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Discursive Construction of Femicide in Selected Kenyan Magazines: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract
This study examines the discursive construction of femicide in two selected prominent Kenyan magazines: *The Parents Magazine*-Kenya and *True Love East Africa*. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a theoretical framework, with particular emphasis on approaches developed by Fairclough, van Dijk, and Wodak, the research investigates how language choices in media reporting shape public perception of gender-based violence, particularly femicide. Analysis of articles published in 2019 reveals several key discursive strategies, including sensationalisation, victim vulnerability framing, and occasional victim-blaming language. The findings demonstrate how media discourse both reflects and reinforces existing gender power dynamics and social attitudes toward violence against women. This study contributes to the growing body of research on media representation of gender-based violence in the African context and highlights the need for more sensitive and responsible reporting practices. The study is specifically beneficial to the scholarship on femicide, media discourse, and gender-based violence in Kenya. Recommendations include media literacy programs, gender-sensitive reporting guidelines, and public awareness campaigns to challenge harmful discourses surrounding femicide.

Key terms: Critical discourse analysis, femicide, gender-based violence, Kenyan magazines, media discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Femicide, according to Radford and Russell (1992), is defined as "the misogynistic killing of women by men. Russell (2001) also defines femicide as the killing of females by males because they are female. Femicide represents an extreme manifestation of gender-based violence. In Kenya, cases of femicide have raised significant concern, with media outlets increasingly reporting such incidents. How these cases are reported and discussed in public forums influences societal perceptions and responses to gender-based violence. This is the motivation for the current study.

Media discourse plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and reinforcing or challenging existing social structures and ideologies (Fairclough, 2010). The language used to describe incidents of violence against women can normalise such violence, contribute to victim-blaming, or alternatively, raise awareness and advocate for social change. This study examines how femicide is discursively constructed in two prominent Kenyan magazines, *The Parents Magazine-Kenya (PM) and True Love East Africa (TL)*, to understand how media representations both reflect and perpetuate social attitudes toward gender-based violence.

The purpose of this research is threefold: first, to analyse the linguistic choices and discursive strategies employed in reporting femicide cases; second, to examine how these linguistic choices reflect broader societal attitudes toward gender and violence; and third, to explore how media discourse can be transformed to contribute to the prevention of femicide and other forms of gender-based violence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global, Regional and Kenyan Context of Femicide

Femicide, the gender-related killing of women and girls, represents the most extreme form of violence against women and the ultimate manifestation of gender inequality and discrimination (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2012). The term was first introduced by feminist author Diana Russell in 1976 to describe the killing of females by males because they are female, thereby politicising these murders as products of patriarchal systems (Russell & Harmes, 2001). Since then, the concept has evolved to encompass various forms of gender-related killings, including intimate partner femicide, honour killings, dowry-related femicide, and femicide linked to organised crime (Laurent et al., 2013).

Global statistics indicate the pervasiveness of this phenomenon. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC] (2019), approximately 87,000 women were intentionally killed in 2017, with more than half (58%) killed by intimate partners or family members. This translates to 137 women being killed every day by someone they know and should be able to trust. The UN 2025 report revealed that the number of women killed daily now exceeds 137; the report indicates that the numbers are rising daily. Corradi et al. (2016) argue that femicide constitutes a global phenomenon that transcends geographical boundaries and socioeconomic contexts, though its manifestations may vary across different cultural and legal settings.

Research on femicide has proliferated in recent decades, with significant contributions from various disciplines including criminology, sociology, public health, and gender studies. Scholars such as Campbell et al. (2003) have identified risk factors associated with intimate partner femicide, including prior domestic violence, access to firearms, threats with weapons, controlling behaviours, and separation after cohabitation. Weil (2016) further developed a comprehensive typology of femicide that includes categories such as intimate partner femicide, family femicide, femicide by other known perpetrators, and femicide by unknown perpetrators, highlighting the diverse contexts in which gender-based killings occur. The 2025 UN report on femicide estimates that approximately 50,000 women and girls were killed by intimate partners or family members in 2024, constituting around 60 % of all intentional killings of women and girls, meaning the domestic sphere remains a central context for lethal violence

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa [UNECA] (2017), violence against women remains pervasive across the African continent, with intimate partner violence affecting 36.6 per cent of ever-partnered women. While continent-wide statistics specifically on femicide are limited due to data collection challenges, country-specific studies reveal alarming rates. In South Africa,

for instance, Abrahams et al. (2013) found that a woman is killed by her intimate partner every eight hours, one of the highest rates of intimate partner femicide globally. Mathews et al. (2015) conducted a retrospective national study of female homicide in South Africa and identified significant risk factors including prior intimate partner violence, relationship problems, and perpetrator alcohol abuse. Their research highlighted the intersection of gender inequality, poverty, and social norms that normalise violence as contributing factors to the high femicide rates.

