkote and Steeves (2001) simply define it as “improving the living conditions of a society” (p. 33). Toparo and Smith (2011) define development as “the process of improving the quality of all human lives and capabilities by raising people’s levels of living, self-esteem, and freedom” (p. 20)

Melkote (1991), Servaes (2004), Melkote and Steeves (2001), and Solomon (2014) agree that development theory evolved through three paradigms: Modernisation, dependency and empowerment (or liberation or emancipation). The first one, the modernisation paradigm, dominated from 1945-1965 (Servaes, 1999). This theory of development was mainly concerned with economic growth as measured by the rate of gross national product and per capita income (Melkote, 1991; Melkote & Steeves, 2001). To
modernise meant to follow the steps that Western nations went through to arrive to a point where a country closely resembles their political, economic, social and cultural institutions (Melkote, 1991). This underlined the importance of economic growth through industrialisation and the accompanying urbanisation, capital-intensive and machine-intensive technology, centralised planning and a sustained interaction between the developed and developing world (Melkote, 1991). This model found its best expression in Rostow (1960) who detailed the stages of economic growth from the traditional society, pre-conditions for take-off, take-off, drive to maturity, to high mass consumption.

The second stage in the evolution of development theory was the dependency paradigm, which arose in the 1970s as a critique of the modernisation theory and sought to offer an alternative approach to achieving development in the Third World. Its proponents mostly criticised the core assumptions of the modernisation paradigm because it placed the blame for underdevelopment on the recipients in the Third World and neglected external economic, historical and social factors (Solomon, 2014; Xiaoge, 2009). They contended that the problem of underdevelopment was squarely placed on the international economic system which conditioned the development of the Third World to that of the countries in the North. They argued that for the developing countries to advance they had to break their ties with the Western nations and come up with a self-reliant development strategy (Servaes, 2004).

The third and most recent paradigm is the empowerment one, which seeks to place the citizen at the centre of all development efforts. The paradigm seeks to shift the locale of power in the development process to the local populace. This has moved attention from economic growth to other social dimensions needed to ensure meaningful results in the
long run. The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were formally endorsed by 189 countries in 2000 depicts this consensus (Kelleher, 2014).

Thus, development is today encapsulated in the MDGs, which had eight development targets which were to be achieved by 2015: (i) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, (ii) Achieve universal primary education, (iii) Reduce child mortality, (iv) Improve maternal health, (v) Combat Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), malaria and other diseases (vi) Promote gender equality and women empowerment, (vii) Ensure environment sustainability, and (viii) Develop a global partnership for development (UNDP & World Bank Group, 2016). The MDGs have since been expanded into 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted in September 2015 and became operational in January 2016. SDGs are more comprehensive and ambitious, and apply to all UN member states. They examine the root causes of poverty deeply, propagate a development that works for everyone and appreciate the need to ensure the measures put in place are sustainable (UNDP & World Bank Group, 2016). The key element of this type of development is sustainability and people’s participation towards its achievement. Kenya’s devolution project speaks to this.

In Kenya, ‘devolution as a new development concept’ finds expression in the 2010 Constitution. The objects of devolution encapsulate the participatory and collaborative nature of development in the empowerment paradigm. It promotes socio-economic development, recognises the right of communities to manage their own affairs and further their development, promotes democratic and accountable exercise of power, gives powers of self-governance to the people and strengthen public participation (Republic of Kenya,
The new development concept was operationalized after the 2013 General Election, in which Kenyans elected governors and MCAs to oversee devolution at the county level in collaboration with the national government. This is the meaning that reflects the research’s understanding of development.

**Development Communication Theory**

The media are said to play a key role in the promotion of development (Kelleher, 2014; Melkote, 1991; Rogers, 1976). In tandem with the evolution described above, the role of communication in development also evolved as scholars continue to rethink how best communication could be used to promote socio-economic development (Banda, 2007; Schramm, 1964; Solomon, 2014).

The modernisation paradigm placed too much emphasis on the media as an all-powerful magic multiplier that would facilitate development by transforming the citizens in the developing world from a traditional to a modern one. The media was variously described as the hypodermic needle, the magic bullet or the transmission belt (Jacobson, 2004) of a one-way flow of information. Rogers’ (1962) diffusion of innovation was the most applied approach to change an individual from a traditional to a modern person through the acceptance of new ideas from the West (Solomon, 2014).

The dominance of strong effects and diffusion of innovation survived the onslaught of the dependency paradigm of development communication. The period saw an introduction of the two-step flow model of media influence which confirmed that social categories and social relationships impacted and limited the influence of the media on individuals (Baran, 2009). The model placed a primacy on opinion leaders to play a key role in diffusing development (Banda, 2007; Kelleher, 2014). The first step of the model
was from the mass media to opinion leaders, then from these leaders to others in the community (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). However, the emergent partnership between the government and the media to deliver development did not succeed as the government hijacked it to satisfy its own interests leading to a criticism of development journalism as a mouthpiece of the government (Domatob & Hall, 1983; Kelleher, 2014; Solomon, 2014).

The alternative development paradigm introduced the participatory model into development communication (Melkote & Steeves, 2001. It emphasises that communication plays a facilitative role in development. The empowerment stage engineered a paradigm shift from the transmission nature of communication to an organisational nature through participation at the grassroots level. In this realm, citizens adorn the clothes of the change agents, resulting in ownership and trust in the process, and increased potential for success.

Moemeka (1991) simply defines development communication as the application of the communication process to the process of development. Coldevin (1987) defines development communication as “the systematic utilisation of appropriate communication channels and techniques to increase people’s participation in development and to inform, motivate, and train rural populations” (p. 14). This is in line with Balit’s (1988) definition, which sees it as a process, which seeks to produce a common understanding among the participants in a development initiative.

Public participation in the development process is the cornerstone of the 2010 Constitution. This is what Kenyans had in mind when they endorsed devolution through the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution. Devolution seeks to enhance people’s participation in making decisions affecting them and recognises their right to manage their own affairs and further their development. Therefore, in this research, development
communication means the systematic use of communication to facilitate development through participatory consensus building. That is, the involvement of Kenyans in identifying the problems that affect them, prioritising their responses to the problems, and their participation in crafting and implementing solutions to address these problems.

**Development Journalism**

As has been demonstrated above, development communication, in its broadest sense is concerned with the use of all forms of communication in the development process. However, a narrower conception of development communication is associated with development journalism, which places an emphasis on the use of the mass media to promote development. Just as the concept of development communication evolved through the three paradigms so did the concept of development journalism (Kelleher, 2014).

The purpose of journalism in Asia and Africa during the dominant and dependency paradigms was that of an ally of the government in the development process. Journalists were expected to “contribute to national development goals, inform citizens of relevant government policies, introduce national leaders, foster political stability, promote national integration and educate” (Domatob & Hall, 1983, p. 11). Development journalism was challenged to mobilise people to participate in the development process.

With the entry of the alternative paradigm, empowerment and participation entered the definition of development journalism from the early 1990s. Djokotoe (2013) provides 10 guidelines for development journalism: (i) Broaden the development story; (ii) Humanize the development story; (iii) Focus on ordinary people, not big shots; (iv) Look for unusual angles; (v) Report from the field; (vi) Use news events to explain issues; (vii)
Avoid technical jargon; (viii) Use statistics carefully; (ix) Follow up stories; and (x) Read widely.

Djokotoe (2013) guidelines are not that different from Kovak and Rosenstiel’s (2007) 10 universal elements of journalism: (i) Obligation to the truth, (ii) Loyalty to citizens, (iii) A discipline of verification, (iv) Independence from the government, (v) An independent monitor of power, (vi) Provide a public forum for criticism and compromise, (vii) Strive to make the significant interesting and relevant, (viii) Keep the news comprehensive and in proportion, (ix) Obligation to exercise personal conscience, and (x) Citizens have rights and responsibilities when it comes to news (see also Musa & Domatob, 2007). The only distinction is that development journalists are expected to play the extra role of economic boosters and liberators (Kelleher, 2014; McKay, 1993).

Edeani (1993) observes that development journalism “is the kind of journalism which pays sustained attention to the coverage of ideas, policies, programmes and activities dealing with the improvement of the life of people … it takes the stand that the media have a social responsibility to promote development” (p. 126). It is a kind of journalism that is meant to serve the people as opposed to the elite, which reflects the participatory communication approach of the development communication theory (Solomon, 2014). The current debates on development journalism emphasis the involvement of people in communication processes as well as their empowerment (Gatling & Vincent, 1992; Gunaratne, 1998; Solomon, 2014; Xiaoge, 2009b).

Thus, this research is concerned with how journalists gather, package and disseminate development-oriented stories. This is critical as journalists are expected to provide access to different stakeholders, support horizontal and vertical flow of
information, and raise awareness and adoption of new methods that promote development (Rogers, 1976; Okigbo, 1991). Quebral (1975) sees development communication as a social process aimed at producing a common understanding or a consensus among the participants in a development initiative. While Gunaratne (1998) emphasises that the development journalist should motivate people to actively participate in the development process, Gatlung and Vincent (1992) stress the need to explain complex development processes in simplified terms for ease of comprehension. Therefore, development communication entails the use of the media to promote devolution for the good of society.

Framing is the best placed theory to test whether Kenyan journalists lived up to the expectation of gathering, packaging and disseminating development-oriented information. D’Angelo and Shaw (2018) observe in their article on ‘Journalism as Framing,’ that “when researchers refer to framing … they are talking about analysing journalism” (p. 205). The central concern of framing is how the media reports on an issue since frames tell us how to think about an issue. Development communication, on the other hand, is concerned with whether the media reported on development or not. This element is incorporated in this study through the use of development and advocacy frames.

Moreover, framing is interdisciplinary and has been employed in studies in different fields including development communication/journalism (Kelleher, 2014; Vilanilam, 1979; Tshabangu, 2013), decentralisation (Cushion, Lewis & Groves, 2013; Haile, 2011), energy (Djerf-Pirre, Cockley & Kuchel, 2016; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), oil exploration (Ireri, Chege, Kibarabara & Onyalla, 2019), health (Brown, 2013), politics (Gronemeyer & Porath, 2017a; Segvic, 2005; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), climate
change (McCann, 2010), new media and business (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Goffman, 1974) to understand the impact of media coverage.

**Framing Theory**

Framing means different things to different scholars. This led Entman (1993) to warn that the lack of conceptual clarity and operational definitions of framing and frames slows down the progress of the discipline. This observation was again highlighted by Weaver (2007) who observed that the term frame still lacks a clear conceptualisation and tends to encompass everything from the schema of an event, to the agenda of attributes of particular objects, to the process where messages influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of the public (see also Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015; Van Gorp, 2007). Scheufele (1999) argues that this lack of a unified theory has characterised framing research with significant levels of conceptual obliqueness and fallacious reasons. The high disparity in the definitions of frames leads to contradictory results.

There are those who argue that the diversity of approaches in framing across different disciplines and theoretical models is the only way to comprehend a complex phenomenon such as media effects (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015; D’Angelo, 2002; Reese, 2007). In fact, Reese (2007) argued that this disparity is much valuable as it provides opportunity for closer qualitative and quantitative research across different academic and professional disciplines. De Vreese (2005) observed that framing research needs to acknowledge that there are different types of frames and that each individual study must be clear on the specifics of a frame, both conceptually and operationally (see also D’Angelo, 2002).

Still on framing conceptual problems, Scheufele and Iyengar (2017) have identified two fallacies associated with the theory: (a) “emphasis vs. equivalence frames” and (b)
distinguishing framing from overlapping concepts (agenda-setting and priming). The first fallacy is dependent on the assumption that all “perception is reference dependent” (Kahneman 2003a, p. 459). That is, how a specific person interprets information differs depending on how the said piece of information is framed (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016; Scheufele & Iyengar, 2017). The second perception is concerned with salience-based effects (agenda-setting and priming), and applicability effects (framing). For priming and agenda-setting (salience-based), media coverage shapes perceptions of salience among audiences for specific issues (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016), or issue attributes (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016).

To solve this problem, Cappella and Jamieson (1997) proposed that every frame must meet four key tenets: (i) A news frame must have identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics; (ii) A frame should be commonly observed in journalistic practice; (iii) It must be possible to differentiate a frame in a reliable manner from others; and (iv) A frame must possess the property of representational validity and not a figment of a researcher’s imagination (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997).

This research stands guided by the debate between Thomas Kuhn (1962) and Imre Lakatos (1977) over research programmes and research paradigms in understanding the growth of scientific knowledge. They assert that both paradigms and programmes guide and direct scientific questions, experiments and interpretation of data. They will both develop anomalies which must be dealt with either through ignoring them, solving them or accepting that they cannot be solved, and thus, abandon a given paradigm or programme (Kuhn, 1962; Lakatos, 1977). Babrow (1993) supports this position with his argument
that knowledge grows when theoretical frameworks and conceptual definitions are investigated, extended and challenged.

