

**MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF TERRORISM: A STUDY OF THE LIVED
EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIM RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS IN NAIROBI,
KENYA**

BY

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DECLARATION

Declaration by the Candidate

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DEDICATION

To my parents; Halima Jimale Dakane and Abdi Sheikh Yakub, who have gone through all odds to ensure that I went through formal education, despite the many challenges at the time. To my wife, Sahara Adan Hassan, who always stood by my side. To my sons; Azzam, Ammar and Aqeel and my only daughter, so far, Azzah Kati. To all my brothers and sisters, and my friends who always loved me unconditionally and whose believe and trust in me have inspired me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars with regards to media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya, against the backdrop of extensive global media attention to terrorism. In spite of a growing body of knowledge on this subject, predominantly in Western contexts, a critical gap remains in understanding how media representation of terrorism affects Muslim communities, particularly, Muslim religious scholars, who are often central to the narratives surrounding Islam and terrorism. The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars regarding media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya, and how these experiences shape their perception of the media. The following were the research questions: What are the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya? How do the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars manifest? How do the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars shape their perception of the media in Nairobi, Kenya? Phenomenology and Representation were used as the theories to structure the discussions around the lived experiences of the Muslim religious scholars in relations to media representation of terrorism. The study adopted the interpretive philosophical paradigm, hence the qualitative approach and the transcendental phenomenology method. The study involved 10 participants drawn from the community of Muslim religious scholars operating in six mosques and religious centers in Nairobi. The scholars were purposively sampled. The data was generated through in-depth interviews, analyzed thematically and presented in narrative form. The study found that Muslim religious scholars were of the view that the Kenyan media in Nairobi associated terrorism with the Islamic religion. The scholars were also of the view that the media stereotyped Muslims as terrorists or promoters of terrorism. These stereotypes had promoted Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments, leading to fears of discrimination and hate crimes. As a result, the relations between the scholars and public officials, as well as with leaders of other religious groups, had strained. The scholars also faced frustration and difficulties in using the media to clarify their position since the negative perception towards the media had led to a disconnection between the Kenyan media in Nairobi and a large section of its Muslim consumers. The study concludes that Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi experience media representations of terrorism as not only misaligned with their faith and identity, but as a daily site of negotiation, resistance, and meaning-making in a contested public sphere. Therefore, it is recommended that media practitioners and policy makers formulate guidelines and practices on terrorism reporting that are more inclusive and understanding to the sensitivities and experiences of the Muslim community in Kenya. There is also need for training and awareness creation for journalists and media users to understand the unique place Muslims occupy in the fight against terrorism and to foster dialogue between the Muslim community and media stakeholders in Kenya.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

In this chapter, the background to the study was discussed, highlighting academic and social context as well as the media in Kenya and the Muslim Religious Scholars in Nairobi, Kenya. The Statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study were presented, along with research questions, scope of the study and justification of the study. The significance and limitations of the study were also discussed.

1.1 Academic context

This study investigated the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars with regard to media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya. It sought to understand Kenyan media's coverage of terrorism as a phenomenon and how this is perceived by the Muslim religious scholars. Representation is an important part of the process by which meaning is produced, understood and exchanged between members of a certain culture (Hall et al, 2024). It also involves the use of selected words in a language as a way of communication, as well as the use of signs and pictures, which stand for or are used to convey to mean certain things (Hall, 2013). According to Stuart Hall (2013), representation includes how identities are represented and/or constructed within the text, and how this is framed in the processes of production, dissemination and reception, by people whose identities are also differentially marked in relation to demographic factors among others.

According to Stuart Hall (2013, p.15), representation means “using language to mention something meaningful about, or to represent, the planet meaningfully, to people.” It involves the issue of use of language, signs, and pictures, which stand for or represent certain things”. Hall further asserts that representation stands for the production of the meaning of certain concepts in our minds through words and language. It is the link between concepts and language, which enables us to refer to either the ‘real’ world; objects, people or events, or indeed to an imaginary world of fictional objects, people or events” (p.17). Through representation and sometimes stereotyping, the media has the ability to influence public perception and seriously impact on the standing of religious and minority groups by subjecting them to what can be referred to as exclusionary pressures (Hall, 1997 p.17)

Globally, media representation of terrorism has been a subject of great interest, because_it is within this cultural-sensitive paradigm of media studies that scholars came up with and studied the idea of media representation (Won, 2021). This idea has helped scholars to go beyond understanding media messages as simply a representation or dissemination of reality. Instead, representation arises or is embedded within the 24-hour live media stream as it establishes norms, patterns and common sense about people, groups and institutions in today’s complex society. The media creates representation as one of the main or central signifying practices for producing and disseminating shared meaning (Hall, 1997).

Modern mass media operates as a normalizing means for the issue of social construction of reality (Couldry at al 2022). The media outlets serve as important agents within the public process of creating, contesting or maintaining the civic discourse on social cohesion, tolerance, integration and international understanding.

Moreover, the media has the power to direct attention to and from public issues and it often determines which issues are going to be ignored or tackled by society.

In our media consumption-addicted and mediated society, much of what is seen and perceived as important by the society is determined often by the stories produced and disseminated by the media (Allen, 2019). Much of what audiences are aware of and care about is mostly pegged on the narratives, images and symbols in radio, television, film, music, and other media (Banet-Weiser & Higgins, 2019). According to Banet-Weiser & Higgins, how human beings construct their social identities and how they are available to understand what it means to be male, female, black, white, Asian, Latino, Native American even rural or urban is formed by manipulated texts produced by the media for audiences that are increasingly divided by the social constructions of race and gender. Media, in short, plays a key role in forming what ultimately come to represent our social realities.

According to Hall et al (2024), the issue of representation is fundamental for the culture, meaning and knowledge about ourselves and the world around us. Eagleton (1991) and Zizek (1989) indicate that beyond just mirroring reality, representations within the media; such as radio, film, television, photography and print journalism form reality and normalize specific ideologies or world-views. This view looks at the concept of ideology as a hegemonic and normalizing force in modern societies, as developed by cultural theorists (Eagleton, 1991; Zizek, 1989)

The mass media therefore, “sets the agenda” by deciding what issues are important and how to represent them, thus influencing the general public discourse (Barack Muluka, 2014). “Stereotyping serves to take care of the social and symbolic order and

sets up a symbolic frontier between the ‘normal’ and the ‘pathological’, the ‘acceptable’ and therefore the ‘unacceptable’, ‘us’ and ‘them’... (Hall et al , 2024).

Media serves as a crucial social need in times of crisis, including covering terror attacks, war on terror and its impact on the society. The media’s main role is to provide the general public with objective, timely and comprehensive information. The role of media isn't only about representing and depicting information and images; they also have the ability to shape opinions and presenting a particular version as reality (Kitching, Bowes, & Maclaren, 2021).

According to UNESCO (2011) report, the media can play the role of promoting co-existence, acceptance and tolerance within communities with differences. The media, therefore, needs to challenge existing attitudes and assumptions related to religious diversity. It has the responsibility of moving beyond normalized stereotypes and avoiding or doing away with anything that has the potential to breed mistrust and suspicion within communities of difference religious beliefs.

The media is, however, frequently accused of exaggerating terror incidents and misrepresenting the Islamic religion, which could provide terrorists with lifeblood or oxygen within the form of publicity (Feick et al 2021).

As a result, some scholars argue that if the media were to deny such coverage to terrorists, terrorism would cease to exist. “Since the press is the primary conduit connecting terrorists, the general public and government, violent incidents can advance the terrorists goals as long as these kinds of incidents are widely reported”. (Nacos, 1994)

According to Pasat (2024), researchers on the field of terrorism and its relations with the media believe that one among the reasons that motivates or encourages any terror acts of sabotage done by terrorists is for publicity and to attract society's attention. According to Barry Willey (2006), the media have a negative effect on handling terrorism, although the government often does some filtrations in selecting information to be disseminated for neutralization purpose. Mc Quail (1994) says in certain conditions, media can help the government in dealing with terror attacks by negatively portraying or giving a negative label or name to terror groups and generating some panic situations for terrorists through the information spread.

Ette (2024) claims that without media's collaboration with the terrorists by giving them publicity, terrorism would be impotent. The media often add to the moral confusion caused by the terrorism phenomenon by refusing to condemn their actions outright and by over-focusing on the terrorist demands and threats. This leads to the media glamorizing the terrorist acts and leaving terror victims forgotten. Barth (1969) says the media plays an outstanding role in making any terrorist operation a success, and this was one of the main reasons for the shift from rural guerrilla warfare to urban terrorism in the 1960s.

Based on this view, all parties, whether the terrorists, or the authorities, have been making an attempt to cooperate with the media, since they are regarded as the sole agent in disseminating information and creating awareness to the society about terrorism-related incidents (Aly, 2007).

1.2 Social Context

Terrorism has been a threat the world over for more than three decades now (Combs, 2022). There had been innumerable major incidents of terrorism long before the catastrophic attacks of September 11, 2001. Though the attacks were there and had been quite devastating in their own right, including some in the United States, it is the devastating 9/11 attacks in the USA that catalyzed worldwide awareness and concern over the continuing threat of terrorism. Even so, another turning point in modern-era terrorism is considered to have taken place in December 1988 with the blowing up of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all about 270 on board (Michael, 2012). According to Demir et al (2022), the attacks on World Trade Centers in USA proved to be a significant turning point, which most likely indicated a shift in the nature of terrorism, from movements first grounded in ideological, left-wing principles to a new formation of extreme right-wing fundamentalism.

The media attention was turned to terrorism with the infamous twin attacks in New York on September 11, 2001, by an Islamic extremist group linked to al-Qaeda, which organized the deadliest act in history (Demir et al 2022). This was a departure from the early leftist terrorist groups like the Palestinian organisations, which were effected by Marxist ideologies, often sought state sponsorship and aimed to cause relatively few casualties while maximizing media exposure to further their political objectives (Benner,1985). In the September 11, 2001, attacks, four planes were hijacked. Two were crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City, killing 2,606 people. Another struck the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, killing 125 people. The fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania, claiming the lives of all 44 passengers and crew (Yin, 2006). These events were of such massive proportions that they led to the

placement of terrorism at the top of both the global media and international policy agendas.

Since 9/11, terrorists continue to remain a huge threat to human beings all over the world. In 2004, for example, a deadly train bombing in Madrid, Spain, saw the loss of lives from almost 200 people (Demir et al 2022). This was then followed by the first Britain's suicide attacks in July 2005, whereby three London underground trains were targeted, resulting in 52 deaths, while over 700 people were injured (Berlet, 2002). That was considered the deadliest attack at that time in London after World War II (Chip, 2002). In November 2008, another terrorist attack rocked Mumbai, India, where a group of ten militants from Pakistan carried out coordinated attacks through the city. They targeted several important places: the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, Oberoi Trident Hotel, railway station of Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus. Over 166 people died, and more than 300 were injured (Al-Jazeera, 21/11/2019).

The frequent and deadly attacks clearly indicated that terrorism was a dynamic and continuous threat to the world. In this regard, it became evidently necessary for all nations to come together, tighten international cooperation, and come up with comprehensive strategies in defeating terror groups.

Even with the introduction of counter-terrorism measures at global level, terror attacks continued to rock across Europe. In 2015, terrorists targeted the offices of the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris, killing at least 12 people and wounding 11 others. The attackers claimed that the reason for attacking the magazine was because it had insulted Islamic religion and Muslims' Prophet Muhammad (BBC News, 2015). This was followed by another equally deadly attack in Brussels, Belgium, in March 2016, at two public places; the Brussels Airport and the Maalbeek metro station. The

attacks were carried out by members loyal to the Islamic State group, killing 32 people and injuring more than 300 others (Estrada and Koutronas, 2016). In May 2017, another lethal attack rocked Manchester Arena, where a suicide bomber detonated a bomb in the foyer at the Manchester Arena, in Manchester, England, as people were leaving a concert by American singer Ariana Grande. The attack killed 23 people, including the bomber, and injured more than 800 others (Bowman-Grieve, 2013).

The attacks on European cities continued as in August 2017, another attack targeted Spain, with a series of coordinated terrorist attacks targeting the Spanish cities of Barcelona and Cambrils, and killing at least 16 people and injuring more than 100 others. The attackers were members of a local Islamist extremist group inspired by the Islamic State group (Carrera and Mitsilegas, 2017).

