THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN COUNTERING POLITICAL AND TRIBAL CONFLICT IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT
Recently, the media has been a passive bystander as the country grappled with violent clashes of both political and tribal magnitude. This has been, perhaps, because the fourth estate has consistently failed to realize the power of persuasion it possesses in regard to shaping public opinion. The study thus sought to establish the role of the media in raising awareness in and countering propagation of political and tribal conflict in Kenya. Specifically, the study investigated the extent to which the media has succeeded in creating awareness about and conflict prevention; identified and describe the
methods employed by the media in creating awareness about conflict and analyzed the effectiveness of the methods and avenues employed by the media in creating conflict awareness and propagating cessation of conflict. The study took a content analysis design. The content of newspaper reports on raising awareness on political and tribal issues and related issues identified by the media were thus analyzed thematically. The study found that the media plays a critical role in sensitizing the citizenry on peace especially at the height of general elections. The study recommends that a broadcaster should be seen as an agent of social change and should discuss the social mobilization which may be able to bring about. The study further suggest that if we can look at radio as a development agent, can we then take this a step further and ask, or try to find, a methodology that looks at the broadcaster as peacemaking agent, or to assist in the maintenance of peace in a post-conflict thereby tapping into radio’s full potential. The study further recommends that when peace agreements are reached, efforts to sustain peace-building and enhance reconciliation and reconstruction are crucial.