Kuhn (1962) argues that scientists will continue to elaborate and extend a paradigm when it is in the normal science stage before anomalies set in. These anomalies, which he calls puzzles, will in the majority of cases be solved. However, if they refuse to go away they will mutate into a crisis and likely lead to a revolution that will lead to the emergence of a new paradigm. Lakatos (1977), on the other hand, argues that there are two critical components of a research programme. The hard core, which cannot be changed, and, the protective belt, which is what is altered in periods of anomalies. Lakatos (1977) argues that anomalies will either make a programme to progress, or degenerate. A programme is progressive if it accommodates data and increases its predictive, puzzle-solving power, while it is degenerative when changes patch up anomalies and accommodate new data but fails to create novel predictions (Lakatos, 1977). In a similar vein, D’Angelo and Shaw (2018) assert that what is called fragmentation in the framing theory is nothing but a thriving and healthy intellectual enterprise. They content that “a communication approach to news framing analysis relies on theory integration, not on testing a unified set of propositions of something called framing theory” (D’Angelo & Shaw, 2018, p. 206). Responding to calls for a universal theoretical framework much earlier, Rosengreen (1993) countered that such an approach would undermine the conditions for cumulativity which allows knowledge to grow.

Be that as it may, there is a consensus within the field of communication that it is impossible to cover everything that happens in a country in the media, and that a selection must be made (Graber, McQuail & Norris, 1998). This leads to certain issues invariably
dominating the news media agenda. Framing theory asserts that the media selects and highlights certain items of an event or issue over others, in such a way that compels the public to evaluate the information in a manner that elevates the importance of those issues over others (Entman, 1993). Events and actions are an ever-moving target and journalists resort to frames to compel us to focus on specific aspects through the use of “figurative picture frames” (Boykoff & Laschever, 2011, p. 345) around these targets while excluding anything that lies outside their projected frames (Lawrence, 2003).

While the origin of framing can be traced to sociology, psychologist Gregory Bateson (1972) is the first scholar to use the term frame in the sense used in communication in which he argued that “any message, which either explicitly or implicitly defines a frame, ipso facto gives the receiver instructions or aids in his/her attempt to understand the messages included within the frame” (p. 188). Bateson (1972) conceptualises it as a picture frame, which tries to organise people’s perception, by urging them to attend to what is within a frame and ignore anything outside it.

Despite the dominance by cognitive psychology of the theoretical body of framing that gained prestige in the 1970s, communication scholars (Borah, 2011; Reese, 2001) credit Goffman (1974) with developing the concept in communication as a social framework and mental schema that allows users to organise experiences (Ardevol-Abreu, 2015). Giltlin (1980) was among the first to explain how journalists use framing, particularly in the political realm, to organise large amounts of information.

Thus, the simplest understanding of framing is that it involves portraying an issue from one perspective at the expense of other competing perspectives. While there are many definitions of framing, they seem to have similar characteristics. A news frame ‘refers to
an interpretative structure that sets particular events within a broader context” (Norris, 1995, p. 357). Framing is a concept that provides scholars across different disciplines with a way to describe the power of a communicating text (Entman, 1993). In other words, it gives conceptual tools to deduce the subtle way the media shapes the audience’s thinking about a given subject based on how the information is packaged (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1995). The media provides audiences with specific patterns which are in sync with pre-existing schemas in our minds and compels us to make sense of seemingly unrelated pieces of information, which without the use of frames, would ideally not make sense at all (Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele & Iyengar, 2012).

These frames consciously compel us to think about a particular issue by persistently selecting and emphasising it at the expense of other equally important issues (Gitlin, 1980). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) agree with Gitlin (1980) by asserting that frames are simply “packages with a centralising idea” (p. 3) which drives a specific narrative. Tewksbury and Scheufele (2009) argue that “a frame is what unifies information into a package that can influence audiences” (p. 19) and that an effective frame should be able to speak for itself, without the need to resort to any supporting arguments, since it relies “upon culture-based meanings, norms and values” (p. 19).

There are different lenses the media can use to project any given issue, and the specific frame they choose to focus on, will determine the way the issue is interpreted and debated by the masses (Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele & Iyengar, 2012; Tuchman, 1978). The media’s propensity to provide the lenses to “diagnose, evaluate and prescribe” (Gamson, 1992) or in the words of Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992) “convey, interpret and evaluate information” (p. 60) shapes the discourses that takes centre-stage in public affairs. Goffman
(1974) refers to frames as a “schemata of interpretation” (p. 21) as they set the boundaries within which citizens interrogate public discourses (Tuchman, 1978).

Despite the multiplicity of definitions, Entman’s definition is widely employed in framing studies. In a meta-analysis examining 131 framing studies published in mainstream communication journals between 1990 and 2005, Matthes (2009) observed that 28.7% of the studies used Entman’s (1993) definition in conducting research. This vastly quoted definition argues that framing is to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

There is unity among scholars (Borah, 2011; Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Goffman, 1974; Scheufele & Iyengar, 2012; Segvic, 2005; Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009) that a frame is a powerful tool that the media uses to tell a story in such a way that gives salience to a certain idea, issue or personality at the expense of other news features to influence how people think about the said idea, issue or personality. Nelson, Clawson and Oxley (1997) argue that framing places an emphasis on “the perceived importance of specific frames” (p. 569). The consideration here is not on what is covered and how much coverage it is given, but rather on how the media covers and how it suggests we should think about it (Dimitrova & Stromback, 2005; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001).

The process of framing stipulates what is relevant about an issue and how it should be examined (Gamson, 1992; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Iyengar, 1991). It does not matter what ideological or political orientations, socio-economic considerations and profession routines influence journalists’ sources of news (Donsbach, 1981; Scheufele,
1999; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), the media frames ideas, issues and personalities “through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss & Ghanem, 1991, p. 3).

Synthesising the varied definitions of framing, de Vreese (2004) concludes that framing is simply “an emphasis in salience of certain aspects of a topic” (p. 4) which “encourages particular ‘trains of thought’ which citizens make use of in judgments” (p. 36). Entman (1993) argues that the emphasis placed on a given topic makes it more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable, which Nelson and Oxley (1999) agree makes it easy for the audience to interpret the topic as it is more accessible and applicable (Nelson, Oxley & Clawson, 1997). Entman (2010) further argues that for the frames to be successful they must be able to provoke the existing schemas in our minds through repetition and consistency. Reese (2001) in agreeing with Entman (2010) avers that “frames are organising principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (p. 11).

To conclude, there are four assumptions which are associated with framing:

- The media selects and emphasizes a particular event, issue or personality at the expense of others thereby elevating its importance;
- The media stipulates what is relevant about an event, issue or personality and how it should be interpreted and debated;
- The media influences how people think about a particular event, issue or personality; and
- Through repetition and consistency, frames are reinforced every time they are evoked, whether positively or negatively (Arowolo, 2017).

There are two main ways through which to identify frames in the news: Inductive and deductive. The inductive style does not use prior defined news frames when analysing news but rather picks the frames during the course of analysis. This approach detects frames
through immersion in the selected sample (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015; De Vreese, 2005; Gamson, 1992; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The disadvantage of this approach is that it uses a smaller sample, which makes it difficult to generalise and replicate (De Vreese, 2005). The deductive approach, which majority of scholars favour (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; De Vreese, 2005; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) uses already operationalized frames before the start of the research. The content analysis carried out using this approach is easier to perform, can be generalised and is easy to replicate (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015).

Typology-wise, De Vreese (2005) labels two main distinction in identifying the nature and content of frames. The issue-specific frames are only applied to a specific topic or event. These frames make it possible for a more detailed and specific study of the issue or event under investigation. However, this specificity makes it a challenge to compare, generalise and use empirical evidence for theory building (De Vreese, 2005). The generic frames can be applied with greater flexibility to diverse topics, events, fields, and to a lesser extent, different physical, temporal and cultural context. They make it easy to compare past and present researches as well as researches conducted in different cultural contexts. The generic frames are lauded for their ability to enable the generalisation needed to strengthen the theoretical body of framing (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015).

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) classical study identifies five generic frames (attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic consequences, human interest and morality), which have come to dominate framing research (De Vreese, 2005). The attribution of responsibility frame presents an issue or problem in such a manner that apportions blame for causing or solving to a specific individual, group or institution. The conflict frame emphasises conflict or controversy between individuals, groups or
institutions. The political elite reduce complex issues into a simple conflict of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’. The economic consequence frame presents an event, problem or issue in terms of the economic consequences it will have on an individual, group or institution. The human interest frame brings a human face, an individual’s story, or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue or problem. The morality frame interprets an event or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral descriptions (Semetko & Valkenbur, 2000).

The other specific sets of generic frames are episodic vs. thematic framing and positive vs. negative framing. The episodic frame looks at whether the coverage of an event or problem focuses on a specific example, situation or story. Put somewhat differently, it focuses on individual episodes, behaviours or events since they are easy to produce as they draw less attention to societal or systematic problems (Iyengar, 1996). Conversely, thematic frame cast the story within a broader context, that is, they relate individual circumstances to larger contextual issues (Iyengar, 1996). Lastly, the positive frame looks at whether a story emphasises positive aspects or is favourable to a certain issue or personality while a negative frame emphasises negative aspects or unfavourable elements about a specific news story.

To conclude, a frame is located in both the sender and the receiver, the text and the culture (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015). That is, the literature on the framing theory (Scheufele, 1999) distinguishes between media frames and audience frames. The focus of this research is on media frames.
Literature Review

Media Frames in Governance-Related Topics

While there are limited framing studies on decentralised systems of governance, there is sufficient literature to demonstrate the use of frames in governance-related topics. Therefore, this research reviews studies from other governance-related topics that have examined media frames using content analysis. An understanding of how these frames are employed helps to analyse how the media used frames to present news about devolution.

Early studies on development journalism focused on the quantity of development content in the news in a bid to confirm the effect of development journalism. The content analysis employed during this period examined the prominence of development content (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). This was based on the assumptions of the dominant modernisation paradigm of the media as all-powerful with strong effects on the populace (Kelleher, 2014). Vilanilam’s (1979) study of development, governance and politics frames in Indian newspapers set an early standard for quantifying development journalism. He employed 14 development topics and differentiated them from governance and political news. This early study showed that in the four Indian newspapers, development news comprised only 15.0% of the news as government and political news dominated. To him this was an indictment of the journalists’ lack of awareness of their special responsibility in developing countries (Vilanilam, 1979).

Sutopo (1983) applied Vilanilam’s (1979) model in a study of six Indonesian newspapers and found that development news dominated between 38.0% and 66.0% of the news hole. Comparatively, the two government newspapers gave more prominence to development news than the four independent ones (Sutopo, 1983). Ogan and Fair (1984)
also observed the relatively low priority given to development news. In contrast, McDaniel (1986) found a surprisingly large proportion of development news in broadcasts in Malaysia and Pakistan (29.5%) that went together with an even high frequency of government and political elite as sources of news than in even other news categories.

Three more recent studies continue to report low coverage of development news. Murthy’s (2001) research on newspaper reporting of different news subjects in India found the coverage of development news accounting for between 4.0% and 8.0% of the news items. Another examination by Tshabangu (2013) showed that development news constituted only 10.0% of the news items in Zimbabwe. And in Rwanda, Kelleher (2014) reported that development news had the highest coverage at 31.5% compared to non-development, international and sports news.

The above studies show that the coverage of development news continues to be low compared to other news items. To contextualise this in the Kenyan scenario, the expectation was that with newspapers having devoted key sections of their editions solely to devolution as a new concept of development, then the discussion should be more on how this coverage was done.

Framing introduces a new angle to development journalism as it seeks to examine what other frames are competing with development and advocacy frames (which are associated with development journalism) to see whether the media advances the development narrative as it is expected. A study in Ethiopia examined the use of advocacy and development frames in the media coverage of federalism – a variant of decentralisation (Haile, 2011). The investigation established the emergence of these frames as key aspects of newspapers coverage of federalism. The advocacy frame was the most dominant
(33.3%) while conflict and economic consequences followed with each getting 10.0% (Haile, 2011). When Haile (2011) examined the most dominant theme, he observed that development stories led with 33.3% of the coverage.

In other framing studies, journalists tend to pick the economic consequences frame when discussing governance-related issues, since there is no governance issue that does not have an economic impact (De Vreese, 2010; De Vreese, Peter & Semetko 2001; Nelson et al., 1997; Nelson & Oxley, 1999). This is because statistics are easily-comprehensible and can capture an audience’s emotions as they pay the tax the government uses. Devolution is about the allocation of resources to effect development, and, it is expected that just like other governance issues, it will attract the economic consequences frame. A study of media framing of political parties in Ethiopia found that the economic consequences frame generated 14.0% with the most dominant frame being conflict (51.0%). The attribution of responsibility frame got 18.0% and human interest 7.0% (Gudenta, 2012).