Terrorism attacks continued throughout the world and worsened in Iraq and Afghanistan due to the presence of the US troops and resulted in huge global media attention. The manipulation of such incidents by the media, at global level, served in creating negative stereotypes of Islam as a religion, and Islamic countries like Afghanistan and Iraq. These two countries and few others in the Middle East region have been labeled as terror hotbed (Brubaker, 2004).

On Its part, Kenya has had its fair share of terrorist attacks (Kamau, 2021). The earliest terrorist acts happened in 1975, when Starlight club were rocked by bomb explosions (Cepulkauskaite, 2000). In 1980, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) bombed the Norfolk Hotel in the city centre in Nairobi, in response to Kenya's co-operation with Israel's Entebbe raid to free hostages in Uganda in 1978 (Robert, 2005). Robert (2005) indicated that in 1998, al-Qaeda-allied terrorists attacked the US embassy in Nairobi with a suicide bomb, which killed 250 people and resulted in

flattening of a high-rise building. Four years later, terrorists launched an attack on Paradise Hotel at the coast in an attempt to target Israeli tourists. The attempt failed, however, it led to deaths of Kenyan nationals including professional dancers and hotel staff. An attempt to simultaneously attack an airborne Israeli plane, carrying tourists, equally failed (Robert, 2005). The latest form of terror attacks in Kenya were carried by Somalia-based Al-Shabaab group. They used grenade attacks that have since rocked the North Eastern, coast and Nairobi regions, with the aim of forcing Kenya to withdraw forces from Somalia, where it had sent troops to deal with cross border kidnappings and attacks inside Kenya carried out by the militant group. However, the deadliest terrorist attacks against Kenya are; The West Gate Mall attack on 21st September 2013 in which 67 people were killed and 175 wounded and The Garissa University College attack of 2nd April 2015, where 147 people majorly students were killed and 79 wounded. Terrorism attacks continued to increase in Kenyan cities despite concerted efforts by the Kenyan Government and its International partners (Kamau, 2021). The last major terror attack in Kenya was on Dusit hotel in early 2019, which resulted in the death of more than 20 people.

This has led to Kenya becoming a partner in the global war on terror (Kamau, 2021). This was due to its geographical location and unstable neighbors, as well as poverty and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism (Kamau, 2021). Much of war on terror was based in North Eastern province, which neighbors Somalia (Chermak and Gruenewald, 2006). Since the collapse of the Somalia central government in 1991 and the creation of a lawless society, radical ideologies flourished (Chermak and Gruenewald, 2006), with the Al-Shabaab militant becoming the main actor. The Horn of Africa; Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan have over the years been considered as a hub for terrorism by the Western nations (Churchill, 1996). This

part of Africa has become a source of insecurity, and were identified as an ideal recruiting ground for terrorist (Churchill, 1996). Kenya is one of the countries within the East and the Horn of Africa which could be described as the most stable nation. Unlike most of its neighbors, Kenya is believed not to host any domicile terror group (Cresswell, 2009). Countries within the horn of Africa have continuously been vulnerable to acts of terrorism, and Kenya was not an exception. This has had an impact on the society, including the children (Cresswell, 2009).

Media and terrorism related issues are always perceived from three perspectives; terrorists' objectives on media, government's objectives on media and media's own objectives on related incidents linked to terrorism (Craigie et al 2020). Ghassan (2011) identifies three categories where action is often taken to mitigate the issue of religious intolerance: wider dissemination of inter-religious news that reflects compassion and understanding, advocacy for responsible use of the media, and monitoring of the media. The increase in both global and local terrorist attacks has created a huge media interest which, in turn, has had an impact on the society (Ghassan, 2011).

According to Grobbelaar (2023), recent terrorist attacks in Kenya by the Al-Shabaab militia were highly publicized in the media. This has had a huge impact on the society, including the children. Culler (2005) argue that the intensity of the terror incidents and the killings and torture that came with it, and perceived lack of ability by their parents and/or government aggravated anxiety amongst Kenyan children and youth. The mounting of terrorist threats in many parts of the country have incredibly impacted public event organizers (Culler, 2005). The Somalia-based Al-Shabaab group has been using religion as basis for its recruitment, as scholars believe that the study of radicalization implicitly presumes that radical beliefs are a precondition to violent

behavior (Culler 2011, 9). In the Kenyan capital Nairobi, similar dynamics of religious violence have been at work. No Nairobi neighborhood has received more attention than Eastleigh. Known as “Little Mogadishu” for its large Muslim community. The neighborhood was described by The Washington Post as “an incubator of jihad” (Angelo, 2002). This was due to what was described as widespread supply of religious extremist content and the perception that the Al-Shabaab recruiters embedded in mosques and schools (Botha 2014, 8). This has led to Kenyan media’s focus on terrorism-related incidents.

1.3 The Media in Kenya

The Kenyan media’s representation of terrorism is a complete opposite of its well-regarded reputation (Mutie, 2021, Muindi, 2020). Kenya’s media is one of the most thriving, respected, innovative and sophisticated in Africa (Erastus et al, 2023; Jamal et al, 2008). According to a policy briefing by the BBC World Service, which recorded the role of the media and communication in the post-election violence in the aftermath of 2007 General Election, the media in Kenya have been increasingly assertive and self-confident for the 15 years period before the post-election violence. The media has played a substantial role in mediating relationships between citizens and the state, in shaping the democratic dispensation in the country and have transformed how some of the marginalized groups in the society assess information on issues that shape their lives (Erastus et al, 2023).

With the benefit of constant reviews, it seems that the liberalization of the Kenyan media in the early 1990s created opportunities for a more open and diverse media playing field (Owade, 2021). Since then, the number of media outlets and perspectives grew, while government control of the sector significantly reduced (Dan-Van-Atta,

1998). Before this was realized, the situation was very much different from what it is today. Immediately after independence, Kenya embarked on a long process of making the country a one-party state (Owade, 2021). Kenya's parliament is understood to have assisted the government in this endeavor by passing a law that forbade the formation of another political party, which meant Kenya had officially transpired into a civilian one-party system (Wanyande, 1995). The political activity restriction during the one-party state's era also extended to the mass media industry; with the beginning of normalization of state's ownership and stringent control of the mass media, similar to the colonial government's case (Fraser & Estrada, 2001; Ochilo, 1993; Wanyande, 1995). It can be argued that the ruling party during one-party era was extremely hostile to the idea of allowing other mass media platforms to operate independently (Fraser & Estrada, 2001). In this regard, the state-controlled media, which was run under the ministry of information became the main source of news. The stations included the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), which started its life in 1928, and the Kenya News Agency (KNA), which was founded in 1963, and were entirely controlled by the government (Ochilo, 1993). It is worth to be noted that the traditional ruling party exercised full control in the daily management of these media outlets mainly by influencing their editorial policies (Wanyande, 1995).

The media in Kenya is viewed as a catalyst of national development and an avenue for the enhancement of democracy to promote peace and stability in the society. However, it is also an essential source of news on crime, terrorism and insecurity for citizens as it aids in the construction of social meanings, and has been accused of bias when representing terrorism, which is completely in contrast with its colorful historical role on democracy and development.

The effects of media presentation of terrorism in Kenya can be looked at from a broader perspective of how the Kenyan media handles its audience in regard to terrorism as a subject of discussion. The terror attack on Westgate mall on September 21, 2013 seems to have aroused investigative journalism in Kenya. For instance, it was KTN's "Jicho Pevu"; then came NTV's "The Foul Winds" and more recently special documentaries observed in most media outlets. Despite proliferation of investigative journalism in Kenya, no systematic efforts have been made to develop policies and guidelines on the reporting of terrorism among Kenyan journalism (Mutie, 2022; Muindi, 2020; Kisang, 2014).

However, since 2011, after the deployment of Kenyan troops to Somalia, the frequency and the impact of terrorism in Nairobi and other parts of Kenya has sharply increased. Consequently, reporting of terrorism-related issues is now one of the main news agenda for the media. The consequence, therefore, is the stigmatization of Muslims, painting them with broad strokes of suspicion and fear (Eberstein, 2020).

Even with the existence of laws and regulations that are supposed to guide the media on safeguarding national unity, the Kenyan media still presented terrorist attacks in a way likely to strain the existing relationship between various groups, especially Christians and Muslims (Mutie, 2022; Muindi, 2020; Kisang, 2014).

According to a study by the Media Council of Kenya in 2014; "Deconstructing Terror: Assessing Media's Role in Religious Intolerance and Radicalization", the extent to which the media sensationalizes issues, and the dissemination of unbalanced stories around Islam and terrorism, are considered part of the radicalizing agents in Kenya.

“It is evident that the media somehow contributes to the propagation of the dominant narratives that; people of Somali origin are potential terrorists; all Muslims are potential terrorists because most suspects arrested are Muslims; and that Islam preaches and supports radicalization and extremism, among other narratives”- (Media Council of Kenya, 2014). Consequently, Kenya’s Muslim population could be negatively represented by the mainstream media through sustained propagation of the narratives that they are responsible for terror activities in the country considering the following instances of negative reporting; The Daily Nation; “Are we just going to sit around and wait to be blown to bits by terrorists?” The writer continues “...every little, two-bit Somali has a big dream, to blow us up, knock down our buildings and slaughter our children” The Daily Nation’s Group Managing Editor, Mutuma Mathiu, (The Daily Nation, 20 March 2014).

The Media Council of Kenya, in its 2014 report, also accused the Kenyan media of bias when they covered the “Usalama Watch” operations in Eastleigh following series of terror attacks. The Standard newspaper wrote; “Mr. President, you are right on the right path on terror war, ignore detractors”. The writer adds; “The mop up began in a place where terrorist attacks have mostly been happening, Eastleigh. The population there is, of course, heavily Somali and Islamic...” (Dutt, 2014).

The Media Council of Kenya, in its 2014 report, also noted a sharp increase in instances where the mainstream media facilitated negative discussions on terrorism and related issues, touching on Islam, on their online publications. This has given an opportunity to audiences to post bitter and hateful statements based on their religious affiliations. In consideration of the above, and due to lack of enough studies on the experiences and perceptions of Muslims, this study sought to understand the lived

experiences of the Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism activities in Kenya.

Although the Kenyan media is hailed for its objectivity, and has made attempts to provide positive coverage of the Muslims, it has also contributed to the inferential profiling of Kenyan Muslims as per previous studies (Mutie, 2022; Muindi, 2020; Kisang, 2014). Overreliance of frames of conflict, problems and emphasis on religious identity crisis, imply that the Muslim community, in general, and their religious scholars, in particular, perceive Kenyan media from this viewpoint. There is also a wide-spread assumption that Kenyan Muslims have been victims of religious profiling and xenophobia following terrorist attacks in the country and subsequent media coverage (Media Council of Kenya, 2014). The Kenyan media in its coverage of terrorism has also focused on Muslim religious scholars, accusing them of spreading radicalization in Islamic schools and mosques (Daily Nation, 2015; The Standard, 2014)

1.4 Muslim Religious Scholars in Nairobi, Kenya

In Nairobi, Kenya, Muslim religious scholars, commonly known as ulama, are not only spiritual guides, but are influential community leaders, shaping the way their followers understand the world around them (Ndzovu, H. J. 2022). Their influence extends beyond the walls of the mosque, as they are seen by the Muslims as trusted voices on a wide range of societal issues, including the sensitive topic of terrorism (Wario, H. A. 2021). Given their significant role, it is important to understand their perspectives on how terrorism is represented in the media. The Muslim scholars help shape how Kenyan Muslims in Nairobi interpret such events and how they react to them.

The Muslim scholars play a crucial role in Kenya's socio-religious and political landscape, offering guidance not only in matters of faith but also in governance, social justice, and economic issues (Athuman, C. S. 2023). Their leadership is particularly significant in areas with large Muslim populations, such as Nairobi, the northeastern region, and the coastal counties, though their presence is felt across the country. Many Muslims rely on them for direction on everything from daily religious practices to broader political and social concerns (Athuman, C. S. 2023).

