

# Media's Role in Televised Media Coverage and Its Influence on Terrorist Attacks in Nairobi County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

With the turn of the century, Kenya's capital, Nairobi, has had its share of terrorist activity. Due to their nature, global media houses have centred on these occurrences as they have formed the focal point during their immediacy. This has led to the rise of media; in all its variety, as a reliable and truthful source of information: on the other hand, terrorists have used the media as a veritable and strong propaganda tool. This is in line with the main aim and intent of terrorism; the spread of fear and it also feeds to the belief by various terrorist groups that media is one of their biggest investments. This study sought to examine media's role in televised media coverage and its influence on terrorist attacks in Nairobi County, Kenya. The sample size for the study was derived from 110 officers from the Anti-Terror Police Unit, a section of the Directorate of Criminal Investigations and informants numbering to 14 from television editors, freelance reporters, and across civil society. The data was collected through questionnaires and interview guides for the officers from ATPU and respondents from the media and civil society respectively. It was further analysed using SPSS and presented through the use of frequency distribution tables and bar graphs; other modes include inferential statistics of linear regression and Chi square. The study revealed that there was a significant effect on the security situation in Nairobi due to televised media coverage of terrorist attacks. The study revealed a significant relationship between media coverage of terrorist incidents and increased insecurity in Nairobi. ( $\chi^2 = 9.499a$ ,  $p = 0.023$ ). The recommendations include the development of proportionality in the reporting on terrorist attacks. This is because an overemphasis on terrorist threats has an inadvertent advancement of terrorism and terrorist activities. There is therefore a need for care by journalists lest they be used as vehicles of propaganda by terrorists. This is due to the power that is inherent in misinformation in denying the general public independent reporting and the resultant understanding that comes with it. It is recommended that there be a limit as to the amount and type of information released to the media and eventually to the public in the event of a terrorist attack; this helps in averting the spread of terrorist propaganda and the misinformation of the public.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

It is inarguable that media plays a central place in the politics of nations and the world at large. Since the time print and broadcast media came into being, they have been used both for good and bad ends. The capacity of media as a galvanizing and informative tool has coexisted with its capacity to be misused as a means to spread and entrench negative propaganda. For example, the swift and wide-reaching capacity of radio was successfully used by the Nazi propaganda team to spread its vile doctrine (Abadie, 2006), by the Interahamwe militia in Rwanda in the build-up and during the country's genocide in 1994 (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014; Levy, 2016), and also during the Balkan Wars in the 1990's; specifically in Croatia (Doward, 2015). Despite time and space being dedicated to the above use of media in propaganda, it can be said that not much literature and research has been devoted to the link between terrorism and media coverage. This is however does not demote that there lacks allusion to such dynamism (e.g., see Rather, 2012; Doward, 2015, Levy, 2016; Rudoy, 2016).

As has been seen above, the media wields a strong and central influence in the news content that will be disseminated to the populace: this in turn influences belief patterns and can be used to set and deliver certain nationalistic and global agenda.