Similarly, De Vreese et al. (2001) analysis of television (TV) coverage of the launch of the Euro in four countries showed an emphasis on the economic consequence frame in the coverage of political news. Semetko, De Vreese and Peter’s (2000) study of the same reported that the United Kingdom (UK) media covered the event using the economic consequence frame. Brown’s (2013) study of framing of the United States (US) health care reform debate found that the economic consequence frame was used in 38.7% of the news stories. De Vreese and Boomgaard (2003) analysis of the 2000 European Union (EU) summit in France found that 18.0% of the print media stories were framed in terms of economic consequences.
The situation is not different in Kenya. A research on how newspapers reported on the coverage of oil exploration showed that economic consequences ranked as the second most dominant used frame at 26.7% (Ireri et al., 2019). A similar examination of newspaper framing of the 2007 post-election violence found that economic consequences came the fourth most employed frame in the coverage of the crisis (11.0%) (Ireri, 2013). In contrast, another Kenyan study on newspaper coverage of terrorist attacks indicated that economic consequences did not feature prominently as a frame (1.7%) (Ireri, 2018).

The *conflict frame* tends to focus on participants at the expense of the issues under considerations and policy outcomes, in which the media overemphasises the extreme positions projected by two sides so as to provide dramatic controversy (Reese, 2001; Underwood, 1998). Considering that politics, and by extension, governance, is about a struggle between an in-group and an out-group, it tends to be a clear target of this frame. Harold Lasswell (1936) observes that politics is about “who gets what, when and how”, that is, the study of influence and the influential, or, what David Easton (1962) calls the “authoritative allocation of values in society” (p. 83), that is, which actor controls the distribution of scarce resources. As a result, governance tends to generate conflict since the allocation of resources can never be equally satisfying to all (Easton, 1962).

The De Vreese et al. (2001) study referred to above further showed that journalists are more likely to emphasise the conflict frame in the coverage of political news. Ballesteros (2015) study of the framing of Catalan referendum found that the conflict frame steered journalists in the structuring of their news. In an analysis of six Chilean newspapers, Gronemeyer and Porath (2017a) found that the conflict frame was a dominant factor in political news stories with 47.2%. A similar study in Chile (Gronemeyer & Porath, 2017b)
confirmed that the two most frequently used frames in the framing of political and
government news are attribution of responsibility (0.42) and conflict (0.37). In an
investigation on framing of the health care reform debate in US, Brown (2013) observed
that the conflict frame was used on 45.3% of the news stories. In an inquiry to understand
how Mainland China and Hong Kong cover political scandals, two scholars (Yan & Liu,
2016) presented evidence showing the tendency by newspapers to use the conflict frame
with an emphasis on power struggle and dramatic story to cover the Chen Liangyu scandal
– which involved a senior member of the Communist Party of China’s Political Bureau,
who was discharged over the illegal use of social security funds (Yan & Liu, 2016).

Ireri (2013) reported conflict to be the most dominant frame in the coverage of
Kenya’s 2007 post-election violence (44.0%). This was associated with the violent
confrontations that were taking place in the country at the time. A different Kenyan study
on the coverage of terror attacks showed contrasting results which depicted conflict as
rarely used as a frame (6.1%) (Ireri, 2018).

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) define the human interest frame as a focus on “a
human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem” (p.
95). The use of the human interest frame has become dominant in the print media with
journalists’ increased use of ordinary citizens personally involved in an event to illustrate
a broader issue (Boukes, Boomgaard, Moorman, & de Vreese, 2015; Daschmann &
Brosius, 1999). This is informed by the ease with which audiences link their own
experiences with interviews with ordinary citizens (Bird, 1998); this helps mobilise their
involvement as it makes it easy for citizens to comprehend complex political issues
(MacDonald, 1998), and it is a cheaper way of producing content (Iyengar, 1991).
The use of human interest frame in studies reveals that it influences people’s attitudes towards government and can lead to increase or decrease of support to government’s projects and plans (Boukes, et al., 2015). Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud (2015) examination of coverage of irregular immigration in the US, French and Norwegian media found that 47.0% of the news stories focused on the human interest frame with the Norwegian media leading with 67.0%, US 41.0% and French 20.0%. Gronemeyer and Porath (2017b) reported that the human interest frame was used in the coverage of political news stories in Chile though it was not as powerful as the conflict and attribution of responsibility frames. Two Kenyan studies showed that the usage of the human interest frame depends on the specific subject matter the media is covering. While the human interest frame was dominant in newspaper coverage of terrorism (55.0%) (Ireri, 2013), it was negligible in print media coverage of the violence that followed the 2007 General Election (6.0%) (Ireri, 2018).

From the development communication standpoint where news is expected to broaden and humanise development stories, the limited use of human interest, development and advocacy frames means that the coverage of newspaper stories is biased towards conflict and economic consequences. This means that there is limited use of ordinary people as news sources, which disenfranchises issues which are dear to them, and lack of a buy-in of their support to key governance processes.

The debate on governance and development in Kenya has in the majority of cases been polarised. Therefore, it is important to understand the impact of the frames newspapers used on the nature of the discourse on devolution during the period under
review. This is mostly important because frames encourage us to think about issues in a particular way. This literature review leads to research question 1a:

RQ1a: Which frames did newspapers use in the four-year coverage of devolution?

**Attribution of Responsibility Frame**

The seminal studies by Iyengar (1991, 1996) demonstrated that framing plays a key role in shaping attribution of responsibility for political issues leading the audience to determine important causes of social problems and their attendant solutions. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) observe that the responsibility frame “presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or an individual or group” (p. 95).

Studies of framing show that attribution of responsibility is commonly used in politically or economically relevant events or social problems (Iyengar, 1991; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Every day, when people come into contact with negative, uncertain or unexpected events, there is a tendency to consciously seek who is responsible (Iyengar, 1991). Print media decision of what aspect of an issue to give prominence and which ones to exclude tends to compel people to assign responsibility to the actor that is strikingly noticeable in newspapers (Gamson, 1989; Gitlin, 2003). Scholars studying attribution of responsibility (Iyengar 1991; Kim et al., 2010; Zheng, 2012) criticise the print media of ignoring societal-level responsibilities by reducing important social matters into mere individual-level issues.

Ballesteros (2015) examination of the framing of Catalan referendum found that the attribution of responsibility frame was salient in journalists’ coverage of the news.
Gronemeyer and Porath (2017a) study again found that attribution of responsibility, just like conflict frame, is prevalent in political news stories with 47.2%. In a four-country investigation of the launch of the Euro, De Vreese et al. (2001) confirmed the prevalence of the attribution of responsibility frame given the importance of a new currency in the economics of these countries after a successful launch. Similarly, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) observation of a meeting of European heads of state in 1997 affirmed the prevalence of the attribution of responsibility frame. Studies on framing of HIV/AIDS show that the print media places a lot of responsibility on individuals at the expense of governments, churches or hospitals which are expected to lead the fight against HIV/AIDS by providing affordable education and affordable access to health care (Brown, Chapman & Lupton, 1996; Clarke, McLellan, & Hoffman-Goetz, 2006; Zheng, 2012).

Three studies have shown that the attribution of responsibility is a frequently used frame in presenting news in Kenya: An examination of newspaper coverage of oil resources found that attribution of responsibility was the most dominant (27.6%) frame used (Ireri et al., 2019); Another research on the reporting of terrorism (Ireri, 2018) reported that attribution of responsibility was the second commonly used frame (15.0%), while a study on the coverage of post-election violence in 2007 saw the attribution of responsibility frame come third with 18.0% (Ireri, 2013).

Following the implementation of decentralisation reforms, there is generally limited political knowledge at the grassroots on the distribution of powers between the national and subnational units of government (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Fournier, 2002) leading to a situation where the citizens are uncertain as to which level of government to place responsibility (Johns, 2011). Oates (1999) and Cutler (2004) observe
that even the most informed citizens struggle to assign responsibilities between the two levels of government (Johns, 2011; Leon, 2018; Rodden, 2006). The blurring of responsibility leads to a situation where levels of government compete over who should be responsible for success and blame in certain issue areas (Rodden, 2006; Tuschhoff, 1999).

A national opinion poll on devolution carried out in 2015 reported that awareness of the role of MCAs increased to 70.0% from 57.0%, while that of the senators – the vanguards of devolution at the national level – reduced from 57.0% to 35.0% and those of women representatives reduced from 52.0% to 45.0% (Transparency International-Kenya, 2015). Thus, the interest of this research is to examine who are the most blamed for the problems facing devolution in Kenya. Thus, the literature review on attribution of responsibilities, paves the way for research question 1b:

RQ1b: Through attribution of responsibility, which actors were the most blamed for the problems facing devolution?

**Episodic vs. Thematic Framing**

Iyengar (1991) argues that the media has a tendency of projecting issues either in episodic or thematic terms. Kim, Shanahan, and Choi (2012) emphasise that while the episodic frame tends to focus on individual responsibility thematic frame highlights social responsibility, which is what is desirable of development journalism. The episodic frame highlights a specific event or activity or depicts an issue in terms of specific instances without contextualising the circumstances within which the event, activity or issue should be reflected upon and understood. For example, bringing poor people into the news covering a certain county so as to inform the public about poverty. In contrast, the thematic frame takes a social or collective approach to an issue, by placing it in a historical or
societal context thereby making it possible for the public to connect issues and make inferences (see also Aarøe, 2011). An example would include the citing of a county’s poverty rate to show the issue of poverty.

While episodic and human interest frames share the focus on specific examples to portray a broader issue (Boukes et al., 2015), the episodic frame not only focuses on the individual but also on the event. The human interest frame emphasises personal exemplars only so as to bring a personal angle to the story (Boukes et al., 2015; Brosius & Bathelt, 1994).

Research focusing on episodic vs. thematic framing demonstrates that while thematic frames can influence people’s thoughts and feelings about social problems (Iyengar, 1991; Price et al., 1997; Shah et al., 2004), episodic frames tend to hinder citizens’ capability to comprehend issues and attribute responsibility to the correct actors (Major, 2009). Gross (2008) found that articles which employ episodic frame are more emotive while those which use the thematic frame are more persuasive. The overemphasis on specific events or activities tends to condition individuals to attribute the problem they face to their idiosyncratic variables rather than to governmental or societal variables, thereby blaming the individuals as the causes of the problems, and hence, the fixer of the same social problems (Iyengar, 1991). This plays into the elite strategy of diverting attention from themselves as the responsible actors in addressing political and socio-economic problems (Kim et al., 2010).

Porto’s (2002) study of framing of politics in Brazil TV found that a dominant majority (80%) of the news items used episodic media frames. Similarly, a study by Holli, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) on media framing of European politics in Dutch
newspapers found that the coverage of television news was predominantly episodic (92%). Two Kenyan studies have shown different results regarding episodic vs. thematic framing demonstrating that the issue under consideration is key to which of the two frames becomes dominant. Ireri (2018) showed that episodic frames were dominant in the coverage of terrorism attacks (70.9%) in Kenya as a result of heavy reliance on ordinary citizens. On the other hand, another research found coverage of oil exploration in Kenya to be overwhelmingly thematic (82.1%) as the newspapers endeavoured to provide a larger social context (Ireri et al., 2019).

Aggrawala (1978) observed that development journalism should report on the process rather than the event. Put somewhat differently, it should not focus on what happens at any given day or moment, but rather, on what happens over time, as a focus on the former would slant its coverage towards the Western commercial libertarian system, which emphasises elite individual and event orientation (Haque, 1986). Ogan and Fair’s (1984) research on development news displayed a lack of longer feature coverage that reflected process-oriented news but rather took the form of ‘spot’ news. This kind of coverage that emphasises event rather than process loses development communication’s promotional intent and participatory structure (Kelleher, 2014).

An understanding of whether the Kenyan media framed devolution using an episodic or thematic frame is critical to this study as it supports a comprehension of how framing either strengthens or weakens the accountability of government officials (Iyengar, 1996) who are expected to implement devolution and engender development at the local level. Murthy (2001) has argued that development journalism should emphasise relevance
to the higher context of development issues rather than events. Thus, a reporting of devolution that is episodic cannot be said to be developmental.

Therefore, this investigation is interested in finding out how the media shapes discussion on the different aspects of devolution. Is the media interested in providing Kenyans with thematic lenses to discuss the various aspects of devolution or does the media simply encourage an event by event analysis that denies citizens the necessary context to assess and evaluate the performance of devolution? And what is the impact of this mode of coverage on the discourse on devolution? This leads to research question 2:

RQ2: Does the four-year newspapers’ coverage of devolution reflect episodic or thematic framing?

Valence Framing
Valence framing is a value-based evaluation that portrays a frame either positively or negatively. A frame with positive valence emphasises a gain, advantageous or a favourable aspect while a frame with negative valence emphasises a loss, disadvantageous or an unfavourable aspect (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003). The import of a positive or negative portrayal of an idea, issue or personality, is that it can either lead to learning and mobilisation (Newton, 1999) or increase cynicism and demobilise citizens (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; see also Ireri, 2013).

Ogan and Fair (1984) study of development topic found that the coverage of the news had a predominantly positive tone. This was blamed on media overreliance on government sources and led to calls for the greater use of critical sources in development journalism so as not to be seen to propagate the government’s position (Ogan & Fair, 1984). Okorie and Oyedepo (1994) examined three newspapers coverage of agriculture as an
aspect of development and reported the dominance of the negative tone (53.4%) over the positive (21.8%) and neutral (24.6%) ones. Chala (2012) investigation of Ethiopian media coverage of development issues affirmed that the coverage was dominantly positive (68.0%). A more recent study on Rwanda returned also showed the dominance of the positive tone (65.0%) (Kelleherr, 2014).