Islamic institutions like the Nairobi-based Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) and Nairobi's Jamia Mosque are known for their leading role in shaping Muslim experiences and perceptions, including how terrorism is represented in the media and how that impacts counterterrorism efforts (Ndzovu, H. J. 2022). For instance, SUPKEM, as Kenya's leading Muslim organization, advocates for the rights and interests of the Muslim community, engages in dialogue with the government on issues such as security policies and religious freedoms, and promotes education and social welfare programs (Kahumbi, N. 2023; Kithure, 2012).

More so, the Jamia Mosque in Nairobi, formed in 1902, and regarded as one of the country's most historic and influential Islamic institutions, plays an extremely important role in religious education, charitable activities, and interfaith dialogue (Wario, H. A. 2021). The mosque offers healthcare and educational services while serving as a center for religious discussions. Through its leadership; composed of a group of Muslim scholars, Jamia Mosque has actively worked to counter radical ideologies and foster peaceful coexistence (Salim, 2006).

Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi, Kenya are not limited to religious matters only; they are deeply engaged in social and political issues, helping to shape the country's broader discourse (Meinema, E. 2021). Their voices matter, not only to the Muslim community but to the nation as a whole.

Despite their significant position in the Muslim society, Muslim religious increasingly became a subject of discussion on the war on terror as the Kenya media focus shifted to the mosques and Islamic schools and begun to shed light on the negative role played by some Muslim religious scholars resulting in widespread negative perception against them. The blame on Muslims religious scholars sometimes came from Muslim representatives themselves. The Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims Secretary General, Adan Wachu, seen to be moderate, is quoted by the media as blaming radicalization of Muslim youths on preachers operating within the Muslim communities and proposed that a vetting process of such preachers be put in place. (The Daily Nation, April 8, 2015, p 4). However, what looked like an effort by Muslim Scholars to regulate preaching at mosques was taken out of context as politicians spoke in more harsh terms towards section of religious scholars from the Muslim community following series of terror attacks. For instance, after the Al Shabaab attack on Garissa University College, Kenya's president at the time, Uhuru Kenyatta blamed Muslim religious scholars and parents for doing little as radicalization of youths took place within their communities; in mosques and Madrassas (The Standard, April 5, 2015, p.9). Similarly, politicians from the Muslim-dominated North Eastern region blamed some religious institutions belonging to Muslims for radicalization of youth including; mosques and madrassas. They also accused the Muslim community of harboring Al Shabaab members and sympathizers who are behind the frequent attacks on Kenyans. (The Standard, April 7, 2015 p. 2).

Despite the constant reference to Muslim religious scholars when discussing spread of terrorism and radicalization, no study was done on how that has had an impact on them, and look at their lived experience of media representation of terrorism.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Since the deployment of Kenyan troops to Somalia in 2011, under Operation Linda Nchi, Kenya has witnessed a sharp increase in terrorist attacks, particularly in Nairobi and other urban centers (Ketter, 2022). These developments have elevated terrorism-related issues to a central focus in Kenyan media discourse (Mutie, 2022; Muindi, 2020). While such coverage is crucial for informing the public, previous studies suggests that the media's framing of terrorism has had far-reaching social and political implications, particularly for Kenya's Muslim community, who often find themselves at the intersection of security narratives and national identity politics (Media Council of Kenya, 2014).

Socially, terrorism has significantly disrupted everyday life in Nairobi. Security checks at public venues such as schools, religious institutions, restaurants, and shopping malls have become commonplace (Entman, 2021). While these security measures aim to deter violence, they also reflect an underlying atmosphere of fear and suspicion, often directed at Muslims. The situation is exacerbated by the portrayal of Muslims in the media, which, according to Eberstein (2020), contributes to a dominant narrative that stigmatizes the entire community. Muslims in Nairobi, who previously experienced political and economic marginalization (Frank, 1990), are further burdened by a media environment that often casts them in the shadow of terrorism.

Multiple studies have shown that media narratives in Kenya tend to link Islam with terrorism. For instance, headlines like “Are we just going to sit around and wait to be blown to bits by terrorists?” from the Daily Nation (Mutuma Mathiu, 20 March 2014) reinforce stereotypes linking the Islamic faith to terrorism. Similarly, coverage of security operations such as Usalama Watch disproportionately focused on Eastleigh, a neighborhood with a high concentration of Muslim residents, thereby reinforcing religious profiling (Media Council of Kenya, 2014; Muluka, 12 April 2014). The media’s tendency to reproduce inflammatory language and allow unmoderated hate speech on its platforms further amplifies societal divisions along religious and ethnic lines (Media Council of Kenya, 2014).

Although the Media Council of Kenya has developed guidelines to encourage balanced and ethical reporting, their implementation remains inconsistent. Existing laws meant to protect national unity have failed to curb sensationalism and bias in terrorism coverage.

This not only strains interfaith relations but also endangers the safety and dignity of Muslim citizens.

Academically, despite the extensive academic inquiry into media representation of terrorism, most research has concentrated on journalistic practices and content analysis, often overlooking the perspectives of those mostly affected by these narratives. Studies by Mutie (2021), Muindi (2020), and Kisang (2014) have illuminated how media coverage of terrorism is influenced by nationalism, state rhetoric, and editorial decision-making. However, there remains a significant gap in understanding the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars, individuals who not only serve as community leaders but are also frequently called upon to respond to pub

lic perceptions of Islam. This study addresses this critical gap by focusing on the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi on media representation of terrorism. It employs a phenomenological approach to understand how media representations of terrorism impact their personal, social, and professional lives.

As Atton and Mabweazara (2011) argue, journalism studies in Africa have traditionally neglected the examination of how journalistic routines and practices affect marginalized communities. By centering their voices of Muslim religious scholars, this study seeks to move beyond content analysis and explore how media narratives translate into real-world experiences. This study is therefore, both timely and necessary. It responds to a pressing social issue of media-induced stigmatization of Muslims, and fills an academic gap by offering an investigation into the perspectives of a critically important yet underrepresented group. The findings have the potential to inform more ethical journalistic practices, promote inter-religious understanding, and contribute to inclusive policy development in Kenya's pluralistic society.

1.6 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi in relation to how terrorism is represented in the media. The study specifically aims to understand how these scholars personally experience and interpret media representation of terrorism, and how such representation affect their everyday lives, community engagement, and sense of identity. Additionally, the research investigated the ways in which the media representation affects the role and relations of the scholars, and how scholar's lived experiences influence their perceptions and attitudes toward the media. The study seeks to generate a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural and psychological implications of media representation of terrorism in

Nairobi, Kenya. It further aims at informing media ethics, promoting more accurate and respectful representation, and providing a platform for voices that have been largely excluded from public discourse.

1.7 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to explore the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi regarding media representation of terrorism and how these experiences influence their perceptions of the media. Therefore, following were the specific objectives of the study;

1. To investigate the personal, social, and professional experiences of Muslim religious scholars in relation to media representation of terrorism.
2. To examine how media representation of terrorism impacts on Muslim religious scholars.
3. To explore how these experiences shape their perceptions, attitudes, and levels of trust toward the Nairobi-based Kenyan media.

1.8 Research Questions

This study, therefore, sought to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya?
- ii. How does the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism manifests itself?
- iii. How does the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism shape their perception towards the media in Nairobi, Kenya?

1.9 Scope of the Study

The study focused on three aspects of the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism; the personal experience of Muslim religious scholars, impact of their lived personal experience on them and on the Muslim community and the perceptions of Muslim religious scholars on the Kenyan media as a result of their lived experience. To answer the first question on the personal experience of Muslim religious scholars in terms of content, the study looked at the personal feelings of the scholars when exposed to the media. I also arrived at the challenges the Muslim religious scholars face with the media representation of terrorism.

To answer the second question, the study focused on the impact of the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya, on them at personal level and impact on the Muslim community. The study also emphasized on the impact this has had on the relations between Muslims and Christians in Nairobi.

To deal with the third question, the study sought to understand the perceptions of Muslim religious scholars on the media as a result of their lived experience of media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya (See Appendix Four).

The study was carried out among Muslim Religious Scholars drawn from six different mosques and religious centers within Nairobi County. Nairobi was selected due to its diverse Muslim Population from different parts of the country where most of the main Mosques and Islamic religious centers are located. Nairobi has also a wide media landscape, serving as the Capital City of Kenya and the media hub for the country.

The city has also witnessed some of worst terror attacks in the country like Westgate Attack in 2014 and Dusit attack in 2019.

In terms of methodology, the study adopted the relativist-interpretivist paradigm, hence the qualitative approach. It used phenomenology as method of inquiry in order to examine the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya. The study used Phenomenology and Representation theories to structure discussions around the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars. This study, therefore, used transcendental phenomenology method because it focuses more on the essence of a phenomenon as it is described and how it functions in the lived experiences of the participants, and how this shows in consciousness as an object of reflection (McNamara, 2005). The study focused on the consciousness or rather the truth as presented by the Muslim religious scholars through their lived experiences towards the media representation of terrorism. It is necessary to study the lived experiences of the Muslim religious scholars in regards to media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya, how that manifests itself, and how it has shaped their perception on the media in general, because it informs on the feeling of the Muslim community in Nairobi, Kenya through the lenses of the religious scholars. Data was generated through conducting in-depth interviews with 10 participants representing Muslim religious scholars. I analyzed the data thematically and presented the findings in narrative form, with paraphrases and quotations (I have dealt with the issue of methodology in more detail in Chapter Three).

1.10 Justification of the study

This study on the lived experienced of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism is justified because most of the research done in Kenya on

the field focused on the content analysis using framing, which was more on the conduct of journalists and media houses in reporting terrorism-related stories than the impact on their audiences. As a result, this study is trying to create new pathways on the research on this particular topic and address the existing gaps in the field of research on media representation of terrorism in Kenya by focusing on the Muslim community through the lenses of the Muslim religious scholars.

The study is also justified since there is scarcity of the studies conducted using phenomenology as a method of inquiry to understand the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism. Muller, Bloch and Kanze (2014) argue that this is to addresses the conflicts with the research methods in the prior studies and offers a new line of research that is divergent from those research methods. It is noted that it might be useful to vary research methods, especially if certain research topics have been mainly explored using a singular or common method (Müller, Bloch & Kranz, 2014)

The study is also justified because Muslims are one of the main religious communities in Nairobi, Kenya, and has increasingly been seen as the face of terror in the country and the East African Region as per previous research and reports from media regulators in the country. The religious scholars look after the Muslim flock and their main responsibility has been to curb terrorism. They are continuously faced with negative perception through the media which eludes that they play a role in the spread of radical views that breed terrorism.

According to a report by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the Muslim community, are confronted with increasing accusations of being responsible for the growing security risks in the country (Muindi, 2014)

This study was therefore intended to serve as an invaluable tool to investigate the lived experiences of the Muslim religious scholars towards media representation of terrorism. It is also aimed to address the gap of the literature on the subject, which is the study on the impact of media coverage on the Muslim religious scholars, who are key stakeholders in the society, and who guide the Muslim community.

1.11 Significance of the Study

This study of the lived experience of the Muslim religious scholars on the media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya was significant at various levels, including for media practitioners, the academia as well as policy makers. With Kenya being one of the countries hard-hit by terrorism in recent times, and Muslims been the subject of public perception, for example, prejudice, following radical terrorist attacks (Kearns et al., 2019), this study would contribute to a growing body of knowledge at international and local contexts on how terrorism reporting is impacting on the Muslim religious scholars and the community at large.

For the media practitioners, including journalists, this study would provide insights into understanding the impact of their journalistic work on the Muslim community represented in this study by the religious scholars. It could inform ways of improving media representation of terrorism with the incorporation of the voices and views of the Muslim community. For instance, this study has explored discourse on how journalists can develop critical stories on terrorism and related events without necessarily offending the Muslim community and without associating terrorism with Islam or

becoming a propaganda tool for terrorists themselves. At the same time, equipping journalists with necessary trainings to understand the sensitivities surrounding terrorism menace was one of the major themes discussed in this study.

Epistemologically, this study presents evidence on the impact of terrorism reporting on the Muslim communities, in a Kenyan and an African context. Most of previous studies have largely focused on Western world (Petersen & Soundararajan, 2020). Therefore, the study made an important contribution to the literature on media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya, in relation to lived experiences of the Muslim religious scholars.

At the global level, this study is significant in contributing to the understanding of the experiences and perceptions of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism and the need to reshape policy around terrorism reporting in relations to mainstream Islam, which does not condone terrorism, but which is often linked to it.