East Africa presents a complex landscape regarding femicide, with varying prevalence rates, manifestations, and responses across different countries. In Tanzania, Krug et al. (2002) reported that femicide often occurs within the context of intimate partner violence, with additional factors such as witchcraft accusations particularly affecting older women. Mgbako et al. (2008) documented how women labelled as witches in Tanzania face extreme forms of violence, including murder, highlighting the intersection of gender, age, and traditional beliefs in femicide cases. In Uganda, studies by Koenig et al. (2003) found that patriarchal attitudes and acceptance of violence against women significantly contribute to high rates of intimate partner violence, creating conditions where femicide can occur.

Kenya has a particularly complex history regarding gender-based violence and femicide, influenced by colonial legacies, cultural practices, economic factors, and legal frameworks. The historical context of femicide in Kenya can be traced to colonial-era policies that undermined women's status and rights, as documented by Musila (2015). Colonial laws regarding marriage, property ownership, and citizenship reinforced patriarchal control over women, creating conditions where violence against women could flourish with impunity. Post-independence Kenya maintained many of these discriminatory legal structures, with women's rights only gradually being recognised through various legal reforms. Kameri-Mbote (2000) analysed how customary laws often discriminated against women in matters of inheritance, marriage, and divorce, creating economic vulnerability that increased women's risk of experiencing violence, including fatal violence.

Early studies on femicide in Kenya were limited, with most research focusing on general domestic violence rather than fatal outcomes specifically. Silberschmidt (2001) examined changing gender relations in rural Kenya and found that economic changes had undermined traditional male roles, leading to increased violence against women as men attempted to reassert their authority. While not focusing specifically on femicide, this research highlighted conditions that could escalate to fatal violence.

More systematic documentation of femicide in Kenya began in the early 2000s. According to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2003 (Central Bureau of Statistics et al., 2004), 40 per cent of ever-married women reported experiencing physical violence from their husbands or partners, with 16 per cent reporting severe physical violence. While this survey did not specifically measure femicide, it established the prevalence of severe intimate partner violence that could potentially lead to fatal outcomes. Njuki et al. (2012) conducted one of the first comprehensive studies focusing specifically on femicide in Kenya, examining cases reported in the media between 2008 and 2010. Their findings indicated that most victims were killed by intimate partners, with jealousy, suspected infidelity, and the woman's attempt to end the relationship being common motives. The study also revealed that most femicide cases occurred in private spaces, particularly the victim's home, highlighting the intimate nature of these crimes. The 2024 UN report on drugs, crime and women revealed that Africa, including East Africa, was leading globally in femicide cases, with 21,700 cases in 2023. This was considered alarming and needed serious attention.

The legal framework addressing femicide in Kenya has evolved significantly over time. The Sexual Offences Act of 2006 and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 2015 represent important milestones in addressing gender-based violence, though neither explicitly addresses femicide as a specific crime. These laws provide some recourse for victims of gender-based violence; however, they do not adequately address the specific context and severity of femicide, particularly in relation to prevention and punishment. In recent years, femicide has attracted increased attention in Kenya amid concerns about a perceived upward trend in cases.

In a groundbreaking study, Musila (2019) conducted a critical analysis of newspaper coverage of femicide cases in Kenya between 2016 and 2018. Her findings revealed problematic patterns in media reporting, including sensationalism, victim-blaming, and failure to contextualise femicide within broader patterns of gender-based violence. This research highlighted how media discourse can contribute to normalising violence against women and obscuring its systemic nature. It is in these analytical gaps that the current study found relevance.

Recent high-profile femicide cases have brought increased attention to this issue in Kenya. The murder of university student Ivy Wangechi in April 2019, businesswoman Monica Kimani in September 2018, and Sharon Otieno in September 2018 sparked public outrage and demands for action to address femicide. These cases highlighted patterns of extreme violence against women and revealed how femicide often occurs within contexts of intimate relationships, educational settings, and workplaces. Civil society organisations have played a crucial role in documenting and addressing femicide in Kenya. Similarly, the Coalition on Violence Against Women [COVAW] (2020) has conducted community-based research on femicide and provided support services for families of victims.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the risk of femicide in Kenya, as in many countries globally. According to UN Women Kenya (2021), the pandemic and associated lockdown measures led to a significant increase in domestic violence reports, creating conditions where women faced greater risk of fatal violence.