Ireri’s (2014) analysis of the framing of Barack Obama during the 2008 presidential election found that, in spite of some of the countries framing stories pertaining to him differently, all of them – China, Kenya, UK and US – generally reported him positively. In an analysis of valence framing of the December 2000 EU summit in France, De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) reported that 52.0% of the print media stories were framed negatively while 22.0% were portrayed positively.

In a review of media coverage during the first term of county administrations, the Council of Governors (the institution that represents all governors across the political divide), at the Fourth Annual Devolution Conference, alleged the media coverage of devolution has been negative and not objective (Obala, 2017). This raises the question:

RQ3: Were devolution stories reported in a negative or positive tone?

**Use of News Sources in Governance-Related Events**

Scheufele (1999) observes that while the media enjoys the ability to actively set frames, the information they use most of the time comes from the political elite (Entman, 2010). The utility of news sources was best captured by Sigal (1987) who argued that news is “not what journalists think but what their sources say” (p. 29). Gans (1979) stated that “news is information that is transmitted from sources to audiences, with journalists summarizing,
refining, and altering what becomes available to them from sources” (p. 80). In the words of Bennett, Lawrence and Livingstone (2006), the press corps has a calibration process based on official consensus and conflict that determines “what gets into the news, what prominence it receives, how long it gets covered, and who gets the voice in these stories” (p. 49).

Evidently, sources influence newspaper frames. It can thus be argued that the sources the media used to frame devolution (Lawrence, 2010) likely determined the narrative that drove the debates on devolution. Frames tend to shape public perceptions about political issues and institutions, and politicians aware of this, tend to use frames to sway the population’s perception about devolution and devolution-related issues (Saris, 1997). Therefore, it is imperative, that while the research pursues the question of how the debate on devolution is framed, it also seeks to understand the actors in politics, academia, science, industry, civil society and media who impact on the frames used by the media and its implication (Dimitrova, & Strömbäck, 2011; Djeerf-Pierre, Cokley, & Kuchel, 2016).

There are three potential sources that influence journalists’ choice of frames. First, is the ideological or political orientations, attitudes and profession norms of the journalists (Donsbach, 1981; Scheufele, 1999; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Second, organisational routines of a media house are critical in influencing the frames journalists routinely pick. The third source of influence is external elites such as political actors, authorities, and interest groups (Scheufele, 1999). Bennett (1990) has argued that it is the politico-economic elite that determines what the media covers, and as a result, there is a tendency of the media to mirror the consensus and conflicts that straddle political debates (see also Gans, 1979).
Development communication thrives on people’s participation, and the only way the media can integrate a participatory strategy of coverage is through the use of citizens as news sources (Kelleher, 2014; McKay, 1993) and not the political elite (Haque, 1984). With the transition from a dominant to an alternative paradigm of development communication, the emphasis was placed on the use of citizens as the main sources of news on development. However, studies on media coverage of all types of news as well as development news show a dominance of the political elite at the expense of other sources. Ogan and Fair (1984) included sources in their nine-country study of development news to see whether the participatory element of development journalism had been integrated into the media through the examination of ordinary citizens as sources of news. They found out that government sources were predominant than any other source resulting in a predominantly positive coverage (Ogan & Fair, 1984).

A later study by McDaniel (1986) on sources of development news in Malaysia and Pakistan reported that the government and the political elite were predominant. Even in a case where a newspaper (Depthnews) in Asia was started solely to cover development news, the citizen was still not the main source of the news (9.0%) indicating a fairly mild participatory strategy for coverage (McKay, 1993).

Guanaratne (1996) argues that development journalism “should sincerely associate with the grassroots rather than the elite” (p. 5) as the continued dominance of the elite lends credence to the notion that development journalism is yet to be institutionalised across the globe. Tshabangu (2013) examined the sources of development news in an African country (Zimbabwe) and demonstrated that only 5.0% were classified as beneficiaries (citizens) with government sources dominating at 50.0%. He attributed this to the commercial
imperative, lack of specialised training, Westernisation, among other factors (Tshabangu, 2013). Kelleher’s (2014) analysis of sources of development news in Rwanda found a similar (50.0%) threshold of government dominance with local citizens/beneficiaries gaining 24.0% of the citation.

A study by Cross (2010) established that of the news sources that journalists used during the provincial election of 2001, political actors (58.6%) were the most commonly used sources, followed by individuals (26.2%), interest group representatives (7.2%) and experts (6.8%). Falasca (2014) study examining Swedish print media coverage of the 2018 financial crisis found that politicians were the frequently used sources (35.0%) followed by experts (19.0%) and citizens (13.0%). Research on reporting on terrorism in Kenya showed the dominance of the political elite with the majority of the stories attributed to government officials (31.2%), ordinary citizens (27.7%) and parliament (6%) (Ireri, 2018).

Cross (2010) and Hall, Clark, Critcher, Jefferson and Roberts (1978) argue that the media gives disproportionate attention to the politico-economic elite with the general public relegated to mere observers (Tuchman, 1978). Porto’s (2002) investigation of the framing of politics in TV news in Brazil found that official sources enjoy a privileged position. This leads to a situation where the politico-economic elite and the institutions they are affiliated with control narratives at the expense of other voices in society (Cross, 2010). Put somewhat differently, elites are in a struggle to ensure they determine the frames that end up in the news (Schlesinger, 1990). Thus, in the Kenyan context, with the institutionalisation of devolution as a participatory approach to development, has the media embraced the citizen as key resource on stories on devolution? Do they play their role of
providing access to a wide variety of views, thus supporting horizontal and vertical flow of information? This leads to the last research question:

RQ4: Who were the major news sources in the reporting of devolution?

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a hypothesised model identifying the variables under study and their relationships (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Arguably, the manner in which the media present news stories (Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 1980; Goffman, 1974) tend to determine how the public interprets and evaluates socio-political issues. As argued by Kuypers (2002), until framed, facts remain neutral, and therefore, the manner in which the media frames an issue affects the public understanding of it. This research is guided by the theory that media frames shape public debates and tend to shape the manner in which people think and talk about issues in the news (Pan & Kosicki, 1993) by making certain information more salient than others in a text (Entman, 1993). Therefore, in this context, the dependent variable, that which is being explained, is ‘discourse on devolution’ while the independent variable, that which is doing the explanation, is ‘newspaper frames.’ Thus, this study hypothesizes that the selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration of frames through prevalence (advocacy, attribution of responsibility, conflict, development, economic consequences, human interest), type (episodic or thematic) and valence (positive or negative) enhances the discourse on devolution. This is well illustrated in Figure 2.1:
Chapter Summary

This chapter conceptualised what development communication/journalism and framing are before reviewing the discourses on the two theories to enrich an understanding of the subject matter under study. It reviewed the different studies which have looked at the frames which are examined in this research and what these findings mean for the current investigation. The next chapter reviews the methodology that guided the collection and analysis of data.

Figure 2.1: The Conceptual Framework
CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that guided the research in answering the question of how the media framed devolution between 2013-2017. It gives the research design employed in the study as well as the procedures that were followed to enable a proper evaluation and replication of the research. This includes the sampling procedure, the data collection method, the operationalization of variables, and the manner in which the data were analysed.

Research Design

The researcher employed a quantitative research design which used content analysis. Content analysis is a data collection technique previously restricted to communication but has since been adapted by other disciplines such as psychology, sociology and political science, to examine newspaper coverage of devolution in Kenya. Scholars conducting research using content analysis (Berelson, 1952; Kerlinger, 1986; Krippendorff, 2004) define it as a systematic, replicable technique for condensing huge amounts of text into fewer categories based on explicit rules of coding to enable better understanding of particular phenomena. There are key definitions of interest to this research. One, is Holsti’s (1968) broad definition which argues that content analysis is “any technique that enables a researcher to make inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (p.14). Another, is Berelson’s (1952) more succinct definition of content analysis as “an objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p.18).
From this definition, it is clear there are four main concepts in content analysis: systematic, objective, quantitative and manifest content. The emphasis of systematic is that the content to be analysed must be selected according to set criteria that are explicitly and consistently applied in relation to the research objectives. Objectivity is concerned with mitigating the effects of a researcher’s biases on the findings. This means that the variables being measured are defined precisely so that any other person conducting a similar study with the same content will accrue the same results (Stempel, 1975; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). On the other hand, quantitative simply denotes that the research design involves the measurement of variables to yield numeric data (Stempel, 1975; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011), while manifest content means that the content must be coded as it appears and not the way a researcher feels it is intended (Berelson, 1952; Stempel, 1975).

Content analysis is selected since it is a better and systematic way of analysing media content (Stempel, 1975), and most importantly, majority of framing studies use it to examine the prevalence of frames (Berelson, 1952; Haile, 2011; Ireri, 2014; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

**Research Approach**

Quantitative research is concerned with the systematic scientific investigation of quantitative properties and phenomena and their relationships. The questions of what were the dominant frames in the coverage of devolution, whether the frames used were episodic or thematic, positive or negative, and what were the main sources of news stories, demanded quantitative data so as to generate appropriate answers. Therefore, the researcher extracted quantitative data that depict the frequency or salience of words and phrases in a text. This involved an examination of how often a frame was present in a particular news
story and used frequencies and percentages to capture this information and decipher its implication in relation to the framing of devolution. The subsequent sub-sections deals with how quantitative content analysis of the framing of devolution in Kenya was employed.

**Population and Sampling Design**

A population is an entire group of individuals, events or objects that share common observable characteristics (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The population for the research was derived from two national English newspapers – *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* – four-year coverage of the first term of devolved system of governance. The sampling period was defined as from 27 March 2013 (when the governors were sworn into office) to 28 May 2017 (the start of the official campaign period) signalling the end of their first term in office. The study selected the entire four-year term of a county government since it was the first time this system of governance was being implemented in the country. This enabled the researcher to factor in the inherent teething challenges at the onset of devolution as the national and county governments struggled to lay the infrastructure for devolved governance as well as the politics involved in later stages of implementation. Considering that campaigns for elections in Kenya become intensive two years into the elections year (2017), it was also imperative to capture the impact of party politics on framing and see whether the patterns at the start persisted to the end. The advantage of this approach is to enhance the external validity of the study.

The choice of newspapers was informed by their dominance as agenda setters of key policy issues in the country. Most importantly, most content analysis studies that examine media framing use newspapers as their main source of data (Entman, 2010). The two newspapers were selected because of a number of reasons. First, due to their popularity

Second, the two newspapers introduced a section on news about county governments in their editions two years after the passage of the constitution that gave life to devolution. These sections are dedicated to news that specifically touch on devolution and other issues that are happening at the county level and that impact on governance at that level.

The vast number of stories on devolution by the two newspapers made it a near impossible task to conduct a content analysis of all the stories in the two newspapers over a four-year period. Riffe, Aust and Lacy (1993) observe that while too few sampling units stand the chance of giving unreliable data and invalid results, too many units may be a waste of coding resources. As a result, sampling, which is the process of selecting a representative portion of a population with a view to determine the parameters of the entire population (Stempel, 1975), was conducted to meet the needs of the study. This enabled the research to generate a sample size that was representative enough to inform its findings.

Therefore, six-constructed weeks sampling technique was used in this study. This is a type of stratified random sampling, which assumes cyclic variation of content for all the days of the week (Jones & Carter, 1959; Riffe et al., 1993; Stempel, 1952). The value
of six-constructed week sampling was affirmed by Luke, Caburnay, and Cohen’s (2011) who found it to be the most efficient for both one-and-five-year population. Constructed-weeks sampling involved identifying all Mondays, and randomly selecting one Monday, then identifying all Tuesdays, and randomly selecting one Tuesday, etc., to “construct” a week that ensures that each source of cyclic variation – each day of the week – is represented equally (Lacy, Riffe, Stoddard, Martin, & Chang, 2001). Six-constructed week also ensure that the results have external validity by creating maximum sampling efficiency while controlling for cyclic biases (Luke et al., 2011).

The research selected all the Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays between 27 March 2013 and 28 May 2017 in the two newspapers. The next step involved using the online randomizer to randomly select in the Daily Nation newspapers a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday to construct the first week. This step was repeated five times until the entire six-constructed week was achieved. The same steps were repeated for The Standard newspapers until a six constructed week was achieved (see Appendix 1).

The six-constructed week sampling resulted in a population of 84 newspaper editions: 50% from Daily Nation and 50% from The Standard. The 84 editions yielded a total of 565 news stories: 272 (48%) from Daily Nation and 293 (52%) from The Standard.

A crucial element of content analysis is the reliability of coding, that is, the consistency of the classification procedures (Krippendorff, 2004; Stempel, 1975) to enable the researcher to make valid inferences from the text (Weber, 1990). Using 10% of the Daily Nation articles (n=30), two coders with a background in communication and political science conducted the pilot study exercise that took one week. They were trained in the
coding procedures and the definitions of the categories being examined. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) explain that data obtained from a pilot exercise are useful because “poorly defined categories can be detected, and chronically dissenting coders can be identified” (p. 166).