There is limited literature on the issue of policies and guidelines for media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya. As a result, media practitioners and policy makers; such as government bodies, including Media Council of Kenya (MCK) and Communication Authority of Kenya (CAK), will find this study useful in developing guidelines and protocols that guide reporting of sensitive issues such as terrorism.

Journalism schools and other institutions responsible for the development of media curriculum and training could benefit from this study too. Development of new curriculum and training journalists on representation of terrorism, as a new area of specialization, should be necessary. Therefore, the study offers important evidence in

key areas such as the psychological trauma caused by terrorism reporting to an important section of the Muslim society; the Muslim religious scholars. As a result, media houses and their editorial team will benefit from the lessons learned.

1.12 Limitations of the Study

The study focused on 10 participants among the Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi and does not involve all the religious scholars in Kenya and by extension not the whole population of the Muslim community in the country. While this can be viewed as a limitation, it can also serve as empirical evidence to look at the lived experiences and perceptions created as a result of that.

In addition to that, the identity of the respondents in this study is not revealed. They are identified as Respondent 1, Respondent 2 and Respondent 3 etc. in order to protect their confidentiality. This is because the study is not aimed at accessing respondent's background, but rather identifying the lived experiences and perceptions of the Muslim religious scholars towards the Nairobi-based Kenyan media as a result of their coverage of terrorism.

The other issue that can be viewed as a limitation is the fact that the researcher in this study is a former journalist and a Muslim, which could raise concerns of bias from researcher's part. However, in transcendental phenomenological dissertations biases are irrelevant because it uses reduction process in data gathering and analysis, which means use of bracketing or referred to as phenomenological vigilance (Van Kaam, 1966 p. 259), does not give room for the researcher to have an influence on the participants' own understanding of the phenomenon and its impact on them.

Another issue that can be termed as a limitation is the fact that most of literature referred to in this study is from Americas, Europe and Asia. This is because there are very few relevant studies done in African and Kenyan context. However, the terrorism phenomenon is a global problem, and hence, it has affected most of the countries in the world in the same way, as it caused a lot of death and destruction and almost sparked religious-based hatred and division in many countries. Therefore, studies done elsewhere are very much relevant in the Kenyan and African context.

1.13 Summary

In this chapter, the background to the study was discussed, highlighting academic and social context as well as the media in Kenya and the Muslim Religious Scholars in Nairobi, Kenya. The Statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study were presented, along with research questions, scope of the study and justification of the study. The significance and limitations of the study were also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This chapter is divided into five sections. In the first section, the main concepts in the study were defined. In the second section, the theme of situating the study to the field of communication was discussed, while in the third section, theoretical framework was explained. In the fourth section, relevant recent research were dealt with. Lastly, the rationale of the study after review of literature was explored.

2.1 Media Representation and Meaning Making

Representation is the production and dissemination of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language (Hall, 2020). It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary world of fictional objects, people and events” (Hall, 1997: 17). Hall (2020) suggests there are two systems of representation. The first involves the direct associations of objects, people and events with a set of concepts or mental representations that people hold in their minds. Meaning is therefore reliant on these correlations. The second system is language, for in order to produce meaning, these concepts need to be changed into a common language.

The term ‘language’ is used by Hall to mean anything from written or spoken words, visual images, music, fashion or even facial expressions (Hall, 1997: 16-19). Social representation is systems of values, practices and ideas with a dual function: i) to establish a framework of order to guide social subjects in the symbolic and material world they inhabit, and ii) to enable communication between the members of a collectivity through a shared code to name and classify objects and processes. The

intersection between the media, terrorism and the Muslim communities can only be linked to social representation (Medina, 2025).

According to Moscovici (1988) “social representations are ‘systems of values, practices and ideas’ that simultaneously ‘form an order that enables people to become familiar with, and be part of the material and social world’, and at the same time, ‘enables interaction between members of a certain community, providing them with a shared social exchange code, which identifies and classifies various aspects of the world and their personal or group history with clarity and without ambiguity’” (Herzlich & Graham, 1973). Social representation can be found in everyday life, “society is a thinking system and they [SRs] can be seen as the contemporary equivalent of belief systems and myths in primitive societies” (Moscovici, 1981, Augoustinos & Walker, 1996). They emerge both from common sense and also from scientific knowledge in modern societies, and although they seem contradictory, this is because social representations explain social reality in its distinct levels of complexity. They are consensual (shared) and dynamic, as they exist in a constant transformation process).

Therefore, social representation goes beyond ways of thinking about the world; they are ways of making the world (Ricardo, 2025), so that it symbolically and collectively makes sense and be part of change, thus incorporating new phenomena (George, 2012), as well as of re-constructing the past from the present in the face of the future (Mead, 1932).

Representation can therefore be termed as ways in which someone or something is ‘portrayed or depicted in the media (Hall, 2020). For example, in the process of news reporting, a specific crime incident can be represented either as a common everyday

occurrence or else as something much more sinister, such as a symptom of society's loose moral standards. Representations generally possess an underlying view. For example, some television stations depict (or have already depicted) the family as an ideal social structure for resolving emotional problems (Gaydos, 2009).

The media do not just offer us a window on the world. They don't just present reality. Media producers usually make choices, as they select, compile, and turn events into stories (Nelson, 2021). In the process, they create characters and invite us to see the world in a particular way (Buckingham, 2003).

It is a reality that media outlets offer us versions of reality. But according to Buckingham (2003), audiences also have the ability to compare media using their own experiences, and make judgments on how far they can trust them. Media representations can be real sometimes, and in some ways, and not in others: we may know that something is fantasy, yet, it can still tell us about a reality (Buckingham, 2003).

2.1.1 Media representation of terrorism

Hellmüller (2022) notes that terrorism is designed to purposely attract the attention and publicity it causes while communicating a message. It is clear that terrorists can only attain the highest potential of their actions and goals by spreading the panic and outrage to achieve the fundamental political change they desire (Hellmüller, 2022). Terrorism is a concept that has been given different definitions but it is clear that it has become one of the most precarious tragedies in the present day (Schmid, 2009). Since terrorism is different from other forms of violence particularly in the choice of targets and modes of activity and the fact that there are diverse definitions of the phenomenon,

there is no general definition agreed upon at international level on the term terrorism (Combs, 2022).

Terrorists tend to carry out their deadly attacks for different reasons, which may include: political, psychological, ideological or even religion-based reasons (Gottlieb, 2025). The psychological approach focuses on attitudes, personalities, and beliefs of terrorists, and can be used to explain the motivation for terror attacks. It also deals with traits of individual perpetrators of terror attacks, while focusing on their profiles, as well as methods of recruitment (Gottlieb, 2025).

Religion as a cause of terrorism has however been dismissed in some quarters with some scholars arguing that it is an ideology which has been used to rally populations towards political violence much like communism and nationalism (Gottlieb, 2025). Defining religious terrorism has therefore become complicated despite there being a lot of research on this topic (Wall, 2007).

The world has for a long time witnessed horrific and deadly terror attacks, which have caused loss of lives, property and instilled fear into millions of people. However, scholars are now looking at whether the manner in which the media represents the news on terrorism is what dictates the impact the terror attack has on the public. Former United Kingdom Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, in a speech in 1985 at the Annual Convention of the American Bar Association claimed that media coverage provided oxygen for terrorism by spreading the terrorist's message of horror, airing their demands and bolstering the position taken by terrorists. The 9/11 attack of the Twin Towers at the World Trade Centre in New York City by terrorists is perhaps one of the major attacks in recent history. At least, 3,000 people were killed in the attack which an Islamist terror group, Al Qaeda, is said to have been responsible. The initial

images of the jets smashing into the Twin Towers were relayed to hundreds of millions of viewers throughout the world. The videos were horrific as the world was treated to major terror attack (Wall, 2007). The President of one of the main US media outlets, the ABC News, David Westin ordered an immediate stop to the repeated airing of the World Trade Centre, so as to protect the viewers. Following the attack on the Twin Towers, the US government reconsidered its stance on broadcasting of footage from scenes of terror attacks (Wall, 2007). In the US for example, in the aftermath of the London train attacks, the government has decided to attribute the attack to external extremists who were waging an international war, and that Britain happened to be the victim. British media on the other hand framed the attack, has a lot to do with homegrown problem, thus dismissing US assertion.

Terrorism can, therefore, be described as a means to strike a major power in its softest underbelly, and thus affect the state of mind of millions of people by preying on them where they are most vulnerable – attacking their basic sense of stability, safety and normalcy (Hall, 1983). There are multiple causes to terrorism, and no single type of understanding, and consequently no single type of solution can provide the remedy to completely solve the problem (Hall, 2000).

Scholars have also focused on the fact that terrorism is not an ideology or a political doctrine; it is rather a method (Ackerman et al, 2021).

However, according to those who use this kind of method, terrorism is a necessary tool of combat, in which the weak wage war against the strong, and the few wages war against the many (Mendelson, 2008). To understand terrorist groups, one needs to take into account that to the terrorist, terrorism is simply a tool used to wage battle (Hall,

Evans, & Nixon, 2021) – as justified and legitimate as any other military tactic or use of high-powered weaponry.

According to Jangada (2022), different researchers divide terrorism into various categories. Jangada (2006) distinguishes between nationalist, ideological, religious-political, single-issue, state-sponsored and state-supported terrorism. Cronin (2002) divides terrorists into left wing, right wing, separatist and religious (or ‘pseudo-religious’) terrorists – with the latter being particularly ascendant in current times (Cronin, 2002. Metz and Millen, 2004). Hoffman (1998) notes that the religious aspect for terrorism is the most significant defining characteristic of terrorism today. Hoffman (1998) further contends that for the religious terrorist, violence is first and foremost, a divine act or a sacred duty. For that reason, religious terrorists are not limited by political, moral, conventionally or practical boundaries (Hoffman, 1998).

Islamic terrorism is motivated by radical Islamic fundamentalism. The term ‘fundamentalism’ has Christian-Protestant origins, where it referred to religious and ideological fanaticism (Shay, 2017). The term ‘Islamist’, often used by the media, is used to refer to radical Islamist groups that (often violently) hold onto a politicized, fundamentalist and ideological Islam (Kramer, 2009). It is used, most of the time, to differentiate it from the mainstream religion of Islam (Kramer, 2009).

Terrorism is a global security threat. About 612 politically motivated groups with guerilla or terrorist capabilities are active in 140 countries, with about forty of them having an external reach and are equipped with threat capabilities at international level (Stevens & Gunaratna, 2004). Stevens and Gunaratna add that these 40 groups, that has international reach, are largely religious, larger in size, and have a bigger audience and a broader reach.

The last two decades has seen a significant shift in public interest in acts of terrorism, or the issue of use of force and violence against nonmilitary targets (Stevens and Gunaratna, 2004). While the definitions of terrorism are yet to be generally defined, it is mostly referred to attacks on public places, often frequented by unarmed civilians (Mickolus, 1980). Paletz, Ayanian, and Fozzard (1982) define terrorism as "politically motivated violence that strikes at symbols and figures of authority in society, where perpetrators seek to achieve their goals through intimidation." In most cases, the symbols include hijackings of planes, buses and buses, and taking of civilians as hostages. The "victims" of such attacks are usually intended to serve as a mere vehicle for making another point, which is establishing a symbolic "victory," or for establishing an identity as a force to reckon with (Hendrickx, 2023).

The mass media are often the implicit or explicit rationale for such acts, because spreading the message out is very important for those individuals committed to a cause, particularly when TV coverage can transform a specific incident into a global drama. Given the notion that the media outlets, and especially TV stations, prefer action-packed events for the purpose of generating good video reports, the formats used by the media are explicitly used by more and more groups that lack the means and the legitimacy to disseminate their messages across through other channels. In this regard, terrorists have shown that they are good communicators, and that they not only understand the media, but they also know how to make use of it (Schmid & de Graaf, 1982).

As viewed by Dowling (1986), "Terrorists engage in recurrent rhetorical forms that force the media to provide the coverage, without which, terrorism cannot fulfill its

objectives." But getting access to media coverage does not, in most cases, mean getting "good press." Indeed, recent work suggests that the excessive amount of media attention and interest on terrorist attacks and their aftermath, rather than bringing out the social conditions, objectives and goals, has resulted in media attention, but not legitimacy (Paletz et al., 1982). The impact, organization, and shape of such messages remain unclear, particularly when government officials draw on a substantial symbolic arsenal in condemnation of such actions.