The policy response to femicide in Kenya has evolved in recent years, though significant gaps remain. The National Policy on Gender and Development (Republic of Kenya, 2019) acknowledges gender-based violence, including femicide, as a priority issue requiring a comprehensive response.

The literature on femicide in Kenya reveals several key trends and challenges. First, femicide in Kenya predominantly occurs within intimate relationships, highlighting the need for interventions that address patriarchal attitudes and controlling behaviours within these contexts. Second, media representation of femicide often reinforces problematic narratives about gender and violence, suggesting the need for more responsible reporting practices. This motivated the current study, which looks at how the reporting is done. Third, the legal and policy framework, while improving, still contains significant gaps in addressing the specific contextual factors that contribute to femicide. Finally, there is growing recognition of the need for comprehensive, multi-sectoral approaches to femicide prevention that address root causes while also providing immediate protection for women at risk. In view of the foregoing discussion, there is a need to note that more research has been done on factors that lead to femicide and the statistics involved than on the way media presents Femicide, maintaining social structures and ideologies that trivialise this serious crime against women. This is a gap that motivated the current study.

Media Representation of Gender-Based Violence

Research on media representation of gender-based violence has identified several problematic patterns. Meyers (1997) found that news media often sensationalise violence against women, focusing on graphic details while neglecting the structural factors that contribute to such violence. Similarly, Bullock and Cubert (2002) analysed newspaper coverage of domestic violence homicides and found that reports often minimised the severity of the crime, blamed victims, and relied on official sources rather than domestic violence experts. This motivates the current study. In another related study, Musila (2015) analysed Kenyan media coverage of femicide cases and found that reports often framed such killings as isolated incidents rather than manifestations of systemic gender inequality.

Gender Stereotyping in Media

Examination of gender stereotyping in media highlights how these stereotypes are perpetuated and their implications for individuals and society. Ferguson et al. (1990) found that while advertisements portraying women as subordinate to men had decreased, there was an increase in advertisements portraying women as sex objects. This finding suggests a shift in the nature of gender stereotyping rather than its elimination. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) report

(2023) states that media reports lack contextual and historical analysis, which distorts public interpretation and understanding of gender based violence and Femicide. The report also notes that unprofessional reporting can reinforce stereotypes and lead audiences to misattribute blame. *The* Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) report of 2025 reports that media worldwide rarely reports on gender – based violence despite its prevalence. The report also notes that the stories that appear often lack depth and do not challenge existing gender norms or structural causes of violence. The UNESCO 2025 report reveals that there is a lot of violence against female journalists; this includes online-related abuse. These media-related abuses reflect a broader pattern of media and platform environments that normalise or amplify gendered hostility.

Corrigall et al. (2007) explored how traditional stereotypes are perpetuated within communities, finding that women often contribute to the maintenance of harmful gender norms by pressuring other women to conform to traditional expectations. This dynamic is particularly relevant in understanding how media discourse about femicide reflects broader societal attitudes toward gender roles and women's agency.

While significant research has examined media representation of gender-based violence globally, the current study found limited research specifically addressing the discursive construction of femicide in Kenyan print media. This study fills this gap by analysing how two prominent Kenyan magazines frame femicide cases and what these framings reveal about societal attitudes toward gender and violence. Additionally, while previous studies have often focused on news reporting, this research examines magazines that specifically target women readers, providing insight into how gender-based violence is discussed in publications aimed at the primary victims of such violence.