Then, the inquiry conducted an inter-coder reliability test Cohen’s kappa (Cohen, 1960) coefficient formula. This exercise made it possible to identify and correct poorly coded categories up to the point that maximised mutual exclusivity and exhaustiveness (Weber, 1990), thereby securing the reliability and validity of the data. The inter-coder consistency exercise yielded a mean kappa’s reliability co-efficient of .95 across the 10 frames. The individual reliability results were as follows: attribution of responsibility = .89; conflict = .88; advocacy = .93; economic consequences = .96; development = 1.0; human interest = .92. The reliability for framing type (episodic vs. thematic) was identical = each 1.0 – meaning the mean kappa’s reliability coefficient was also 1.0. The reliability result for negative was .92 and for positive .96.

**Data Collection Methods**

The newspapers used in this study were scrutinised at the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS). The library had all the sampled 84 editions of the two newspapers for the period the investigation was interested in. There was a daily charge of Kenya Shilling 20 for accessing the library. The newspapers are archived in a manner that made it easy to retrieve them. They are bundled in a single unit of all the editions for a specific month for a specific newspaper publication and arranged in sections according to the month and year of publication. Thereafter, the researcher sifted through all the 84 editions and selected all news stories on devolution (565).
The method used for the research is known as coding which records the evidence that is observed during the examination of the newspapers (Stempel, 1975; Wilson, Esiri & Onwubere, 2008). A coding protocol, containing a code book and a code sheet, was used to examine the variables under investigation (see Appendix 2). The code book provided the coding instructions (the operationalization of the variables) used and the coding sheet was used to record the information collected from the sampled news stories.

The unit of analysis used to capture the occurrence of a frame was a paragraph. The frame was counted once in paragraph even if it appeared more than once. For example, if the conflict frame appeared in a paragraph more than once it was counted once. In addition, in circumstances where more than one frame appeared in a paragraph, they each were counted once. For example, if economic interest, conflict and attribution of responsibility frames appeared in the same paragraph, they were each coded separately. Similarly, the unit of analysis for the actor most blamed for the implementation of devolution was a paragraph. In addition, in circumstances where more than one actor appeared in a paragraph, they were each counted once. For example, if county executive officer, expert and community member appeared in the same paragraph, they were each coded separately.

With regard to episodic and thematic framing, the unit of analysis was the entire news story. When both episodic and thematic framing appeared in a story, the most-dominant in terms of paragraphs was coded. For valence framing, the unit of analysis was a paragraph. The focus of the study was on news stories, and as such, it excluded editorials, opinion editorials, advertorials, letters to the editor and pictures.
Measures - Operationalization of Variables

The research, using the extant literature (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015; Iyengar, 1991; D’Angelo, 2018; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Schuck & De Vreese, 2006), developed a code book and code sheet that were used to examine the frames in newspaper stories as well as the sources of news. These provided the specific details and the coding scheme to be followed for each of the identified variable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The code book was used to transfer the information captured in the sampled newspapers to the code sheet, which was designed to record the information in a systematic way (See Appendix 1).

The categorisation of the frames into attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic consequences and human interest are borrowed from studies by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) while the episodic and thematic definitions used Iyengar’s (1991) work. The definition of valence framing was adopted from Schuck and De Vreese (2006). The development frame was formulated based on UN’s definition of sustainable development which is encapsulated in the Constitution of Kenya (2010). The advocacy frame was developed based on the premises of development communication/development journalism, which expect journalists to advocate for development as well as the study by Haile (2011).

The conflict frame emphasizes conflict or controversy between individuals, groups or institutions. The political elite reduce complex issues into a simple conflict of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. The conflict frame addresses the following questions: Does the story reflect disagreement between the parties/individuals/groups? Do the parties in conflict blame one another for the issue? Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the issue? Does the story refer to winners and losers?
The *attribution of responsibility frame* presents an issue or problem in such a manner that apportions blame for causing or solving the problems facing devolution to a specific individual, group or institution. The attribution of responsibility frame means that blame is assigned to one of the many actors involved in the implementation of devolution. It addresses such questions as the following: Does the story suggest that some level of government has the ability to implement devolution? Does the story suggest that some level of government is responsible for the issue/problem? Does the story suggest the general community is responsible for the issue? Does the story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue?

The *economic consequence frame* presents an event, problem or issue in terms of the economic consequences it will have on an individual, group or institution. The economic consequences frame raises the following questions: Does the story state the economic benefit of devolution? Does the story indicate economic consequences of devolution in the country? Does the story emphasise the impact of devolution on meeting the plan designed to ensure sustainable economic development in the country?

The *human interest frame* presents an issue from a more emotional point of view. The human interest frame raises the following questions: Does the story go into the private or personal life of those involved? Does the story mention a human example or give a “human face” on the issue? Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue?

The *development frame* focuses on issues which have an impact on Kenya’s development efforts. The development frame raises the following questions: Does the story concentrate on issues which have an impact on Kenya’s development efforts? Does the
story focus on improving food security and reducing extreme hunger? Does the story focus on achieving or improving universal education (primary/secondary)/healthcare (reducing child mortality/combating HIV/AIDS/malaria/other diseases)? Does the story focus on achieving or improving infrastructure (roads/markets/hospitals/schools/houses)/access to water and sanitation? Does the story focus on promoting gender equality and empowering women? Does the story focus on conserving and enhancing the resource base?

The *advocacy frame* provides citizens with information on devolution and promote policy change. The advocacy frame raises the following questions: Does the story give more information/simplify/popularize the concept/idea of devolution? Does the story suggest policy changes in the country regarding devolution? Does the story positively advocate/champion for devolution?

In valence framing, *positive* framing is where the manner in which county or national governments handle devolution is evaluated as having a positive effect, while *negative* framing is a description that evaluates the county governments or national government handling of devolution negatively.

On framing type, *episodic* coverage involves storytelling in which an issue is presented in a specific event or case. The primary focus is on telling personal stories, describing anecdotal events, and/or presenting individual cases. It depicts issues in terms of concrete instances. For example, bringing poor people into the news covering devolution so as to inform the public on the consequences of devolution. On the other hand, thematic framing refers to framing that places an issue in a larger and more abstract social context. The primary focus is on providing contextual and big-picture information. This framing
approach may use historical data, statistics, and expert interviews. Examples include citing reports which give statistics on the poverty rates since the introduction of devolution.

The most common sources of news on county governance include: the national executive comprising the president, his deputy and the cabinet, which is expected to cooperate with county governments in the implementation of devolution; Parliament composed of the National Assembly and Senate, which facilitates the implementation of devolution through legislation, determination of the allocation of revenues between the levels of government, and exercises oversight of state organs; the county executive comprising the governor, his deputy and the country executive committee, which implements the development objectives of the county; the county assembly composed of elected members of wards, which exercises the legislative authority of the county, approves county plans and policies and exercise oversight over county assembly; the general public who are expected to act as the vanguard of devolution and experience the effects of devolution – positive or negative; interest groups, who lobby those in position of public responsibility with a view to incorporate the interests of their members in public policy; businesspeople who are affected by the implementation of county policies; experts; and religious leaders. Citizens are rarely quoted directly, but the media tend to use opinion polls and general statement to express citizen’s views “with an eye toward how public preferences on the issue are distributed” (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001, p. 199).

Research Procedures
The research was conducted using content analysis of newspaper stories to determine how journalists framed devolution between 2013 and 2017. The procedures involved identifying the research problem and the questions, review of the theory and existing
research, determination of appropriate methodology and research design, data collection, and the analysis and interpretation of the data.

The research problem was identified as a result of the researcher’s interest in the workings of devolution in the country. Once the enquiry adopted development communication/journalism and framing as its theoretical standpoint, it then developed its objectives and questions based on the theories’ assumptions. This was done after an extensive review of the literate on development communication/journalism and framing especially of governance-related issues, development, decentralisation and the use of news sources.

After the completion of the literature review and the development of the research questions, the next step involved the determination of the population of the study, which has already been described above. The investigation focused on newspapers between 27 March 2013 and 28 May 2017. From this universe, the researcher used the six-constructed week sampling to generate a representative sample of 84 newspaper editions – 42 from the Daily Nation and 42 from The Standard. The researcher scanned through all the 84 newspaper editions to examine articles on devolution, which generated 565 news stories. Thereafter, the researcher settled on the units of analysis for the different research questions, constructed the categories to be analysed and established a nominal quantification system.

Two coders were trained on the coding protocol and conducted a one-week inter-coder reliability test which achieved a mean kappa’s reliability coefficient of .95 across the 10 frames, which is way above the recommended .75, thereby, ascertaining the reliability of the study instruments. Subsequently, in line with the accepted practice of using a
collection of newspapers in a library or a given database (Stempel, 1975), the coders spent three weeks at KNLS coding the 565 stories in line with the established coding protocol. They identified the frames and the sources used in the coverage of the news and captured this information in the coding sheets. This information was then tabulated and analysed using SPSS. Lastly, the results were interpreted to test the research questions of the study.

Data Analysis
Once data had been collected it has to be interpreted because on its own it is meaningless. It is through quantitative analysis of the data that the research was able to deduce the meanings behind the data collected.

The study employed quantitative analysis techniques through the use of frequency of frames, the number of times an actor is blamed, and the number of times a source is quoted. The data from the content analysis was entered using CSPro software and exported to SPSS for cleaning and analysis. The measurement of the frequency of the variables used in study were done using descriptive statistics, that is, counts and percentages. The data are presented using tables. Thereafter, the statistics were cast within the broader literature on development communication/journalism and framing so as to assess their contribution and implications for devolution.

Chapter Summary
This chapter describes the procedure the research followed in answering the research questions. This includes the use of a quantitative research design that employed content analysis to collect data. It details the sampling strategy that was used to arrive at the study’s sample, the pilot test that confirmed the agreement between coders, the development of the
coding protocol which operationalized the variables, the units of analysis and the tools which were used to analyse the data.
CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Introduction

This section presents the findings of the content analysis of 565 newspaper articles which examined: (i) The frames which newspaper journalists used in the four-year coverage of devolution; (ii) Through the lenses of attribution of responsibility frame, who were the most blamed actors for the problems that faced the new development concept of devolution; (iii) Whether the coverage of devolution was framed more from an episodic or thematic perspective; (iv) Whether the coverage was more negative or positive; and (v) The major sources of news in the coverage of devolution stories. It shows the reporting on devolution was dominated by conflict and was overwhelmingly episodic with a more negative tone. In addition, it shows that the county executive was the most blamed for the problems facing devolution and at the same time the most cited on devolution news.

Dominant Frames in Newspaper Coverage of Devolution

Before investigating the research questions, some descriptive data are necessary. Overall, the number of frames per news story ranged from 1 to 69. While there were a few cases where the number of frames exceeded 20, the mean was 7.2 and median 12. The most mentioned frame in a single newspaper story was conflict with 34 mentions followed by economic consequences with 30 mentions (See Table 4.1 below).

Table 4.1: Average Frequency per Dominant Frame per News Story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Interest</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When analysed in terms of how many news stories were mentioned in a given frame, out of the 565 newspaper stories, 89.0% did not mention the advocacy frame, 87.0% did not mention the human interest frame, 72.0% did not mention the attribution of responsibility frame and 63.0% did not mention the development frame.

The content analysis of 565 newspaper stories generated a total of 4,047 mentions of the six frames reviewed. Table 4.2 indicates that the two newspapers’ coverage of devolution was dominated by the conflict frame (40.2%). This relates to research question 1a, which examined the dominant frame in the two newspapers’ four-year coverage of devolution between 2013 and 2017. Economic consequences was the second dominant frame followed by the development frame. The findings indicate that the media are not purposeful at enhancing development in the country as advocacy (3.8%) was the least used frame in the coverage of devolution. Analysed against Djokotoe’s (2013) guidelines of development journalism, the newspapers neither broadened nor humanised the development story. The literature on development communication and framing shows that when the conflict frame is dominant, the issues which are central to the citizens get lost as the political elite satisfy their own interests (Kelleher, 2014; McDaniel, 1986; McKay, 1993; Ogan & Fair, 1984; Tshabangu, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Frame Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>1,628</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Interest</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,047</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.2: Frame Prevalence in Newspaper Coverage of Devolution**
Attribution of Responsibility in Problems Facing Devolution

Relatedly, research question 1b asked which actors were the most blamed for the problems facing devolution through the lens of attribution of responsibility frame. Journalist use the attribution of responsibility frame to present an issue or problem in a manner that attributes the responsibility of its cause to an individual, group or government (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Collectively, the members serving in the executive offices at the county and national level were the most blamed (67.0%) for the problems facing devolution. Individually, the officers at the county executive level were the most blamed for the problems facing devolution (39.0%) followed by officers at the national executive level (38.0%). Parliament and the county legislature tied at positions three with 11.0% while the independent institutions and commissions were fourth with 10.0%. The rest constituted less than 1.0%.