2.1.2 Symbols and Media Formats

Acts of terrorism often unfold within a dense web of symbolism (Sageman, 2017). Leaders and the public try to interpret what is happening, to make sense of violence in political terms. These symbols shape how political acts are understood and remembered. But symbols are not just floating out there for anyone to claim, they are deeply embedded in power structures. As political communication has become more sophisticated, those in power increasingly learn to contain challenges within the dominant symbolic order, often neutralizing dissent before it can gain traction (Davidson, 2018).

Recent studies suggest that political elites use media-savvy tactics to shape public meaning and maintain legitimacy in the face of conflict or crisis like terrorism. For example, instead of confronting criticism directly, state actors often reframe dissenting voices through strategic narratives that make them seem irrational, threatening, or marginal (Waisbord, 2021).

This reframing allows them to control how the public perceives both the threat and the state's response. It is not so much about denying problems as it is about managing how they are seen by the people. Signals in this space; whether speeches, symbolic

acts, or public rituals, are crafted not only to reassure constituents but also to influence how domestic and international audiences interpret the intentions behind those acts.

As Entman (2021) notes, in political communication, framing is everything: it determines what gets emphasized, what gets ignored, and how meaning is constructed in moments of uncertainty. Terrorist acts, in this sense, are also performances. They are aimed not only at victims but at the broader public, particularly the community where the victims belong to or are represented by. The message is often strategic, designed to provoke a reaction, expose vulnerability, or challenge legitimacy. Meanwhile, political leaders responding to such acts rarely speak just to the perpetrators. They also speak to their citizens, their critics, the global community, and often, to history. In doing so, their response becomes a symbolic act in itself, one that reinforces their image of control, strength, or moral authority, regardless of the actual substance of their policy or actions. As Hennik, & Bailey (2021) argue, the media's role in amplifying these symbols, whether intentionally or not, adds another layer of complexity. The meaning of any political act becomes a contest between narrative control and interpretive resistance. In this space, both state and non-state actors are constantly trying to win the symbolic battle, knowing that legitimacy and power often rest not only on what is done, but how it is seen.

It is not, therefore, unusual for political leaders, especially during crises like hostage situations, to be more candid with adversaries rather than with their own citizens. Sometimes, even the families of victims are left in the dark while negotiations proceed behind closed doors. The rationale, often, is that withholding information protects the process or reduces political fallout. As Entman (2021) argues, political actors frequently manage communication not just to inform, but to control narratives

that shape their legitimacy. This type of strategic silence is not about a lack of transparency, it is about symbolic control over uncertainty. But the more pressing issue is how these events and decisions are packaged and communicated to the broader public through mainstream and digital media. The media's role here extends far beyond simply reporting facts. It frames events in ways that shape public perception and emotional response (Waisbord, 2021). Media outlets decide which voices to amplify, what imagery to use, and which details to emphasize or omit, each choice contributing to a larger narrative architecture.

In high-stakes moments like terrorist attacks or hostage crises, these choices become even more significant. Visuals, in particular, carry extraordinary weight. They give form to fear, urgency, and grief, collapsing emotional distance between the audience and the event (Fahmy, 2021). This is especially true in television and social media coverage, where short, emotionally loaded segments dominate.

As Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2021) describe it, news is no longer just about conveying what happened, but about staging affect, creating visceral experiences that drive public sentiment and, often, political response.

Modern news broadcasts and digital stories are constructed from what some researchers call "narrative units", small clusters of meaning, often anchored in visuals, that connect an actor to an action and an outcome (Pantti, 2021). These are the building blocks of mediated reality. They function like modular scenes in a movie, guiding viewers through complex, chaotic situations with clear cause-and-effect framing. This kind of visual storytelling isn't neutral. Studies in media framing consistently show that how an event is framed affects not just what people think about, but how they think about it (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018). For example, framing a hostage crisis as an

act of barbarism versus a failure of diplomacy can shift public support between military intervention and negotiation, even when the underlying facts remain the same. What is more important is that the temporal structure of news; the sequencing, pacing, and repetition of stories, helps to determine what sticks in public memory.

As Chouliaraki (2021) points out, crisis communication today operates through loops of emotional resonance rather than sustained analytical depth. This makes the spectacle of violence or leadership response more significant than the underlying structural conditions. And in this loop, political leaders often benefit. Their statements, appearances, and actions, no matter how symbolic, can reinforce a sense of competence or control, even when outcomes are uncertain or delayed (Bennett & Knüpfer, 2018). So, whether it is a press briefing that avoids hard questions or a news segment showing images of grieving families, the point is not just to inform. It is to shape meaning. It is about managing what people see, feel, and remember, and by extension, how they evaluate the legitimacy of those in power.

Pippa Norris, Montague Kern and Marian, (2004) further indicate that framing involves selecting particular aspects and angles of reality and privileging them in the definition, the description, the interpretation and the moral evaluation of the subject being covered. The decisions made by the mass media is not always a conscious one and can copy news frames as suggested by others, like government officials, but also public figures, study centers, journalistic routines such as that of giving priority to the proximity or the emotion, or an ideological bias. Nevertheless, the decision on how to frame is crucial. It can either influence how the public and the authorities react to it(Pippa Norris, Montague Kern and Marian, 2004).

Barnett and Reynolds (2009) noted that the way the U.S. media framed the attacks of 11 September 2001, was to certain extent, a call for decisive retaliation. The press widely relied on the declarations made by the politicians, who were proposing a military response, as well as the declarations of ordinary Americans calling for reprisal attacks. During the Cold War, most terrorist acts were interpreted within the frame of the ideological and geopolitical confrontation between East and West. However, since the Berlin Wall fell and the 'Islam-inspired' terrorism emerged, terrorist acts are often represented with a perspective that insinuates a "clash of civilizations" theory popularized by former Harvard professor, Samuel Huntington. In both cases, the model is very similar, inspired by a Manichean, binary conception of information: them vs. us, the 'bad guys' against the 'good guys' (Tacaks, S, 2012).

The same events can thus be framed in radically different ways according to the media's premises. While some sift through information to find what divides communities, others choose the facts that demonstrate the need for people to live together, and the possibility or otherwise of doing so. After 9/11 September, certain number of American media published more positive articles on Arab American or Muslim citizens. This frame was aimed at avoiding retaliation against certain U.S. community and insisted on the urgency of rising to the challenge presented by Al-Qaida with the law, and not discrimination. It is essential to think about representation, as journalists can sometimes go beyond the gregarious reflexes of journalism, its established consensus and the existing norms to offer different, plural and critical perspectives.

The way a terrorist act is framed can also change over time. After a certain period of time, when the shock of the attack fades, the media abandon the cohesional or

patriotic frame they had established and entertain a greater diversity of views and opinions. After the Paris attacks in 2015, Chris Elliott, the former editor at The Guardian, remarked that “The idea that these horrific attacks have causes and that one of those may be the policies adopted by West is something that in the immediate aftermath might inspire anger. This is the kind of point of view that should be heard three days after the attack.

The frame is therefore, expressed through the selection or rejection of subjects, their representation, hierarchy, placement and the choice of speakers and images. By Comparing two attacks; one in Beirut (12 November 2015), and the other in Paris (13 November 2015), Nadine Ajaka, the Lebanese-American journalist has shown how the use of few words were enough to set up a representation that can influence the public. For instance, agencies described Beirut attacks, as an attack against “the stronghold of Hezbollah, a Shiite militant group”. By enveloping the area in a communitarian and geopolitical commentary and thus compacting its diverse identities. These news outlets implied, to a certain extent, that a crime was only to be expected, as the Lebanese Shiite militia was a sworn enemy of the Islamic State.

The Paris attacks did not seem to have such characterization in the news coverage, and the media only rarely referred to France’s military interventions against the Islamic State group as the main reason. “Framing” can also, more fundamentally, be described as a philosophy of journalism. For instance, Javier Dario Restrep, a renowned Latin-American expert of journalistic ethics, who also serves as a professor in Columbia, offers an enlightening anecdote on that aspect.

McLaughlin (2016) notes that Ryszard Kapuscinski, one of the most famous war correspondents in the world, , looked at the war differently when he was covering Bogota. Ryszard focused on the solidarity, tenderness and tolerance, associated with the war, of which he said its characters were children, elderly people and pregnant women (McLaughlin, (2016). He had the option of focusing what every other journalist was covering; to meet the war heroes, actors with strength and cruelty. For Ryszard Kapuscinski, the Polish journalist, however, this were different, Similarly, too much reliance on the public and the government authorities, who often react immediately after the attack, and while still shocked from the immediate effects of the attack. As a result, some media outlets are tempted to adopt a more nationalistic frame, to criticize the human rights advocates and to promote the harshest ways to respond to the terror attacks. The risk here is then to ignore what defines the ethics and the values the society stands for, and as well as its commitment to human rights and humanitarian law at international level.

Delori (2020) noted the importance of ensuring that the war on terror is conducted in a humane way. The alternative is adopting a racist discourse that is unique, in that, the media showcases and advocates for the violence they deplore. Delori (2020) argues that the modern, liberal and humanist society does not focus on its own violence. This is therefore, something that needs to be thought about.

Framing the news and representing it in a certain way has its consequences on work of the media in terms of professionalism and factuality. It can, in most cases, lead to ignoring civilian casualties resulting from any retaliation to terrorist attacks, or to neglecting abuses committed by one's own side, which raises questions of journalistic practice of objectivity, impartiality and truth telling in a humane and ethical way.

Vanchikova (2019) notes that In October 2001, in a memorandum transmitted to the editors, CNN, underlined that “given the magnitude of the death toll on innocent people, in the US, we must remain careful not to focus excessively on the human casualties (death and injury) and the challenges of the people of Afghanistan, that will, at the end, be a part of this war. This style of media coverage of terrorism continued until 2004, when the U.S. media seriously started to inform readers on the use of torture in the U.S. manned prisons of Bagram or Abu Ghraib. This has prompted the human rights to condemn the practices associated with the US security apparatus.

Mir (2018) notes that the impact of the drone war on the civilian populations in Pakistan were mostly under- covered or not covered at all, because the raids were considered to be legitimate by the media outlets, whose journalists were convinced of the necessity to harshly fight terror groups. McKelvey (2013) noted that when drone strikes are carried out, key questions get ignored and unanswered.

While journalists could sometimes have a reason and a justification for such framing, it cannot and should not lead to deliberately pending journalism rules and ethics. As a result, framing should also involve explanations related to the main causes of terrorism (Norris et al, 2024).

Marthoz (2017) argues that journalists must be always wary of unequivocal theories and peremptory equations. Behind many explanations, sometimes backed by experts’ opinions, are ideological biases that are so powerful that they prevent an independent approach to the event (Marthoz, 2017). Is terrorism born from social misery? Is it the product of international interference? Which historical episodes inspire it? What is the actual role of religion? Is ‘Jihadism’ the consequence of the radicalization of Islam, or, as the French researcher Olivier Roy believes, the result of the Siamization of

radicalism? The answers to these questions can be determined by not only the media's representation in its editorial lines, but also frequently the choices of journalistic coverage.

The definition of the concept of terrorism is hugely contested and elusive. The classification of an act as terrorism has been a contested issue depending on the parties involved, and also based on ideological stand points. Generally accepted definitions, though, have described terrorism as the rejection of state authority; through politically and/or ideologically motivated violence with the aim of achieving a demoralizing effect on publics and governments (Jones, 2011). Schmid (2007) observes that terrorism is a doctrine about the supposed effective of a fear- generating and forceful political violence on one hand, and a conspiratorial exercise of violent action without legal or moral restraints whose main target is civilians on the other hand.

Schmid (2007) indicates that terrorism has often been used as a weapon by non-state actors like terrorist groups, liberation organisations and other hardline entities fighting for the sole aim of attaining recognition, and as well as intending to advance certain sectorial, political or ideological agenda. But at the same time, states and other government-backed actors, have also indulged in direct terrorism or state-sponsored terrorism. From the revolutionary movements, to the organisations struggling for independence, and the Islamists movements with hardline ideologies dominating the global terrorism scene today, different periods of history have produced different types of terrorism; and in each period, the concept of terrorism and whatever has been categorized as such has always often been contested (Jones, 2011). In more recent past, the phenomenon of terrorism has gained global prominence with the September 11 attacks in the United States of America (USA).