Most previous research on media representation of femicide has focused on news reporting in mainstream outlets. This study uniquely examined magazines specifically targeting women (The Parents Magazine-Kenya and True Love East Africa), providing insight into how gender-based violence is discursively constructed in publications aimed primarily at those who are most often victims of such violence. Unlike many studies that focus solely on problematic media representations, this research also identifies emerging counter-discourses that challenge traditional gender ideologies, addressing a gap in understanding how media can potentially contribute to social change regarding femicide.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Strategies in Femicide Media Reporting

CDA provides useful tools in its framework for analysing and understanding how the media, especially magazines, present the victims and perpetrators of femicide. The tools in the framework can also produce or challenge gendered power relations. In view of CDA, news reports are not neutral accounts of events, but an assessment of how linguistic choices, agency, evaluation, patterns and social change shape interpretations of violence against women (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993, 2008). The feminist CDA approach explains ways in which discourse produces or contests gendered power, ideology, and inequality (Lazar, 2005)

There are several discursive strategies that are useful in the analysis of femicide reporting. These strategies include: Sensationalisation, Victim-vulnerability, Victim-blaming, euphemisation, and normalisation. In sensationalisation, there is use of emotional or sentimental headlines, graphic and visually striking images and dramatic expressions that attract attention. This kind of language may increase visibility of the case in question, but on the other hand it may turn femicide into a spectacle and move the attention from gendered violence and inequality to just details of a dramatic event. (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Secondly, there is victim- vulnerability framing. In this case, the female persons are presented basically as helpless, defenceless, innocent and passive victims. CDA provides a means of looking at the gendered power relations underlying femicide and not just reducing the victim to a figure of suffering. The analysis in this case also considers whether women are presented as social actors with agency, identities, relationships, and even voices. Feminist CDA is valuable mainly because it asks how apparently sympathetic representations may still reproduce

patriarchal assumptions and vulnerability (Lazar, 2005).

The other discursive strategy is victim- blaming. Some reports front women's relationships, clothing, sexuality, movements, or perceived ways that imply responsibility for the violence committed against them. Such representations produce patriarchal tendencies, shifting discursive responsibility away from the perpetrators. CDA therefore examines not only what information is included, but also which explanations are treated as relevant, credible, or newsworthy (Fairclough, 1995; Lazar, 2005).

There is also perpetrator representation and agency. News discourse can highlight or obscure perpetrator responsibility through linguistic choices. For instance, "A man killed his partner" clearly highlights the actor, whereas "A woman was found dead" underplays the magnitude of the action by the agent. Examining transitivity, active and passive constructions, nominalisation, and actor deletion can reveal how responsibility is assigned or obscured (Fairclough, 1995; Machin & Mayr, 2012). CDA also makes it possible to evaluate how media discourse constructs knowledge about crime and legitimises certain interpretations of perpetrators, victims, and social causes (van Dijk, 2008; Statham, 2016).

Finally, in this study, euphemisation and normalisation are considered. Common phrases such as "domestic dispute" or "crime of passion" frame femicide as a private conflict, an emotional loss of control, or an isolated case rather than gender-based violence. The analysis examines whether such expressions minimise the seriousness of the perpetrator's actions and detach individual cases from wider structures of gender inequality. In this regard, CDA treats language as socially consequential: repeated portrayals or descriptions can normalise certain understandings of violence and make alternative explanations less visible (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008).

Reports in many cases privilege the voices of police officers, relatives, neighbours, or perpetrators while marginalising women's organisations, survivors, and gender-based-violence specialists. CDA examines whose accounts are legitimised, whose interpretations are left out, and how the distribution of voices shapes public understanding (van Dijk, 1993; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Feminist CDA further questions how source hierarchies reproduce institutional or patriarchal authority by presenting official voices as objective while treating feminist or survivor-centred perspectives as secondary (Lazar, 2005). All these strategies enabled the researcher to investigate how femicide reporting assigns agency and responsibility, constructs victimhood, legitimises particular explanations of violence, and reproduces or challenges gender hierarchies.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used in this study and offers a valuable framework for examining how language use in media reflects and reinforces social inequalities and power relations. Fairclough's (2010, 2015) approach emphasises the relationship between linguistic choices, power, and social structures. His three-dimensional model examines discourse as text, discursive practice, and social practice, highlighting how linguistic features contribute to the construction and maintenance of social realities.

Van Dijk's (1998, 2014, 2015) socio-cognitive approach focuses on how discourse reflects and perpetuates social representations and ideologies. He emphasises the role of mental models and social cognition in discourse comprehension and production, as well as how discourse contributes to the reproduction of social power and dominance. Van Dijk's work is particularly relevant for understanding how media discourse shapes public perceptions of gender-based violence and Femicide.

Wodak's (2011, 2015, 2020) discourse-historical approach examines how discursive strategies construct identities and power relations within specific socio-historical contexts. Her work highlights the importance of contextualising discourse within broader social and historical frameworks, making it valuable for analysing how media representations of femicide reflect and reinforce gender hierarchies and social norms.

