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Mass Media Framing of Climate Change Related Human-Wildlife Conflicts in Kenya

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Abstract

Majority of rural communities living adjacent to wildlife conservation areas are increasingly disgruntled with wildlife conservation because of the increasing competition poised by wildlife populations for over water, food and pasture. Extreme climate change events such as droughts are poised to aggravate conflicts over these resources in the coming decades. Wildlife conservation agencies are faced with a monumental task of safeguarding wildlife resources while ensuring that wild animals do not undermine social life, economic productivity and people's livelihoods against the backdrop of increasingly more frequent and prolonged droughts. In this paper we examine print media coverage to decipher how media frames, i) the causes of climate change related human-wildlife conflicts, ii) effects of climate change related human-wildlife conflicts, and iii) the mitigation to climate change related human-wildlife conflicts. We analyzed the discourses underlying climate change related wildlife conflicts stories in two Kenyan newspapers namely: the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. We used media framing theory and discourse analysis to explore key frames in relation to climate change related human-wildlife conflicts and solutions. Stories were analyzed using inductive and deductive codes, constant comparison and content analysis to explore themes. The stories revealed three main categories of causes, effects and mitigation strategies. There were five main causes of human wildlife conflict namely: human invasion to wildlife territories, people and animals scrambling for diminishing resources, institutional failures and in this regard KWS, droughts forcing animals to leave the parks, and construction of megaprojects. The category of effects had six sub-categories: loss of human lives and livelihoods, children dropping out of school, species depletion e.g., hippos and lions, and the fading glory of iconic conservation areas such as Masai Mara. The study identified these mitigation strategies: local community inclusion in conservation issues, the search for permanent solutions rather than temporary ones, engaging regional and international bodies in search for solutions such as ban of ivory items. Policy implications of the research findings are discussed in detail.

Key words: Climate change, human-wildlife conflicts, media framing, drought, vulnerability, Kenya