This shows that the key players involved in the implementation of devolution were the most blamed for the challenges facing its execution. Considering the top five sources on news on devolution were similar to the top five blamed for the challenges facing implementation, there is a possibility of buck-passing amongst these five actors.
Table 4.3: Actors Blamed Most in the Problems Facing Devolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County Executive</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Executive</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Assembly</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Institutions &amp; Commissions</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Members</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Leaders</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business People</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Leaders</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers &amp; Researches</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Governmental Officer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>462</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Episodic vs Thematic Newspapers’ Framing of Devolution

Research question 2 tackled the issue of whether the four-year coverage of devolution reflected episodic or thematic framing. Table 4.2 shows that newspaper news in Kenya on devolution was predominantly “episodic” (98.4%). Put somewhat differently, Kenyan newspapers depicted devolution as limited to specific events only and did not contextualise how the newspaper stories impacted on development (Iyengar, 1991).

Analysed against Djokotoe’s (2013) guidelines of development journalism, newspapers reported on events as opposed to process. This is contrary to the tents of development journalism, which champions relevance to the higher context of development. This means that development journalism is yet to take root in the country with citizens bombarded with specific stories on devolution without helping them to understand the import of the activities carried out with regard to the broader context of its implementation.
Table 4.4: Frame Type Prevalence in Newspaper Coverage of Devolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame Types</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Episodic</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>98.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valence Framing of Devolution

The average mentions per news story for the positive frame was 2.1 while for the negative frame was 2.4. The maximum number of mentions for the negative frame in a single news story was 24 mentions while that of positive frame was 17 mentions. Research question 3 examined whether the tone of the newspaper coverage of devolution was positive or negative. As Table 4.5 below shows, slightly over a half (53.5%) of the newspaper coverage of devolution was negative. Also a significant coverage of devolution was positive (46.5%). This seems to mirror the complaints by governors that newspapers give devolution the short end of the stick in its coverage.

Table 4.5: Valence Framing in Newspaper Coverage of Devolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame Types</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>1,332</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>1,159</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,491</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Major News Sources in Reporting Devolution

The last research question (RQ4) investigated the most used news sources in the coverage of devolution in Kenya. The most authoritative source for news stories on devolution is the county executive (41.2%), followed by the county assembly (16.8%) and parliament (13.1%). This shows that newspapers systematically institutionalised the official discourse as the dominant interpretive manner of debating devolution as a new development concept.
As such, journalists are yet to embrace the participatory model of development journalism as they rarely contact other stakeholders outside the political elite.

Analysed against Djokotoe’s (2013) guidelines of development journalism, newspapers did not focus on the ordinary people, but rather, on the political elite. This leaves us wondering whether newspapers, as earlier observed by McDaniel (1986), are being used as a vehicle to promote the political elite as well as publicise government development programmes. The dominance of the political elite gives them undue advantage over the narrative on devolution and shows that journalists are still stuck in the dominant paradigm and are yet to fully embrace the participatory and collaborative nature of the empowerment paradigm.

Table 4.6: The News Sources in the Coverage of Devolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County Executive</td>
<td>1,367</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Assembly</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Institutions &amp; Commissions</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Executive</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Members</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business People</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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<td>Religious Leaders</td>
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Chapter Summary

Summing up this part of the analysis, the results have shown that, (1) Conflict (40.2%) was the dominant frame in the coverage of devolution between 2013 and 2017, (2) The county executive (39%) was the most blamed for the problems facing devolution, (3) The coverage of devolution was overwhelmingly episodic (98.6%), (4) The tone of the coverage was
more negative (53.5%), and (5) County executive (41.2%) was the dominant sources of news stories on devolution.
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This section interprets the findings of the study within the broader academic discourse on development communication/journalism framing of governance-related issues. What the findings mean in relation to the coverage of devolution and the implication of this to the promotion of devolution. The following key findings are addressed: (1) The dominant use of the conflict frame; (2) The county executive and national executive as the most blamed actors for the problems facing devolution; (3) The predominance of episodic framing; (4) The dominance of negative framing; and (5) The predominance of the political elite as news sources.

Discussion

This study sought to investigate how the prevalence, type and valence of newspaper frames influence discourse on devolution as a new development concept. The research also examined the main sources of newspaper stories on devolution. The major findings of the study is that the two newspapers covered devolution from a conflict frame, reported using a predominantly episodic frame with a more negative tone. The main source of newspaper stories on devolution was the county government, with the county executive emerging as the most blamed actor for the challenges experienced during implementation.

Dominant Frames in Newspapers’ Coverage of Devolution

Tuchman (1978) advanced the argument that news frames set the parameters within which citizens discuss public events. The frame that shaped the discourse on devolutions during the period under study was conflict. Thus, conflict was the main prism through which
Kenyans understood and evaluated the new development concept – devolution. Discourses on devolution have largely been about power relations and the allocation of resources. In the words of Gitlin (1980), the Kenyan media persistently selected and emphasised conflict at the exclusion of other important frames such as advocacy and development.

The expectation with the transition from a centralised to a decentralised structure of governance was that devolution would bring development closer to the people, become less abstract and more participatory, and mitigate or eliminate the polarisation that coloured the discourse on development since independence up to the time of the promulgation of 2010 Constitution. However, the findings of this study demonstrate that polarisation continues to be the staple of Kenyan discourse on development.

The predominance of the conflict frame in the Kenyan newspapers suggest the importance and potential influence of political culture and context on the framing of devolution in the news. Historically, as already observed in chapter one, the debate, on the governance architecture of the country as well as development, has been polarised. The two dominant coalitions during the period under review – the ruling Jubilee Alliance and the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) – polarised debates in the country. This polarisation at the national level trickled down to lower levels of government and bedevilled the discourse on devolution.

Kenyans, and more specifically, the political elite, have limited trust and confidence in their fellow political actors. The impact of this on political processes and behaviour is that political opponents or those with different economic interests are considered antagonistic, conflictual and full of hostility (Verba, 1965). The finding is in agreement with previous research (Bennett, 1990) which showed that conflict among the political elite
over a policy issue leads to increased coverage by the media. This is mainly because conflict news always consists of a mix of different political news sources trying to control the narrative over an issue. Thus, the Kenyan media overreliance on the political elite as news sources accounts for the dominance of the conflict frame in the coverage of devolution.

Kenya embodies a presidential system of government in which power is shared at three levels: (i) Between the national executive and the county executive; (ii) Between the national executive, parliament, the judiciary and the independent institutions and commissions; and, (iii) Between the county executive and the county legislature. This is bound to generate a conflictual and antagonistic approach to politics as each of these institutions checks against encroachment on their powers. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) makes a similar observation on the tendency to report politics as conflict in the US and Holland where political power is anchored in two political coalitions. Thus, the issue of coalition politics in Kenya also contributed to the dominance of the conflict frame, which Entman (2010) also observed in Chile and the US, where two main factions dominated news framing in the coverage of political discourse. Kenya borrows most of its governance architecture from US, and as such, political power was equally anchored in two coalitions – Jubilee and CORD. The contestation between these two rival factions dominated the framing that prevailed in the discourse on devolution (Entman, 2010; Gronemeyer & Porath, 2017a).

Gronemeyer and Porath (2017a) observed that the conflict frame’s dominance could also be attributed to media consolidation, the influence of owners on journalistic approaches and the prioritisation of statements from official sources, in which the media
reproduces the dominant visions and experiences of governments and the political elite. Ireri (2017) made a similar observation in Kenya where he found that editorial policies (29.2%), editorial managers (18%) and media owners (17.0%) exert a lot of influence on journalists when deciding which angle to take in a news story.

Cavallin (2000) introduces a different perspective where he argues that the professionalisation of journalists is responsible for the manner in which they cover the news since they share the same vocational training, standards of evaluating newsworthiness, ethical principles and routines. And therein lies the dominance of conflict as all journalists go to similar schools where they are taught to report their news stories in a specific manner. The Western commercial libertarian logic which emphasises news that is “negative, elite-driven and event-oriented, and full of drama and conflict” (Hague, 1986, p. 84) seems to have manifested in the curriculum of the country’s training institutions. A study by Ireri (2018) found that 26.3% and 17.8% of Kenyan newspeople pursued their education at the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication and the University of Nairobi respectively. This leads to the production of journalists who have a similar orientation of how to frame news stories.

Economic consequences was the second important frame in the coverage of devolution. This is in tandem with most studies on framing (De Vreese et al., 2001; Gamson, 1992; Neuman et al., 1992) which document that news about politics and governance are often framed in either conflict or economic consequences as it reflects a “preoccupation with the ‘bottom line,’ profit and loss” (Neuman et al., 1992, p. 63). Distribution of resources between the national government and county governments was a major issue of contestation in the first-term of the devolution, especially between the
national executive and county executives (Kariuki, 2014; Namunane & Leftie, 2013; Ongiri, 2013). Of course, the two institutions charged with overseeing the allocation of resources as well as the implementation of different facets of devolution – the parliament and the county legislature – got sucked into these contestations (Nation Reporter, 2014; Ongiri, 2014). There were also turf wars between the Senate and the National Assembly over the distribution of resources and functions between the two levels of government in the formulation of relevant laws during the period under review. This explains why economic consequences was the second key frame in the newspaper coverage of devolution. There were also high incidences of corruption reported in the media that affected a majority of the county governments (Ongiri, 2015; Wesangula, 2018).

Devolution is a development concept which is expected to bring financial and political resources closer to the people, and provide democratic and development gains (Cheeseman et al., 2013). This explains why the third frame was development. Journalism role conception assumes that the way journalists comprehend their functions shapes the content they produce (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Based on this assumption, it can be argued that the media has mildly embraced devolution as a new development concept. An inquiry into the professional role conceptions of Kenyan journalists found that a majority of them believe that providing citizens with information (61.3%), advocating for social change (51.7%), supporting official policies (46.9%) and motivating people to participate in civic activities (45.6%) are very important (Ireri, 2017). However, this research challenges the Kenyan journalist role conception (Ireri, 2017) due to the non-existence of the advocacy frame and mild use of the development frame. The limited use of the two frames shows that development journalism is yet to be institutionalised, and as a result,
journalists are yet to embrace a comprehensive and participatory model in their reporting on devolution (Xiaoge, 2009).

Tshabangu (2013) similarly found low development content news, and following his interviews with journalists in Zimbabwe, concluded that “they do not have any understanding of development journalism’s philosophy and principles” (p. 21), which he attributed to tabloidisation of news, the commercial imperative, lack of specialised training on development news, Westernisation of news values and journalists focus on urban areas (Tshabangu, 2013). Would it be in order to wonder whether a similar situation obtains in Kenya? A future qualitative study might help to settle this query.

As agents of development, it was expected that the media together with other actors would be at the forefront of championing devolution as a new development concept, especially considering development journalism is usually described as advocacy journalism. Unfortunately, the advocacy frame was non-existent (3.8%) showing that the manner in which the issue of devolution is covered in newspapers does not propagate its potential or successes – but rather focuses on its economic consequences and the contestations over the distribution of power between the different levels of government.

Similarly, the human interest frame (4.6%) was negligible. This correlates with the mild use of community members as sources of news stories on devolution. The dominance of the political elite in the coverage of news articles ensures that the polarity that exists among them takes centre stage. The mild use of the human interest and advocacy frames shows that devolution continues to face great impediments in its implementation as the voice of its champions is hinged.
The findings of this study provide some insights into the use and significance of the concept of framing to devolution in Kenya. First, it provides empirical evidence regarding the replicability of Semetko and Valkenburg’s (2000) generic frames which majority of studies have adopted in their investigations. This provides a platform to move the research agenda on framing in the country to the next level of comparisons with other countries and cultural context (Gronemeyer & Porath, 2017a). Second, the research provides insights into the adoption of development journalism in the country. It confirms that development communication as defined by the empowerment paradigm is yet to be institutionalised in media houses as the frames (development and advocacy) which espouse key aspects of development journalism, and which have the potential to advance devolution, were marginalised. From the standpoint of development communication, newspapers did not frame the news in a way that the importance of devolution as a new development concept was elevated and spotted by the people.

**Attribution of Responsibility in Devolution Reporting**

Relatedly, through the attribution of responsibility, the executives both at the county (39.0%) and the national (28.0%) levels were the most blamed for the challenges facing devolution. This could be attributed to the fact that the two institutions were charged with laying the foundation for devolution and ensuring that the provisions of the constitution were implemented so as to achieve the goals, objectives and aspirations of the new governance concept.

The nature of relations between the national executive and county executives was largely strained due to the nature of political affiliations in the country and the allocation of resources between the two levels of government. An interesting scenario that presents
itself in Kenyan politics is the ethnic nature of the composition of political parties and the attendant voting patterns across the country. As a result, roughly half of the county governments were headed by governors allied to the opposition – CORD (20), and the other half (18) allied to the ruling coalition, the Jubilee Alliance. Therefore, the manner in which the governors conducted themselves in public was critical to their chances of securing re-election, which made it dangerous for opposition governors to be seen to be too close to the government and vice versa for Jubilee governors. Thus, they had to maintain a conflictual and antagonist approach to politics.