Justification for the Study

As documented in the literature review, Kenya has experienced alarming rates of femicide, with the National Police Service (2021) noting a 21% increase in

gender-related homicides from 2020 to 2021. This troubling trend justifies research examining how media discourse may reflect and potentially influence societal attitudes toward femicide. Previous research by Musila (2019) identified problematic patterns in Kenyan newspaper coverage of femicide, including sensationalism and victim-blaming. This study builds on this foundation by examining whether similar patterns exist in women-oriented magazines and how these might be evolving. The study also contributes to the theoretical understanding of how CDA approaches can be applied to gender-based violence in non-Western contexts, addressing the geographical bias in much existing CDA research. As Kenya continues to develop policies addressing gender-based violence, including the National Policy on Gender and Development (2019), research on media discourse could inform more effective approaches to public awareness and education campaigns. In 2024, the DCI constituted a team to investigate the rising cases of Femicide in Kenya and identify strategies for curbing femicide.

This research therefore addresses significant gaps in the literature while responding to pressing social concerns regarding femicide in Kenya. It bridges theoretical frameworks from CDA with practical implications for media reporting and policy development, justifying its importance in both academic and practical contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research design, specifically Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), to examine how The Parents Magazine-Kenya and True Love East Africa construct femicide through discourse. CDA was selected as the theoretical and methodological framework because it focuses on how language reflects and reinforces social inequalities and power relations, making it particularly suitable for examining media discourse on gender-based violence. These magazines were selected due to their significant readership among women in Kenya and their focus on social issues affecting women. Articles that were analysed were selected purposively. The specific articles analysed included: *"Femicide and the Social Implications"* by Stephanie Odhiambo and Andanje Wobanda (*True Love East Africa, October 2019*). Stephanie Odhiambo and Andanje Wobanda give pointers on society's role and how killings can be stopped, suggesting the following:

Stop normalising gender-based violence, address mental illness issues, teach men from a young age that a woman is not property that one needs to invest in, stop victim blaming, stop sanitisation of perpetrators, legislation and policies, teach young men how to handle rejection (*True Love East Africa*, October 2019)

"Why are we disobeying God's commandment?" (*The Parents Magazine, October 2019, page 56*) gives a list of the following cases:

Dutch National Tob Cohen's body was found tied with ropes in a septic tank in his home in Nairobi on September 13, 2019, after being reported missing for over one month.

Moi University student Ivy Wangechi was hacked to death, and her body was dumped near Moi Referral Hospital in April this year.

39-year-old Mary Wambui was killed on January 26, 2019, by her husband at her lover's house in Nairobi.

Rongo University student Sharon Otieno, who was seven months pregnant, was abducted on September 3, 2018, killed, and her body was found at Kodera Forest.

On September 19, 2018, businesswoman Monica Nyawira Kimani's body was found tied up and stuffed in a bathtub in her apartment in Nairobi, with her throat slit.

Janet Wangui Wangechi, shot dead on May 20, 2013, at a city park in Nairobi.

24-year-old Lucy Njambi, driven away from her apartment compound on the outskirts of Nairobi on January 24, 2018, raped and forced to drink acid, then left for dead. She died the following day at Kiambu Hospital.

Nine–year–old Maribel Kapolon, a daughter of a Meru court magistrate, was kidnapped on her way from school, and her body was found on 16th September 2018 in Gitoro Forest in Meru.

Ann Gathoni and her children aged six and fourteen were strangled to death in Mururui village, Roysambu, Nairobi on May 6, 2018.

23-year-old Asone Wanjohi, shot five times by a police constable in September 2017 on a Nairobi Street.

Additional related content from these magazines, including personal narratives like that of Kamene Goro, was also analysed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how gender-based violence is discursively constructed.