After the 9/11 attacks, the war on terror has become a global and violent confrontations, and the status of the terrorist groups was directly raised. They were identified as international actors whose influence and global actions could no longer be confined to their countries. Today, the international law and relations discourse is almost dominated with the issues related to terrorism and counter-terrorism, as there is no better agent to shape these perceptions about terrorism than the media (Nelson, & Scott, 2002).

The role of media outlets in framing terrorism at global or local levels is as historical as terrorism itself. In order to achieve their overall objectives (often physical and psychological damage), terrorist organizations have adopted to the use of the media, either directly, by using their terror channels - or indirectly, through launching deadly attacks on vulnerable targets, and thus generating publicity and thereby attracting huge media coverage, which, in a way, creates their desired publicity that also comes with the element of fear and impact.

The symbiotic relationship existing between mass media and terrorism is played out in various aspects of media reporting, angling of issues and balance in coverage. Further, media coverage in use of words, images and even dissemination of terrorists own statements only leads to glorifying terrorism. Prominence of this coverage, even when attacks have not happened, leads in amplifying terrorists' intentions and objectives (Schmid, 2009). For example, the largest circulating weekend newspaper in Kenya and East Africa, Sunday Nation, carried a headline on what it said was an Al-Shahab's intended attack on Kenyan parliament in Nairobi on March 1, 2015. The story described the details of how the terrorists intended to carry out the attacks, as well as their number and ways in which previous such attempts had been foiled.

Some scholars believe that the media's coverage on terrorism, focusing on attacks that have been foiled, and reporting of previous such attacks or attempts, has the potential to amplify and help realize some of the objectives of the terrorist's organizations and their leaders. Rumsfeld (2006) notes that such coverage is in line with the norms and the values of the terrorists, and can only result in aiding the actualization of their goals which is either physical or psychological attack.

In a study of the coverage of two investigative documentaries by two local television stations, KTN and NTV, Kisang (2014) noted that the two stations continued to replicate and project the al- Shabaab messages to the audiences, and often quoted verbatim, or replayed terrorists video messages, which were, in some cases, subject to investigations, or had resulted in targeted attacks against Christians in Nairobi and other parts of Kenya.

The question, thus, has been how to create a balance between media blackout on terror activities and enabling terrorism. On 26 September, 2013, one day after the terror attack on Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, the Sunday Nation, ran a splash photo of a bloodied victim which not only drew anger and widespread condemnation, but resulted in demands for an apology to the nation and the families of the terror victims. Unknown to the newspaper, the victim had subsequently died and the image had greatly been celebrated within the terror circles. The management of the newspaper, in its apology, clarified that it did not intend to glorify the terror attacks, which had already happened.

Ahmed et al (2020) noted that the use of images, especially, has been critical in the Al-Shahab's propaganda war. The attacks and killings in Mandera County in North Eastern Kenya, which was extensively reported by the media in Nairobi, again, has

seen the use of victim's pictures in the mainstream newspapers and in television broadcasts in Nairobi. However, looking at some of the reports released immediately after the terrorist attacks, the use of television images and reporting on terror related activities has raised even more questions on the enabling role of mass media in promotion of terrorism (Obwogi, 2021). In his popular investigative documentaries, Jicho Pevu, KTN's Mohammed Ali has on several occasions ignored the need for balanced reporting when using images and words. The Nairobi-based Kenyan media has gone to the extent of replaying Al-Shabaab messages, as in one programme about the anti-terrorist war in the coast, the producer and narrator of the programme consistently used images of Al-Shabaab training in Somalia and replayed their messages encouraging conscription into the groups. They also aired the sermons of wanted terror suspects and Sheikhs encouraging killing of Christians and calling for an open warfare against the state (Muchoki, 2015).

In some TV programmes in Nairobi, Kenya, the terror suspects are heard calling on their followers to kill Kafirs, which stands for non-Muslims (Kisang, 2014). Further, the same programme continued to broadcast the sermons (preaching) of another suspected Muslim religious leader, calling on Muslims to travel to Somalia and train on use of weapons (Kisang, 2014). Even worse, graphic images of slain Muslim cleric were shown in the same documentary, and the narrator used the words "shahid", or martyr, to repeatedly refer to the killed sheikh. In a different programme, NTV would broadcast an investigative piece of similar nature and replicate the same language, words and images as had been used by the terrorists (Kisang, 2014).

2.1.3 Media, Terrorism and Muslim Communities

According to Demarest et al (2020), Media representation of terrorism has had an impact on Muslim communities around the world as acts of violence perpetrated by Muslims receive disproportionately more coverage in the media than those by non-Muslims, with Muslim incidents often labeled as "terrorism" and linked to broader networks of violence. This framing reinforces stereotypes and contributes to the racialization of Muslims in the context of national security (Kanji, 2018). The labeling of crimes as "terrorism" is significantly more likely when the perpetrator is Muslim, influencing public perceptions and contributing to negative judgments and bias against Muslims. This demonstrates a clear media bias in portraying Muslims versus non-Muslims in the context of similar criminal acts. (West and Lloyd, 2017). Saleem et al., (2017) is of the view that exposure to media representation of Muslims, describing them as terrorists correlates with increased support for public policies that harm Muslims, both domestically and internationally.

This effect is mediated by perceptions of Muslims as aggressive, highlighting the role of media in fostering aggressive attitudes and policies towards Muslims (Saleem et al., 2017). The unequal reporting and negative imagery used in media coverage reinforce existing prejudices against Muslims, even in instances where Muslims are the victims of terrorism (Nickerson, 2019). Nickerson is of the view that this biased representation contributes to a cycle of misunderstanding and prejudice that impacts Muslim communities globally.

Research further indicates that crimes are more likely to be labeled as "terrorism" by the media when the perpetrator is Muslim, affecting how Muslims perceive media bias and contributing to negative judgments about their community. This labeling mediates

the effect of Muslim identity on public perceptions, exacerbating stereotypes and fostering bias. (West and Lloyd, 2017).

Brown, Brown and Richards (2015) say that international Muslim students in Britain have reported negative media representation of Muslim countries as sympathetic to terrorism, economically backward, and conservative. These representations lead to Muslims being viewed with suspicion by host communities, affecting students' self-esteem and sense of cultural identity. Some students feel compelled to act as ambassadors to correct these misrepresentations and promote the true essence of Islam (Brown, Brown and Richards, 2015).

The concept of "culture talk" following significant events like September 11 has led to distinguishing between what they describe "good Muslims" on one side, and "bad Muslims" on the other, in media discourse, politicizing religious experience (Kazi, N. 2021) . This binary framing impacts Muslims' perceptions of how their identity is constructed and represented in the media, pushing for a narrative that transcends simplistic categorizations and acknowledges the diversity within the Muslim community (Mamdani, 2002).

2.2 Situating the study in the field of communication

Media representation refers to the idea that everything we see in the media has been constructed and that it serves or acts as a representation of an idea or something (Hall et al, 2024). There is a strong argument that media represents their own interpretation of reality. Media representation is created through a process of selection, omission and construction. These decisions that are made by content creators influences the meaning that as conveyed to the audiences. As a result, the relationship between

media representation under the field of cultural communication studies has been a central concern to scholars throughout modern history (Stokes, 2021).

According to Fursich (2010), while it is commonly assumed that the media have an effect on their audiences through their representation, this question has been of central concern throughout the history of academic communication research. It is within this cultural-critical paradigm of communication studies that scholars created and studied the idea of representation (Hall et al, 2024). This concept helped scholars to move beyond studying media messages as simply a representation or reflection of reality. Instead, representations are embedded in the 24-hour media coverage and live stream, and establish sort of common sense and norms about people, groups and institutions in contemporary society.

The focus by scholars on media representation under the field of cultural communication stems from an awareness that media is neither passive nor apolitical; it is a constitutive force in the production of meaning, identity, and power relations (Hall et al, 2024). In a globalized and digital media ecology, representations are no longer confined to the national, or even regional. They are transnationally circulated narratives that shape how communities are seen, and more crucially, how they see themselves. Within this terrain, media representation of Muslims, particularly Muslim religious scholars, within the context of terrorism coverage, reveals a potent site of semiotic violence, ideological misrecognition, and cultural distortion (Said, 1997).

The subfield of media representation within cultural communication studies offers tools to analyze how meaning is constructed and who controls it. Stuart Hall, a foundational figure in this domain, articulated one of the most important models for understanding media: the encoding/decoding theory (Hall, 2020). Rather

than assuming that media texts transmit fixed meanings from sender to receiver, Hall proposed a circuit model of communication in which producers encode messages with intended meanings that are then decoded sometimes in alignment, sometimes in opposition, by audiences with their own socio-cultural frameworks. In this model, media does not simply reflect reality; it becomes a site where reality is actively constructed and contested through symbolic practices (Hall, 2019). For Muslim communities, their consistent positioning within dominant media discourses, particularly in the Western World, as either suspect or sympathizers in the "war on terror" exemplifies this encoded ideological framing (Said, 2007).

Media representations of terrorism are therefore, rarely accidental; they are situated within broader discourses of securitization and Islamophobia (Cesari, 2013), which Hall would identify as the "dominant -hegemonic code", a code which aligns with institutional ideologies of state power, nationalism, and racial ordering. In practice, Hall's decoding theory reveals the complexity and agency of the audience. Crucially, the encoding/decoding framework enables us to see how media production itself is embedded in structures of power. Media producers; journalists, editors and content strategists, operate within ideological apparatuses that Hall (2019) describe as "ideological state apparatuses," institutions that function to reproduce the dominant ideology of the state. In post-9/11 media coverage, the dominant encoding often fused Islam with violence, producing a semiotic shorthand that was both emotionally charged and ideologically potent (Kumar, 2012). This alignment, frequently unexamined, shaped the very grammar of coverage, from choice of interviewees to framing of headlines and accompanying visuals (Morey & Yaqin, 2011). Yet, Hall's model also emphasizes polysemy, the notion that media texts are inherently open to multiple interpretations.

The media strives to create representations as main signifying practices for producing shared meaning (Hall, 2019). In the US, for instance, cultural media studies have often demonstrated that news media often stereotype certain groups, like non-elite and non-white groups, and as well as other minority groups, by excluding them from coverage or by offering a limited range of representations (Ross, 2019).

The media representations of minorities have been extensively studied by media and communication scholars in the cultural-critical paradigm, for example, (Rudar, 2023). Since criticism directed towards representations mostly focuses on coverage constraints, there is need to question media content, as a major aspect of representations (Fursich, 2010).

This study, therefore, challenges the theories that characterize mass communication as a transparent and straightforward system of inscribing and discovering the intended meaning in discourse, where audiences read and understand the intended meanings of the media texts and images. Hall (2019) further demonstrates the ‘lack of fit’ between the circular process of encoding aspect (by producers and narrators) and the decoding aspect (by the audiences), and the ways in which this opens up possibilities for polysemic values and oppositional accounts to develop. This can often be described as the relationship between the world of science, where media representations are encoded or formed by the journalists, and the consensual world of everyday conversations and commonsense, where media representations are decoded by the audiences. The same way as Hall (2019) criticizes studies that present media representation as a one-way process from encoding to decoding, we need to be critical of the view that media representation of terrorism in Kenya is a straight forward

messaging and receiving concept, and that we need to focus on the impact of those messages to concerned audiences.

Howarth and Sharman (2017) note that it is productive from Social Psychology of communication perspective, to carry out an analysis of the processes of realization and conceptualization. Similar to what Hall (2020) suggests, this would allow us to look at the ways in which representations become systemically distorted and naturalized in the maintenance and defense of the dominant cultural order (Howarth, 2011).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

While there are many theories that could be used in structuring the discussion on the lived experiences of the Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi, Kenya on media representation of terrorism, I have settled on Representation and Phenomenology theories.

2.3.1 Representation Theory

Representation theory, originally developed within cultural studies and semiotics, has its roots in the work of scholars such as Stuart Hall, who emphasized that representation is the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged through language, signs, and images. While Hall's foundational contributions still resonate, more recent work has advanced the field considerably. Hall et al (2021) re-affirmed the significance of representation in framing identity, power, and political visibility, particularly in mediated contexts.