A case in point is the debate over a referendum to change the constitution in 2014 in favour of county governments by increasing the amount of funds allocated to them. Both the opposition and the Council of Governors (COG) started separate campaigns, Okoa Kenya (save Kenya) and Pesa Mashinani (more money to the grassroots), more or less at the same time, to mobilise support for a referendum. However, media coverage of the campaigns turned it into one where a governor was either with the ruling coalition, Jubilee, which did not support a referendum or the opposition which supported it. Governors associated with the ruling party were compelled to abandon the quest for a referendum as they were portrayed as rebels, and considering the ethnic base of political parties and voting patterns in the country, this would have been costly to them. In fact, none of the COG chairpersons from the Jubilee strongholds who remained committed to the push for a referendum (Isaac Ruto and Peter Munya) were not re-elected in 2017.

Of course, the national government also attempted to curtail the governors’ powers through a number of manoeuvres contributing to the high incidence of blame attributed to them. First, the decision not to disband the provincial administration but rather to
restructure it in a manner that is in tandem with the constitution while still retaining the powers it had prior to the promulgation of the new constitution (Steeves, 2016). Second, delay in release of funds, especially the equalisation fund which was meant to be operationalised in 2013 but was first disbursed in 2017 (Czuba, 2017; Steeves, 2016). Third, the national government acquiring medical equipment and compelling county governments to use their funds to lease and purchase despite the devolution of the health function. Lastly, the attempt to introduce County Development Boards (CDB), which were to consider and adopt (i) county integrated development plans, (ii) county plans for cities and urban areas, and (iii) annual county budget, before they were placed in county assemblies for approval (Republic of Kenya, 2013). The High Court declared the act null and void.

Thirty-two per cent of the actors blamed over the problems facing devolution was almost equally shared between the county legislature (11.0%), parliament (11.0%) and independent institutions and commissions (10.0%). These are the institutions which are charged with oversight over the two executives in the implementation of devolution. This could be as a result of a number of reasons. First, their weakness in checking the excesses of the two executives due to the nature of the country’s political culture where a MP or MCA toes the party line irrespective of merits of the issue under consideration. Every year the Office of the Auditor General detailed reports of massive corruption at county levels without the MPs or MCAs initiating measures to prevent the abuse of public funds or punish those involved (Ongiri, 2015; Wesangula, 2018).

Second, the entanglement of senators into the tag of war between the national executive and the county executives. There was a strained relationship between the
governors and the senators who the constitution abrogated the role of defenders of counties’ interests at the national level. The senators sought to prove that they were more important than the governors since the constitution empowers them to oversee the performance of county governments. The senators’ quest to limit the governors’ operational space would engender conflictual relations, especially where the senator and governor came from different political parties or where the senator had ambitions to contest in the subsequent gubernatorial race. The governors further accused senators of instigating impeachment motions against them so to as to clear the way for themselves in the subsequent by-election. In an attempt to curb the governors’ influence, the senators, working in cahoots with the national government, passed the CDB Bill, which sought to empower senators to take charge of the budget and development functions of governors (Cheeseman et al., 2016; Czuba, 2017; Steeves, 2016).

Third, the desire of the county legislature and parliament to eat into the resources earmarked for governors. The county assembly became an avenue through which MCAs sought to extract perks from the county executives as well as resources to extend patronage to the wards they represented. Where such overtures were turned down they resorted to attempts to impeach the governors so as to leverage demands for greater influence. A classic example is the case of Martin Wambora in Embu County, whose impeachment was engineered by MCAs from his own political party. This was also witnessed in the counties of Bungoma, Kericho, Makueni, Nyeri and others where MCAs threatened to institute impeachment proceedings. In Embu, the governor had to concede and allocate MCAs KES 20 million to spend on projects within their wards at their discretion. (Cheeseman et al., 2016;
This creation of ward development funds became a norm across the country as governors sought measures to contain the rising appetite for impeachments (Wanga, 2014).

**Episodic vs Thematic Newspapers Framing of Devolution**

Numerous studies have demonstrated the dominance of episodic over thematic frame in media coverage of political and governance issues (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Iyengar, 1991). Where the media’s main source of news is the political elite they tend to focus on issues which advantage the elite at the expense of issues which are critical to other stakeholders especially the masses. This provides the political elite and the media with an avenue through which to control the flow of information and as a result gain some semblance of control over the mind of society. This prevents the masses from conceptualising an issue in a manner that can enable them to call the elite to accountability.

The case of Kenya on the issue of devolution is not different. The episodic frame was overwhelmingly dominant meaning the coverage of devolution focused on events within the past 24 hours (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). This is similar to Porto’s (2002) examination of the framing of politics in Italy which reported an 80% dominance and Holli et al.’s (2000) investigation of framing of European politics in the Netherlands which reported a 92% dominance.

A major cause for the dominance of episodic framing is the introduction of 47 county governments. This means the limited number of journalists employed by the media stations are not able to deal with the vast amount of information to be gathered related to the implementation of devolution. Kim et al. (2010) observe that thematic framing requires a significant amount of background research and data collection. Due to the limited
numbers and time constrains, journalists prefer episodic framing since it is relatively easy to prepare a story.

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) observed that the presence of the conflict frame reduces the attention to substantive content. The danger of episodic coverage is that a lot of critical issues are excluded from news coverage, denying citizens the opportunity to critically observe affairs of devolved governments (Iyengar, 1991). Thus, the dominance of the episodic frame is reflective of the predominance of the conflict frame and the weakness of the advocacy frame.

The implication of this is that news on devolution is not cast within the broader themes of development. This would help citizens realise how devolution can be used to not only address the challenges they grappled with, but also see the obstacles that prevent them from realising the aspirations of devolution as it discourages further analysis of why devolution has been implemented the way it has (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Thus, the journalists are yet to focus on long-term development processes as opposed to day-to-day news (Xiaoge, 2009). This could probably mean that reporters “lack an investigative spirit and an in-depth understanding of development issues” (Murthy, 2001, p. 104) or that “they simply follow the traditional Western concept of news” (Haque 1986, p. 84) which is elite-driven and event-oriented. Put somewhat differently, they seem to be stuck in a time warp (of the dominant paradigm of development communication).

How an issue is framed determines how it is perceived. Iyengar (1991) suggested that episodic coverage makes individuals less likely to hold governments accountable for the alleviation of the challenges they struggle with. This can account for the cynicism and hopelessness with which Kenyans talk about abuse of public office and addressing
development challenges they face at the local level. This reduces citizens’ perception that they can meaningfully participate in devolution and influence its responsiveness to their needs. In order for citizens to have an in-depth understanding of the working of devolution and how they can participate in its implementation, context must be provided.

The predominance of episodic framing shows that journalists have abdicated their professional role to advance devolution as a new development concept. The prevalence of the episodic frame does not augur well for the advancement of devolution as citizens are not empowered to see the connections between the problems faced by devolution and type of leadership in the country as these two are presented as discrete and unconnected (Iyengar, 1991). This makes it a challenge for citizens to better comprehend how the new governance concept works and how they can plug into it so as to impact on its implementation, ensure leaders remain accountable, and that the development initiatives which find expression in the different counties are responsive to their needs.

An episodic frame is more conflictual, elite-driven and event-oriented. This is against the basis premises of development journalism, which champions a focus on process rather than events and a participatory model. The mild presence of experts, researchers, community leaders and non-governmental agents accounts for the episodic frame’s dominance. Thus, development journalism, did not play its role of facilitating and fostering devolution as a new development concept, and, continues to serve the interests of the political elite at the expense of ordinary people (Xiaoge, 2009). This could also suggest there is no real appetite in meeting the challenge of embracing an inclusive approach in reporting on devolution.
Valence Framing of Devolution

Devolution was covered in a more negative tone (53.0%) than positive (47.0%) tone. This could be reflective of the optimism, successes, challenges and disappointments that devolution grappled with during the first term of its implementation. Newton (1999) observed that the positive effects of news coverage lead to learning and mobilisation while Cappella and Jamieson (1997) noted that negative effects increase cynicism and demobilise citizens.

The negative coverage of devolution could largely be attributed to two key issues. First, the high incidences of corruption which followed the devolution of patronage-based politics and resources to the local level. Year after year, the Auditor General published reports on huge theft of public funds by county officials (Ongiri, 2015; Wesangula, 2018). As already alluded above, the senate and national assembly were at each other’s throats over distribution of resources and functions between the two levels of government. The senators and governors were also at each other’s throats over the running of county governments, and the governors. In addition, the MCAs were at each other throats over the allocation of resources and distribution of perks. Second, the incessant conflicts between the different actors involved in the implementation of devolution.

The positive tone could be attributed to the changes devolution has brought at the local level especially in previously marginalised counties in the northern, western and coastal areas. The most significant successes in devolution have been realised in the arid-and-semi-arid areas, which were previously marginalised and poorest counties in the country – Garissa, Isiolo, Laikipia, Mandera, Marsabit, Samburu, Tana River, Turkana, Wajir, and West Pokot. These findings brings into disrepute the repeated assertion by
governors that the media negatively covers devolution and shows that the coverage reflects the highs and lows of the implementation.

The high percentage of negative tone could probably imply there is a critical discourse on devolution amongst the main news sources on devolution (members of government). Alternatively, considering the top five most blamed actors for the challenges facing devolution are the political elite, this could imply that there is a lot of buck-passing amongst them. This does not augur well for devolution as it makes it difficult for citizens to apportion blame to the right individuals and institutions due to the dominance of the episodic frame. While the almost 50% positive tone is good and shows traction to the idea of devolution as a new development concept, as other studies have noted (Kelleher, 2014; Ogan & Fair, 1984), there is the danger that it could also probably be a public relations exercise for the two levels of government rather than critical reporting (Ogan & Fair, 1984).

**Major News Sources in Reporting Devolution**

The dominance of the political elites as the main sources of news is in line with the central thesis of the indexing hypothesis which argues that the media are heavily reliant on the political elite as sources of news. Over 77.6% of the news sources (the county executive, county assembly, parliament and national executive) were political elite with the county government (both the executive and the legislature) cited 58.0% of the times.

This supports the assertion by Bennett et al. (2006) that the press corps has a calibration process based on official consensus and conflict that determines “what gets into the news, what prominence it receives, how long it gets covered, and who gets the voice in stories” (p. 49). Bennett (1990) argued that the media heavily relies on the government for its news sources. Of the beats that various media houses follow, most if not all, are from
government institutions. This could be attributed to self-censorship where reporters tend to believe government sources are the most credible when it comes to matters of governance whether at the national or the local level. On this basis alone, it can be argued that the political elite determined the ebb and flow of devolution news in newspapers.

The dominance of the political elite can be explained from the perspective of their elite status. The literature on visibility of politicians evinces that one of the key determinants of media coverage of politicians is the elite status of an actor (Tresch, 2009). This is because they are deemed to be in a position to know, have higher credibility and are considered to be authoritative (Bennett, 1990). Strömbäck and his colleagues (2013) noted that the type of news sources that fulfil journalists’ source considerations are official and high-ranking sources: They provide easily accessible information high in news values; Are available, reliable and authoritative; Reduce uncertainty and provide verification of the news accounts; Help in analysing and interpreting events and processes; Grant legitimacy to the news; and, The political elite can express themselves in a way that suits the medium (see also Berkowitz, 2009; Manning, 2001; Tuchman, 1978).

From the perspective of political marketing, what gives the political elite more advantage is that they go out of their way to validate their newsworthiness and attract media coverage: They adapt their activities to meet media criteria for newsworthiness, react to issues that dominate the political arena, call news conferences, send press releases to newsrooms and maintain close and frequent contact with journalists (Vos, 2014). This is what other actors seem to either have not mastered or are not interested! The reasons the political are able to fulfil journalistic considerations is because they have greater incentives and more resources to influence the media (Strömbäck et al., 2013).
Considering devolution is about bringing services closer to the people, the expectation was that community members (the beneficiaries) would be a critical source of the achievements, successes and challenges that devolution faces since they directly encounter these. However, the predominance of the political elite as the main sources of news ensured they set boundaries within which the discourse on devolution took place (Brown, 2013). The coverage of devolution excluded the views that fall outside the bounds of the elite debate (Bennett, 1990).

This exhibits that Kenyan journalists are yet to transit to the participatory paradigm of development communication, which integrates a participatory strategy of covering news that facilitates citizen engagement. Without the integration of citizens as a key resource of news on devolution, it will be difficult to institutionalise development journalism in Kenya.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this research was to investigate the newspaper framing of devolution in Kenya between 2013 and 2017 so as to appreciate whether the discourse on devolution as a new development concept was less polarised and more participatory. Specifically, the study examined five things: (i) The frames which newspaper journalists used in the four-year coverage of devolution; (ii) Through the lens of attribution of responsibility frame, who were the most blamed actors for the problems that faced the new development concept of devolution; (iii) Whether the coverage of devolution was framed more from an episodic or thematic perspective; (iv) Whether the coverage was more negative or positive; and (v) The major sources of news in the coverage of devolution stories.