The data were analysed using CDA approaches developed by Fairclough, van Dijk, and Wodak. The analysis focused on: examining how specific language choices, including vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical devices, contributed to the framing of femicide cases; identifying strategies such as sensationalisation, victim-blaming, depersonalisation, and contextualisation used in reporting femicide cases; analysing how the discourse reflected broader societal attitudes toward gender, power, and violence; and considering how the discourse was situated within the broader context of gender relations and violence against women in Kenya. The analysis involved close reading of the texts, identification of recurring patterns and themes, and interpretation of these patterns within the theoretical framework of CDA and gender studies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the selected magazine articles revealed several key findings regarding the discursive construction of femicide in Kenyan print media. The findings from this study reveal how media discourse on femicide in Kenyan magazines both reflects and reinforces existing gender power dynamics and social attitudes toward violence against women. This section discusses these findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

Linguistic Choices in Reporting Femicide

The articles employed specific linguistic devices that shaped the portrayal of femicide cases. In The Parents Magazine's October 2019 issue, the description of femicide cases included violent language such as "*hacked to death*," "*shot dead*," and "*strangled to death*." And, "*All the above killings are intentional, well planned and orchestrated in a precise move*." This use of graphic and violent language emphasises the severity of the crimes but may also contribute to sensationalisation and potential desensitisation of readers to gender-based violence and Femicide. The report seems to concentrate on the choice of lexical items rather than the weight of the matter, showing the criminal as an organised, intelligent person who can plan and orchestrate crime in a precise move.

Temporal and geographical references were consistently included, framing the incidents within specific contexts. For example, "*Moi University student, Ivy Wangechi hacked to death and her body dumped near Moi Referral Hospital in April this year*" and "*Dutch National Tob Cohen's body found tied with ropes in a septic tank in his home in Nairobi on September 13, 2019*." These specifics contribute to the framing of femicide cases as discrete incidents rather than manifestations of systemic gender inequality.

The use of violent and graphic language in reporting femicide cases aligns with Fairclough's (2010, 2015) understanding of how linguistic choices shape discourse and contribute to the construction of social realities. The emphasis on brutal details may sensationalise violence against women, potentially desensitising readers to its severity, as suggested by Meyers (1997). This sensationalisation can divert attention from the structural factors underlying femicide, such as gender inequality and patriarchal power structures.

The specific temporal and geographical references in femicide reporting frame these incidents as discrete events rather than manifestations of systemic gender inequality. This finding echoes Musila's (2015) observation that Kenyan media often portrays femicide cases as isolated incidents. Such framing can obscure the broader patterns of gender-based violence and hinder understanding of femicide as a social problem requiring systemic solutions.

Discursive Strategies in Femicide Reporting

Several discursive strategies were identified in the magazine articles:

Sensationalisation
The detailed descriptions of violent acts, such as "*throat slit*" and "*forced to drink acid*," sensationalise the violence, potentially drawing attention to the graphic nature of the crimes rather than their social implications.

Victim Vulnerability Framing
The articles often emphasised victim vulnerability, noting factors such as *pregnancy ("seven months pregnant")* and *age ("nine-year-old")*. This framing highlights the heinous nature of the crimes but may inadvertently reinforce notions of female vulnerability.

Relational Framing
Some femicide cases were framed within interpersonal relationships, such as "*killed by her husband at her lover's house*," which may implicitly suggest victim responsibility or justification for violence based on perceived moral transgressions.

Call for Social Action
In the *True Love East Africa* article, it is noted that there was a clear call for social action to address femicide, with suggestions including "*stop normalizing gender based violence, address mental illness issues, teach men from a young age that a woman is not a property that one needs to invest in, stop victim blaming, stop sanitisation of perpetrators, legislations and policies, teach young men how to handle rejection*." This indicates an attempt to challenge existing discourses and advocate for social change.

The emphasis on victim vulnerability in femicide reporting reflects van Dijk's (1998, 2014, 2015) socio-cognitive approach to discourse analysis. By highlighting factors such as pregnancy and youth, the discourse constructs victims as inherently vulnerable, potentially reinforcing gender stereotypes of women as passive and in need of protection.

The framing of femicide within interpersonal relationships, particularly with emphasis on perceived moral transgressions (e.g., extramarital affairs), aligns with Bullock and Cubert's (2002) finding that media reports often implicitly blame victims for the violence they experience. This discursive strategy can contribute to victim-blaming attitudes and deflect attention from perpetrator responsibility.

However, the explicit call for social action in the True Love East Africa article represents a departure from these problematic discourses. By advocating for measures such as stopping the normalisation of gender-based violence and challenging the notion of women as property, the article aligns with Wodak's (2011, 2015, 2020) emphasis on discourse as a site of resistance and social change. This suggests that while problematic discourses persist, there are also emerging counter-discourses that challenge traditional gender ideologies.

Representation of Gender Dynamics and Power Relations
The articles reflected and reinforced certain gender dynamics and power relations:

Women as Subordinate
As noted in the analysis, "it can clearly be inferred that the women are portrayed as subordinate to men and that is why such cruelty and violence is directed at them." This representation reinforces traditional gender hierarchies and potentially normalises violence against women as an expression of male dominance.