Scholars such as Aiello and Parry (2019) have expanded this view by incorporating perspectives from media theory and sociology, linking representation with questions of symbolic power, legitimacy, and audience reception. Representation theory has

increasingly become central to the study on mediated meaning, especially when examining how identity, power, and discourse intertwine in the framing of political violence.

In this study, the issue of how the theoretical apparatus of representation, illuminates the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars when faced with the media representation of terrorism were explored. The research is grounded in transcendental phenomenology, to explore how symbolic regimes are not just cognitively interpreted but felt, embodied, and negotiated daily. Scholars have recently focused on the dynamic inter-play between representation, securitization, and political visibility (Hall et al, 2021). This further supports the argument that media frames are not neutral; they carry affective weight, signal legitimacy or danger, and shape public perception in profound ways (Banet-Weiser & Higgins, 2019). In turn, individuals who are cast within these frames must constantly negotiate their roles and the assumptions that come with them (van Es & Duyvendak, 2020). Transcendental phenomenology provides an avenue to access these negotiations at the level of lived experience. As Zahavi (2020) has articulated, phenomenology goes beyond surface description to uncover the structures that underpin experience.

The data analysis in this study included horizontalization and theme categorization, seeking to map the full texture and structure of participants' engagement with what might be called the symbolic burden of representation, where participants often describe a lingering sense of hypervisibility and misrecognition, wherein their identities were constantly mediated through the lens of securitized narratives. This further explores how symbolic conflation, where religious identity becomes directly

linked to violence, is a recurrent theme in media representation of terrorism (Kumar, 2021).

The emotional toll of this symbolic burden often translates into behavioral adaptations, to avoid scrutiny or suspicion. This reflects broader critiques in communication studies about asymmetries in voice and visibility (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2019).

As Allen (2019) notes, identity is not merely expressed but constantly rehearsed in response to external gazes. The work of Banet-Weiser (2018) further provides an insight into how resilience and civic resistance are cultivated in response to media representation. This study is, therefore, a testament of how by focusing on representation theory through transcendental phenomenology method, deeper understanding of how symbolic structures can be assessed in real lives. Terrorism, as it circulates through media, is not merely an object of narrative or policy, but a lived texture of experience for those involuntarily entangled in its framing. This also means that the study used Phenomenology as a theory.

2.3.2 Phenomenology theory

Phenomenology theory was conceived by Hirschman, E. C., (1859 - 1938) as a rigorous philosophical method dedicated to the study of lived experience through careful reflection and descriptive analysis of consciousness. The foundational insight of Husserl's thought is that our experiences of the world are always intentional, meaning they are directed toward something, and that understanding this directedness reveals the essential structures of experience (Husserl, 1970). Husserl rejected the so-called "natural attitude", the uncritical assumption that the world exists exactly as we

perceive it, and called for a shift to the "phenomenological attitude," where this everyday acceptance is suspended through the method of epoché (Crowell, 2021).

This study draws on phenomenology theory to explore how media representations of terrorism are experienced by Muslim religious scholars. The choice of this framework is theoretically significant. Phenomenology offers a lens through which researchers can investigate consciousness and perception without pre-imposed theoretical assumptions. According to Zahavi (2020), phenomenology remains distinct in its insistence that phenomena be described as they appear to consciousness, allowing the researcher to bracket out presuppositions and move towards uncovering the essence of experiences. More recent studies emphasize phenomenology's role not only as a method, but also as a philosophical orientation to social research (Zahavi, 2020).

The study specifically benefits from the four major conceptual pillars of Husserl's phenomenology: the lifeworld (Lebenswelt), intentionality, intersubjectivity, and epoché. Each of these concepts, grounded in Husserl's thought, but later extended by other scholars, provided crucial analytical tools for the inquiry into the lived experience of media representation. The lifeworld, as Husserl defined it, refers to the pre-theoretical realm of experience in which people live, act, and make meaning. Jung (2021) underscores how individual and collective lifeworlds intersect, arguing that the cultural contexts in which individuals exist deeply shape how phenomena are experienced.

In this study, the concept of lifeworld helped elucidate how media narratives about terrorism are received not just intellectually, but emotionally and socially, by Muslim religious scholars. Their lifeworld is saturated with religious, cultural, and political contexts that shape their interpretative framework. Yanow (2015) asserts that the

lifeworld is constituted by shared practices, tacit understandings, and habitual expectations. Intentionality, another key component, has been reemphasized in recent phenomenological literature as central to understanding how subjects relate to the world (Mykhailov, 2020).

In this study, intentionality was applied to grasp how participants' consciousness was directed toward specific linguistic and visual cues in media coverage of terrorism. Their reactions were not passive; rather, their intentional engagement with the media revealed how meanings were constructed, contested, or resisted. This underscores Hart's (2019) argument that intentionality is not just a philosophical abstraction but a real-time process in which subjects apprehend and interpret their world. Intersubjectivity, or the shared dimension of experience, has also been foregrounded in current research.

The study also used the concept of intersubjectivity, which as Loidolt (2021) emphasizes is crucial for understanding identity formation and social recognition. In this study, the shared communal background of Muslim scholars shaped a common framework for interpreting media messages. As Tembo et al (2023) point out, intersubjectivity enables researchers to explore how individual experience is always already embedded in collective contexts.

Perhaps most important to the theoretical clarity of this research is the application of epoché. Epoché, or bracketing, involves the suspension of judgment regarding the existence or truth-value of the external world, allowing the researcher to focus purely on how phenomena are experienced (Crowell, 2021). The use of epoché in this study enabled a descriptive rather than evaluative mode of engagement with participants' narratives. Okuonghae (2020) emphasizes that bracketing is not a naïve dismissal

of the world but a disciplined attempt to set aside personal biases and theoretical frameworks that might distort the representation of participants' experiences. This theoretical clarity that fed into methodological rigor was critical in ensuring that the scholars' lived experiences on media representation of terrorism were heard on their own terms. Contemporary researchers such as Vagle (2018) have expanded the application of phenomenology beyond its classical roots, framing it as an encounter, a way of life, and a technique of attentiveness to the lifeworld. Vagle's approach underlines phenomenology's versatility in accommodating the emotional, embodied, and temporal dimensions of human experience.

In this study, participants reflected on the sensory and affective responses to media images and language, pointing to the necessity of a phenomenological approach that encompasses more than just cognitive interpretations. The integration of transcendental phenomenology also aligns with broader trends in qualitative research that emphasize subjectivity, situatedness, and reflexivity.

As Shaker, Van Lanen, and Van Hoven (2021) argue, lifeworld analysis reveals the entanglements of identity, space, and discourse. Similarly, Azeem (2021) suggests that phenomenological methods are especially apt for capturing the ways religious identity is constructed and contested in contemporary media environments. These insights support the theoretical decisions in this study and point toward a broader resonance of phenomenology in current academic debates.

Bernet (2015) further indicates that a rigorous application of phenomenology demands fidelity to eidetic reduction, through which the essential structures of experience are sought. This approach was employed in the analysis phase of this study, using imaginative variation to move from particular lived moments to generalizable

essences of experience. Martinaro (2016) similarly argues that the core tension in phenomenological research lies in navigating the dialectic between subjectivity and generality, a tension this study embraced by holding individual narratives alongside shared themes.

The phenomenological orientation of this research, therefore, does not merely offer a method of data collection and analysis; it provided a philosophical commitment to understanding the world through the eyes of those who live it. It brings into view not just what is said, but how it is said, felt, and made meaningful. It takes seriously the silences, hesitations, and affective weight of narratives. In a media landscape saturated with representational violence, phenomenology theory allows for a textured and ethically attuned understanding of how individuals navigate their mediated lives.

2.4 Review of recent previous research

There are a lot of academic research on media representation of terrorism in USA, Europe and Asia, and a few about the same topic in Africa in general and in Kenya in particular. In this section, previous research on media representation of terrorism is presented with the aim of showing the existing gap in literature on the issue, starting by the literature on media representation of terrorism globally, then Africa and finally in Kenya.

2.4.1 Research on Media Representation of Terrorism at global level

The research in USA, Europe and Asia focused a lot more on media representation of terrorism and how media links it to Muslims and Muslim nations. (Li and Zhang, 2022) investigated media representations of the Islamic religion and the Muslims in the US media, drawing upon an analysis of reports on terrorism in the New York Times over a 17-year period (from Jan.1, 2000 to Dec. 31, 2016) by using the

framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. They examined how Islamic religion and the Muslims were represented in news media coverage and how discursive power is penetrated step by step through such media representations. Most important, they investigated whether Islam, as a religion, and Muslims, as people, have been stigmatized through stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. They found that the representation of Islam and Muslims by the New York Times were largely negative and stereotypical: which, in their view, contributed to people's prejudice, such as Islamophobia.

This was further supported by Sikorsi et al (2021) who examined how Muslims are depicted in relation to Islamic terrorism, and to what extent journalists use undifferentiated coverage – which directly links Muslims to terrorism activities – and differentiated coverage - that actively differentiates Muslims from terrorism. They drew their study from previous research in journalism studies and from terror management theory, and they examined media-specific and event-specific predictors using a quantitative content analysis (12 quality/tabloid newspapers from three countries). They found out that undifferentiated representation of Islam was evident in almost every article. They also found out that proximity of a terror attack, led to a more undifferentiated and less differentiated coverage.

Another research by Betus, Kearns, and Lemieux (2020) arrived at almost the same conclusion. They conducted a systematic analysis of print news coverage of all terrorist attacks in the United States between 2006 and 2015. They found that attacks with Muslim perpetrators are significantly more likely to be referenced as terrorism compared to those with non-Muslim perpetrators, even when controlling for factors like fatalities and affiliation with a group. This study highlights a partial confirmation

of public speculation regarding media bias in framing attacks involving Muslims (Betus, Kearns, & Lemieux, 2020).

This was in line with Ifah (2021), who examined how Western media construct the message that Islam is the religion of terrorists and extremists. The study reveals that media representations often link acts of terror directly to Islam, thereby reinforcing negative stereotypes and misconceptions about the religion and its followers (Ifah, 2021).

Nickerson (2019) further explored the notion that the media reinforces a false synonym between Muslims and terrorism. He begun with a description of news framing bias and how this bias impacts the representation of terrorism attacks and the Muslims, through politically and emotionally charged discourse. He examined select terrorist attacks in France and Turkey, through a content analysis of national and local news articles, analyzing the US media's representation of these events to focus on what elements journalists emphasize, and/or deemphasize in countries with predominantly Muslim and non-Muslim populations. The analysis he did were useful in revealing the mechanisms propagating for rise in tandem with U.S national security's placement on the country's policy agenda due to perceived threat. His findings were geared towards how news media representation of terrorism utilizes biased, negative imagery, representing the events in the Muslim countries in a way that reinforces prejudices against Muslims. Nickerson (2019) concluded that the unequal reporting in media representation of terrorism increases viewership, but at the same time, allows current perceptions about the relations between terrorism and Muslims to continue. On a similar study, Suryandari and Arifin (2021) focused on the representation of Islam and Muslims in international media, particularly after high-

profile terrorist attacks. Their research points out the pervasive negative framing of Islam and Muslims as extremists and terrorists, contributing to the spread of Islamophobia (Suryandari & Arifin, 2021).

Another study conducted by Brown, Brown and Richards, (2016) looked at the experiences and perceptions of Muslims towards media representation of terrorism. He focused on the unique experience of International Muslim student leaders on media representation of terrorism. They presented findings from a qualitative study of British media representations of Islam. They found that the international Muslim students perceived Muslim countries to be represented by the media as: (1) sympathetic to terrorism; (2) economically backward; (3) conservative. The study brought out that the Muslim student leaders believed that these representations led Muslims to be viewed by members of the host community with suspicion. The study also focused on the impact this had on the students' self-esteem and sense of cultural identity.

Critical representation of Muslims was not only a concern in USA and European media, but also in China, where Luqiu and Yangg (2019) and Raza (2019) found out that Chinese state media (either print or electronic media) represents Muslims as the root-cause of the Islamophobic sentiments in China.