The findings indicate that, (1) Conflict (40.2%) was the dominant frame in the coverage of devolution, (2) The county executive (39%) was the most blamed for the
problems facing devolution, (3) The coverage of devolution was overwhelmingly episodic (98.6%), (4) The tone of the coverage was more negative (53.5%), and, (5) County executive (41.2%) was the dominant source of news stories on devolution.

This means that newspaper coverage of devolution as a new development concept was devoid of the principles of development journalism, which emphasises a people-centred approach in the coverage of development issues. The political elite’s dominance maintained their control of the narrative on development, which they have turned into a largely conflictual, episodic and negative discourse. This stagnates development as it stifles citizen engagement, encourages cynicism and hopelessness about the utility of devolution as a tool to actualise sustainable development, and cultivates unaccountability of the political elite.

There are three key limitations of this research that future investigations should seek to ameliorate. First, it focuses on Kenya’s two lead newspapers – *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* – at the expense of two other important print media – *The Star*, which majorly focuses on political news, and *The People Daily*, which is a free publication and with a wider reach. Second, the study does not include broadcast media and social media, which are also key players in framing politics and governance in the country. Third, the study did not include a qualitative aspect, which would have helped to better understand the reasons behind journalists’ obsession with the conflict frame, and whether they comprehend the philosophy and principles of development journalism.

**Recommendations**

The predominance of the political elite as sources of news means that news, in the words of Cross (2010), “is a representation of conversations between the powerful in society,
while the general public are relegated to a position of mere observers” (p. 414). The unheard voices of key stakeholders in the implementation of devolution – ordinary citizens, researchers, experts, business people, community leaders and NGOs – leads to a situation where those with the most power define the boundaries within which issues of devolution are debated and settled. Therefore, journalists should focus on the needs of the people and articulate popular voices in their narratives as the best means of engaging the public on the discourse on devolution. In addition, members whose voices are not heard in the newspapers should engage in media advocacy strategies so as to get on the political agenda as well as make their issues visible and credible in policy debate.

The preponderance of the episodic frame and the dominance of government sources calls for a need to re-evaluate the practice of development journalism in the country. Therefore, there is a need to revisit journalism curriculum so that they can reflect devolution as a new concept of development. In addition, there is a need to train (and re-train) journalists in the competencies and commitment to work hand-in-hand with key actors in devolution. It is when journalists are aware that they can play a role in creating awareness regarding the system of devolved governance that they become advocates of devolution as a new development concept. Thus, a special seminar for journalists covering devolution is highly recommended on a regular basis. This should challenge the Kenyan media to provide contextual and background information on devolution issues and discuss the impact of plans, policies and problems with the people so as to entrench a participatory development approach to devolution.

The Kenyan newspapers tend to employ episodic framing in their coverage of devolution ignoring the wider context within which devolution was implemented. This
trivialises public discourse on fundamental reasons for the challenges devolution continues to grapple with. Therefore, this study recommends that other key stakeholders such as universities, experts and the private sector should leverage the conversation on devolution so as to relate the everyday happenings at the county level with the broader goals and objectives of decentralised development.

**Areas for Further Research**

Considering devolution is a national issue which continues to receive wide coverage across different media platforms, the most significant limitation of this study is the focus on newspapers only at the expense of other media platforms, which would have enriched its findings. However, in spite of the limitations, the present research provides useful information because it is the first study that examines framing of devolution in Kenya.

Based on the current frame analysis, it would be interesting to examine in future how other media platforms such as broadcast and new media (Facebook and Twitter) cover devolution. This will further explicate the negative tone of the coverage of development news.

Second, while this investigation has examined the dominant frames in the coverage of devolution as well as news sources of devolution, future studies need to examine whether there is an association or causality between the news sources and media frames. This requires research that goes beyond content analyses and that combines studies of news production and media content.

Third, the results further establish that with the onset of devolution, officials sources is a large and heterogeneous category, suggesting that it is time to move the
discussion towards research and theory that explores differences within the different sets of official sources and their antecedents.

Lastly, there is need for a qualitative study so as to ascertain whether or not journalists are aware of the philosophy and principles of development journalism, and depending on the outcome institute the relevant response.
References


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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Six Constructed-Week Sampling

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Appendix 2: Coding Protocol

Newspaper Framing of Devolution as a New Development Concept in Kenya, 2013-2017

Code Book

The purpose of this study is to investigate the newspaper framing of devolution in Kenya between 2013 and 2017. Specifically, the study examined five things: (a) the frames which newspaper journalists used in the four-year coverage of devolution; (b) through the lenses of attribution of responsibility frame, who were the most blamed actors for the problems that faced the new development concept of devolution; (c) whether the coverage of devolution was framed more from an episodic or thematic perspectives; (d) whether the coverage was more negative or positive; and (e) the major sources of news in the coverage of devolution stories.

Conflict frame

The ‘conflict’ frame emphasizes conflict or controversy between individuals, groups or institutions. The political elite reduce complex issues into a simple conflict of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. The ‘conflict’ frame addresses the following questions:

- Does the story reflect disagreement between the parties/individuals/groups? Yes/No
- Do the parties in conflict blame one another for the issue? Yes/No
- Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the issue? Yes/No
- Does the story refer to winners and losers? Yes/No

Economic consequences frame

The ‘economic consequence’ frame presents an event, problem or issue in terms of the economic consequences it will have on an individual, group or institution. The ‘economic consequences’ raises the following questions:

- Does the story state the economic benefit of devolution? Yes/No
- Does the story indicate economic consequences of devolution in the country? Yes/No
- Does the story emphasize the impact of devolution on meeting the plan designed to ensure sustainable economic development in the country? Yes/No

Human interest frame

The ‘human interest’ frame presents an issue from a more emotional point of view. The human interest frame raises the following questions:

- Does the story go into the private or personal life of those involved? Yes/No
- Does the story mention a human example or give a “human face” on the issue? Yes/No
• Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue? Yes/No

**Development frame**

The ‘development’ frame focuses on issues which have an impact on Kenya’s development efforts. The development frame raises the following questions:

• Does the story concentrate on issues which have an impact on Kenya’s development efforts? Yes/No
• Does the story focus on improving food security and reducing extreme hunger? Yes/No
• Does the story focus on achieving or improving universal education (primary/secondary)/healthcare (reducing child mortality/combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases)? Yes/No
• Does the story focus on achieving or improving infrastructure (roads/markets/hospitals/schools/houses)/ access to water and sanitation? Yes/No
• Does the story focus on promoting gender equality and empowering women? Yes/No
• Does the story focus on conserving and enhancing the resource base? Yes/No

**Advocacy frame**

The ‘advocacy’ frame provides citizens with information on devolution and promote policy change. The advocacy frame raises the following questions:

• Does the story give more information/simplify/popularize the concept/idea of devolution? Yes/No
• Does the story suggest policy changes in the country regarding devolution issue? Yes/No
• Does the story positively advocate/champion for devolution? Yes/No

**Attribution of responsibility frame**

The ‘attribution of responsibility’ frame means that blame was assigned to one of the many actors involved in the implementation of devolution. It addresses such questions as the following:

• Does the story suggest that some level of government has the ability to implement devolution? Yes/No
• Does the story suggest some level of government is responsible for the issue? Yes/No
• Does the story suggest the general community is responsible for the issue? Yes/No
• Does the story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue? Yes/No
Through attribution of responsibility, who is most blamed for the problems facing devolution?

1. National executive officer: This means an official of the Jubilee administration under the leadership of President Uhuru Kenyatta. This includes the president, deputy president, the attorney general, secretary to the cabinet, director of public prosecution, cabinet secretaries, principal secretaries and an employ of the Public Service Commission.

2. Officer of Parliament: This means members of Parliament (MPs), senators and an employee of the Parliamentary Service Commission.

3. Officer of independent institutions and commissions: This means officials of the following independent institutions established by the Constitution of Kenya (2010): the Auditor General; the Controller of the Budget; the Kenya National Human Rights and Equality Commission; the National Land Commission; the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission; the Judicial Service Commission; the Commission on Revenue Allocation; the Salaries and Remuneration Commission; the Teachers Service Commission; and the National Police Service Commission.

4. County executive officer: This means an official of the county executive under the leadership of the respective governor. This includes the governor, the deputy governor, county executive committee members, county secretary, county chief officers, an employ of the county public service board, and sub-county, ward and village administrators.

5. County legislature officer: This means an official of the county assemblies. This includes the elected members of the respective wards, and an employee of the county assembly service board.

6. Non-governmental officer: This means officials who work for institutions which are not part of the government and non-profit making.

7. Researchers and researches: This means individuals who have conducted studies on devolutions as well as the reports on devolution.

8. Religious leaders: This means individuals who are recognized by religious institutions as having some authority within that body.

9. Community leaders: This means individuals who are perceived to represent the ward/constituency/district/subcounty/county but is not a member of the national or county government.

10. Experts: This means those with specialized knowledge on different subjects that touch on devolution.

11. Community members: This means the ordinary citizens.

12. Businesspeople: This means individual who engage in for profit business in different parts of the country.

Positive mention (positive valence)

Positive mention refers to the depiction of a story on devolution in good light – for example, supporting devolution. For example, supporting devolution and its outcomes
Negative mention (negative valence)

Negative framing occurs when a story on devolution is mentioned in bad light – for example, disapproval of devolution. For example, disapproving devolution and its outcomes.

Episodic vs thematic

Episodic framing involves storytelling in which an issue is presented in a specific event or case that illustrates the issue. The episodic coverage raises the following questions:

- Does the story focus on individual responsibility/personal stories/individual cases? Yes/No
- Does the story focus on a specific event or issue? Yes/No

Thematic framing refers to framing that denotes the story by exhibiting societal context of the issue. The episodic coverage raises the following questions:

- Does the story focus on social responsibility/historical data/statistics/expert interviews? Yes/No
- Does the story provide the context of the circumstance within which an event takes place? Yes/No

Who speaks about devolution

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**Unit of analysis**

1. Frame: A paragraph. The frame should count once in a paragraph even if it appears more than once (in a paragraph). In cases where the four frames appear in the same paragraph, they should be coded independent.
2. Frame type (episodic or thematic): A news article. Only the episodic/thematic frames are coded per news story.
3. Positive/negative mentions: A paragraph. Any positive or negative mention will only count once in a single paragraph. If an issue is mentioned more than once in a paragraph in a positive or a negative manner, the mentions will be counted only once.
4. Actor: A paragraph. An actor should count once in a paragraph even if the actor appears more than once (in a paragraph).
### Code Sheet

A. Name of coder

B. Article Number

C. Name of the newspaper

D. Title of the article

E. Date of the newspaper in which the story appears

F. How many times did the story refer to the ‘advocacy’, ‘attribution of responsibility’, ‘conflict’, ‘development’ and ‘economic consequences’ frames?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Times</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attribution of responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic consequences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human interest</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

G. How many times was devolution mentioned?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Times</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negatively</td>
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H. How many times was devolution covered?

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematically</td>
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<tr>
<td>Episodically</td>
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I. Through attribution of responsibility, who is the most blamed for the problems facing devolution?

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<tr>
<th>Blame area</th>
<th>Blamed</th>
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<tr>
<td>National executive officials</td>
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J. Who speaks about devolution?

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Appendix 3: Institutional Introduction Letter

November 6th, 2018

The National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
Off Waiyaki Way
Upper Kabete
P. O. Box 30023-00110
Nairobi, Kenya

Dear Sir/Madam:

Re: Roma Oting

This is to confirm that the above-mentioned person is a student (ID 9640136) pursuing M.A. Communication Studies in the Journalism and Corporate Communication Department at the United States International University-Africa.

His thesis proposal titled “Newspaper Framing of Devolution as a New Concept of Development: The Case of Kenya, 2013-2017” has successfully been defended and approved for further research.

Any assistance accorded to him is highly appreciated. In case of any questions, don’t hesitate to contact me via the contacts provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Kaika Ireri, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Journalism & Mass Communication
Chair, Journalism & Corporate Communication Department
School of Communication, Cinematics & Creative Arts
United States International University-Africa
P. O. Box 14614-00100
Nairobi, Kenya
Cell Phone: +254-718-223-866, Office Phone: +254-20-3600766
E-mail: kireri@usi.ac.ke
Appendix 4: National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
Research Authorization Letter

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Ref No: NACOSTI/P/18/79399/26935

Jimmy Oyugi Ochieng
United States International University
P.O. Box 14634- 00800
NAIROBI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “Newspaper framing of devolution as a new concept of development: The case of Kenya, 2013-2017,” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Nairobi County for the period ending 10th December, 2019.

You are advised to report to the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Nairobi County before embarking on the research project.

Kindly note that, as an applicant who has been licensed under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 to conduct research in Kenya, you shall deposit a copy of the final research report to the Commission within one year of completion. The soft copy of the same should be submitted through the Online Research Information System.

GODFREY P. KALERWA MSc., MBA, MKIM
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:
The County Commissioner
Nairobi County.

The County Director of Education
Nairobi County.