Women's Role in Perpetuating Harmful Norms
The narrative about Kamene Goro highlights how women sometimes contribute to perpetuating harmful gender norms. As stated in the data, "Her fellow women advising her to hold onto the marriage portrays the traditional notion of a helpless woman holding onto the family hoping for things to change because the society does not expect a woman to initiate divorce or separation." This finding aligns with Corrigall et al.'s (2007) study on how traditional stereotypes are perpetuated within communities, enhancing harmful activities.

This highlights the complex ways in which gender ideologies are internalised and reproduced, not only through media discourse but also through interpersonal interactions. This finding extends beyond previous studies by illustrating how women may inadvertently contribute to their own oppression by reinforcing traditional gender expectations.

Ideological Underpinnings of Femicide Discourse
The articles revealed several ideological assumptions underlying the discourse on femicide:

Normalisation of Gender-Based Violence
The sheer number of femicide cases reported and the writer's observation that "*Have we lost humanity? Are we not shocked any more by the horrific deaths reported in our media?* ", suggest a societal desensitisation to gender-based violence.

Women as Property
The True Love East Africa article explicitly challenges the notion that "*a woman is not a property that one needs to invest in*," indicating that this ideology persists in Kenyan society and contributes to femicide.

Mental Health Discourse
The suggestion to "*address mental illness issues*" as a way to prevent femicide introduces a mental health discourse that may inadvertently pathologise individual perpetrators rather than addressing broader structural issues.

The ideological assumptions underlying the discourse on femicide, particularly the normalisation of gender-based violence and the conception of women as property, reflect van Dijk's (2005, 2015, 2020) understanding of how discourse perpetuates power relations. The expression of concern that society has become desensitised to gender-based violence suggests a recognition of this normalisation, which is a crucial first step toward challenging it.

The introduction of mental health discourse in discussing femicide prevention represents a departure from some previous studies. While this approach recognises the complexity of factors contributing to gender-based violence, it may inadvertently individualise what is fundamentally a social problem. This tension illustrates the challenges in developing comprehensive approaches to femicide prevention that address both individual and structural factors.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Conclusions: This study examined the discursive construction of femicide in two prominent Kenyan magazines, providing insights into how media discourse reflects and reinforces social attitudes towards gender-based violence. The findings indicate that media reporting on femicide employs linguistic choices and discursive strategies that may sensationalise violence against women and inadvertently contribute to victim-blaming. The discourse also reflects broader societal attitudes towards gender and violence, particularly the subordination of women and the normalisation of gender-based violence. However, alongside these problematic representations, emerging counter-discourses challenge traditional gender ideologies and advocate for social change. The findings further reveal that women themselves sometimes contribute to the perpetuation of harmful gender norms, highlighting the complex ways in which gender ideologies are internalised and reproduced. These conclusions demonstrate that media discourse on femicide is a complex site where traditional gender ideologies are both reinforced and challenged. Although problematic representations persist, efforts to develop more progressive and transformative discourses offer opportunities to address femicide and other forms of gender-based violence.

Recommendations: Several recommendations were drawn from the findings of this study for media practitioners, policymakers, and researchers:

Media practitioners should develop and implement gender-sensitive reporting guidelines that avoid sensationalisation, victim-blaming, and other harmful discursive practices when covering femicide cases. They should also focus on systemic factors contributing to femicide rather than framing such incidents as isolated events or attributing them solely to individual pathology. Finally, it is recommended that the media should amplify counter-discourses that challenge traditional gender ideologies and advocate for social change, providing platforms for voices that offer alternative perspectives on gender and violence.

For Policymakers, they could develop comprehensive approaches to femicide prevention that address both individual factors (such as mental health) and structural factors (such as gender inequality and patriarchal power structures). Policymakers should also **s**upport media literacy programs that help consumers critically analyse media representations of gender-based violence and recognise problematic discourses. Finally, they should implement public awareness campaigns that challenge harmful gender stereotypes and promote equitable gender relations.

By implementing these recommendations, it may be possible to transform media discourse on femicide from a site where harmful gender ideologies are reinforced to one where such ideologies are challenged and more equitable gender relations are promoted. This transformation could contribute to broader efforts to prevent femicide and other forms of gender-based violence in Kenya.

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