



A Peer Reviewed International Journal of Asian
Academic Research Associates

AARJSH
ASIAN ACADEMIC RESEARCH
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL
SCIENCE & HUMANITIES



AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRINT MEDIA'S COVERAGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES IN KENYA

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Abstract

This study sought to find out how issues of environmental sustainability are reported and framed by the print media in Kenya with a specific focus on the coverage of the Mau Forest evictions that were carried out between November 2009 and December 2009. The study employed a mixed methods research approach where content analysis and guiding schedule of questions as data collection approaches and quantitative methods for data presentation. Through a census, the study identifies 202 articles from the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* of between November and December 2009. The time frame was chosen for the study based on the time when the evictions occurred while the two newspaper dailies were arrived at due to the fact that they were two of the biggest papers with regards to national circulation. The study developed a guiding schedule of questions to capture the following important variables of the study: Frequency (amount) of environmental issues coverage; prominence given to environmental sustainability (determined by the size of space and section occupied by the story); themes and frames emanating from the stories and the social issues that have a bearing on the coverage of environmental sustainability issues. Data was then analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The analysis showed that the majority of frames had political themes. There was a frequency of straight news items as compared to opinions and editorials and the placement of articles on environmental sustainability was not prioritized as majority of the articles were in the inside pages. This study concludes that Kenyan newspapers inadequately cover environmental sustainability issues and hence limit popular dissemination of knowledge of the same while suppressing public participation. In order to change this, Kenyan newspapers ought to widen their coverage of environmental sustainability issues. It also recommends that newspapers frame articles more as conservation and environmental sustainability in addition to giving readers more say, involvement and bigger participation in environmental sustainability issues.

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