2.4.2 Research on Media Representation of Terrorism in Africa

In Africa, despite the emergence of terror groups, and media's huge interest in terrorism reporting, there are few studies done on media representation of terrorism. (Demarest, Godefroidt and Langer, 2020) did interviews with Nigeria Media Practitioners and in a comparative study of two Nigeria newspapers; one Christian-affiliated and another Muslim-affiliated to understand how terrorism is represented by

the newsmakers. The study investigated how Nigerian media covered the Boko Haram crisis, comparing *The Guardian*, based in Christian-dominated southern Nigeria, and *Daily Trust* newspaper, based in Muslim-dominated northern Nigeria. It found no major differences in their framing of the crisis, with both focusing more on the consequences than causes. Socioeconomic and human costs are most discussed, with a slight emphasis on religious affiliations of victims. Both outlets primarily suggest security-based solutions over diplomatic or socioeconomic measures. Interestingly, the Southern-based *Guardian* is no more likely to defend the government or link Boko Haram to Islam than the Northern-based *Daily Trust*.

Hendricks, (2020) analyzed the role of South African national newspapers in the securitization of Muslims, identifying instances where Muslims were labeled as 'the enemy' in media discourse, contributing to the broader 'War on Terror' narrative. The study used Securitization Theory to explore how Muslims have been constructed as a security issue in Africa after the 9/11 terror attacks in New York, the United States of America. It explored, particularly, how western-centered security discourses in regards to Muslims has had an impact on South African security discourse in the post-apartheid period. It claims that the popular media stations imported rather than interrogate debates around the global war on terror. The study found that non-institutional voices have securitized the African Muslims by equating them with terrorism. It illustrated how securitization of African Muslims reproduces partisan knowledge that promote Western interests.

Mou-Danha, (2019) analyzed the coverage of Boko Haram attacks by Nigerian newspapers, using the Functionalist Theory of the Media to examine the role of media in surveillance, transmission, entertainment, correlation, and mobilization in news

about the Boko Haram group. The study did an empirical qualitative and quantitative analysis of how four Nigerian newspapers; Thisday, Vanguard, The Guardians, and Daily Trust of Nigeria covered stories related to the attacks carried out by Boko Haram group. The study observed that the way newspapers from different regions presented reports varied in several ways. On the quantitative analyses, the differences in reporting were in the areas of the frame, the positive and negative aspect of the report, as well as the different entities that were blamed in each report. The frame of conflict was the predominant frame across newspapers, albeit in varying percentages. The main frame over the years was on the conflict. This reflects clashes and disagreement among individuals, groups, or organizations. When used in the news report, the Boko Haram group was usually at one end of the conflict with other entities.

Alfred, & Taiwo (2019) explored the rhetorical functions of thematic choices in Nigerian editorials on terrorism, relating to how newspapers in different regions of the country reveal or mask security issues through thematic selections. The study found that preposition-headed adjuncts occurred the most in thematic positions, and that marked adjuncts were used to substantiate claims, mark varying degrees of commitments and inject prejudices. At the same time, marked complements were thematized to project the sufferers/victims of violence, thus achieve emotive effects on the readers. Several Themes were created to function as adversatives, emphases, correctives and stance markers on security measures in the editorials. All the newspapers used thematic relations that clearly projected negative disposition to the violent activities by Boko Haram insurgents, cattle herders and Niger Delta militant in Nigeria.

2.4.3 Research on Media Representation of Terrorism in Kenya

Most of the research on Media Representation of Terrorism in Kenya focused on content analysis (Adhoch, 2016; Muindi, 2020; Nyakomitah et al, 2021; Woldemariam. 2018). For instance, Adhoch, (2016) did a critical evaluation of media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya through content and discourse analysis and found that the Kenyan media has deliberately encouraged public indignation as a result of terror attacks, and perpetuated what the study referred to as “a moral panic” in the society.

This is supported by Muindi (2020), in a study sponsored by the international centre for counter-terrorism, which dealt with mitigating the impact of media reporting terrorism through content analysis with specific focus on government communication during Westgate and Dusit2 attacks (in 2013 and 2019 respectively) and found that Kenya media reporting of terror stories is laced with patriotic sentiments often encouraged by the state.

Mutie, (2021) examined the lived experience of journalists who covered terrorism incidents between 2011-2019. His study also looked at the structures that influence journalists’ work when reporting terrorism. He found that nationalistic coverage is highly associated with Nairobi-based Kenya-born reporters – a clear bias to favor their country. Legal, policy and organization structures influence journalists covering terrorism. It also found that there was violation of tenets of professional journalism, such as impartiality, objectivity, and journalistic ethics.

Another study by Nyakomitah et al (2021) focused on how media coverage of terrorist attacks influenced public perception and fed into the narratives of terrorist groups. The study revealed that there was a significant effect on the security situation in Nairobi as

a result of televised coverage of terror attacks. The study found that there was a significant relationship between media coverage of terror incidents and increased insecurity in Nairobi. The recommendations included the development of proportionality in the reporting on terrorist attacks because, it argued, an overemphasis on terrorist threats has an inadvertent advancement of terrorism and terrorist activities. It therefore said that there is a need for care by journalists lest they be used as vehicles of propaganda by terrorists.

Woldemariam (2018) investigated the impact of counter-terrorism measures set by the Kenyan government on the functioning of media outlets, specifically focusing on print media. The study concluded that counter-terrorism measures built by the government could turn into “a rat ship”. It found that government intervention diminished the freedom of the two newspapers to independently make decisions without fear of possible ramifications. It further indicated that individual journalists admitted to have been coerced into self-censorship.

2.5 Rationale of study after literature review

The literature reviewed reveals a significant body of research on media representation of terrorism, with a predominant focus on the global context, particularly in the United States, Europe, and Asia. These studies have consistently highlighted the negative framing of Islam and Muslims, linking the Islamic religion to terrorism. Critical analyses, such as those by Li and Zhang (2022) and Sikorsi et al. (2021), have illustrated the persistent stigmatization and reinforcement of stereotypes through media narratives, leading to widespread Islamophobia. Similar patterns are observed in Africa, where limited studies have been done, such as those by Hendricks (2020) and Demarest, Godefroidt, and Langer (2020), indicate the securitization of African

Muslims and the framing of terrorism with religious undertones. In Nairobi, Kenya, the media's nationalistic and often sensational reporting has also been shown to perpetuate moral panic and influence public perceptions, as evidenced by research from Adhoch (2016) and Mutie (2021). Although these studies provide valuable insights, they reveal limitations in scope and depth.

Despite this growing body of knowledge, a critical gap remains in understanding the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars who are often central to the narratives surrounding Islam and terrorism. According to Brockopp, (2017), the Muslim religious scholars hold influential positions within their communities. This leads to them being frequently at the intersection of media scrutiny and public opinion among the Muslim population in Nairobi, Kenya. However, little research has been conducted to explore their perceptions on how media representations of terrorism affects their roles, identities, and interactions with their communities and as well as the broader society.

It also is very clear in the reviewed literature that most of the current studies done on media representation of terrorism have mainly revolved around the content-analysis based on some framing theories or experiences of the journalists themselves. Majority of the previous research on the field either analyzed the performance of the journalist and the media houses regarding their representation of terrorism, with some very few studies looking at the impact of terrorism coverage on the wellbeing of journalists. According to Müller-Bloch & Kranz, (2014), this kind of emphasis has the potential of leading to a gap in the research, especially in how media representation of terrorism affects the Muslim communities.

This study opens up new avenues of research into how Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi, Kenya experience and perceive media representations of terrorism, a perspective that has rarely been explored in the literature so far. As Miles (2017) argues, one of the challenges that researchers have to overcome is the development of a research agenda that will fill the existing gaps in the area of study. This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to the development of a new research pathway in the field of media representation of terrorism by focusing on the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi, Kenya, a group that has been largely under-researched in this context. This means that the voices of the most likely interlocutors to Muslim communities on media representation of terrorism - the Muslim religious scholars - has attracted little attention. As a result, this research offers an opportunity to contribute to this gap and further expand the scope of the research on media representation of terrorism through the incorporation of lived experiences of an often-neglected demographic.

Aside from filling a critical gap in the research in the field of media representation of terrorism, this study also utilizes phenomenology as a method of inquiry, which separates it from much of the current literature on media and terrorism. While much of the research on media representations of terrorism has been conducted using quantitative approaches, phenomenology allows an in-depth focus on the personal and emotional impacts of media representations. As Müller, Bloch, and Kranz (2014) notes, this variation of research methods might provide new insights into the area, particularly where the main approach has traditionally been one dimensional. With phenomenology, this research brings new insights by not limiting it to content analysis, but bringing on board the subjective experience of religious Muslim scholars as their contribution to the discourse introduces a new methodological perspective.

Another important approach is that of the context of Kenya itself. Few comparative works on media representation of terrorism have been done compared to the available literature in Western and Asian contexts. There are relatively fewer studies in the field of media representation of terrorism targeting African nations and even fewer directed specifically towards Kenya, where most research overlooks broader discourses shaping media practices and public perceptions of terrorism. Addressing these gaps is critical to understanding the complex interplay between terrorism, media representation, and public discourse in Kenya. The aim of this research, therefore, is to localize the current stock of knowledge by examining the perspectives of the Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi, Kenya on the phenomenon of media representation of terrorism. According to Robinson et al. (2011), there are always populations that are underserved; Muslim communities in Nairobi, Kenya, especially the religious scholars, represent such a population. This gap is a clear indication of the importance of this study in adding to the empirical set of literature on how Muslim religious scholars negotiate their roles within the community amidst the media representation of terrorism.

This empirical contribution is important in advancing our understanding of how media representations of terrorism impacts specific communities and lays the foundation for future research that may further explore the intersection of media, religion, and terrorism. This study, therefore, fills not only a critical gap in the literature but also provides valuable insights for policy makers, media practitioners, and scholars interested in addressing the complex relationship between media representation of terrorism and their effects on Muslim communities.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, five main sections were discussed. In the first section, the main concepts in the study were defined. In the second section, the theme of situating the study to the field of communication was discussed, while in the third section, theoretical framework was explained. In the fourth section, relevant recent research were dealt with. Lastly, the rationale of the study after review of literature was explored.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

In this chapter, the philosophical paradigm that guide this research and the reasons for choosing qualitative approach were explained. The logic behind using transcendental phenomenological method was also discussed. The instruments of data collection and data analysis were equally explored. The ethical challenges the study may grapple with and how to mitigated them were explained.

3.1 Philosophical Paradigm

This study is informed by the interpretive/constructivist philosophical paradigm. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) state that research philosophy is a set of believes and assumptions about the development of knowledge. A paradigm also means a way of looking at the world and interpreting what is observed, while a research philosophy indicates how research should be carried out, with what degree of involvement and by whom (Rubin and Rubin, 2011).

Al-Saadi (2014) notes that two main philosophical assumptions in research are ontology and epistemology, and any researcher should be committed to them in the process of framing the research. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) are of the view that Ontology is defined as the nature of reality, or our assumptions about reality and/or knowledge, whilst epistemology refers to the way reality or knowledge is studied.

The assumptions on ontology can be conceived along a continuum of two extremes; on side is the 'objective' view of reality, while on the other side is the 'subjective' (Johnson 2008). Epistemology can be referred to as the nature of evidence and

knowledge, the rules and principles by which we decide whether and how social phenomena can be known and how knowledge can be demonstrated (Mason, 2003: 16).

The two most common epistemological paradigms are positivism and constructivism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). There are others such as post-positivism and postmodernism. Denzin and Lincoln explain that the ontological positions of relativism and realism are in agreement with epistemological viewpoints of positivism and constructivism respectively.

This study therefore uses the interpretive paradigm since it agrees with the fact that researchers work with their participants in not only co-creating reality together, but also interpreting it in certain ways. The interpretive epistemology was chosen because it is also linked to subjectivism with the assumption that knowledge can only be created from an individual's point of view (Johnson 2008).

The interpretive as a paradigm is reliant on observation and interpretation, such that observation means collecting information about certain events, and interpretation means making conclusions or assessing the fit of information with abstract patterns, and ways of giving meaning to the information (Aikenhead, 1997). Therefore, the interpretive-constructionist epistemological paradigm was adopted because the lived experiences of the Muslim religious scholars differed, and the same to their perception of the Nairobi-based Kenyan media and the society as a whole, based on their individual exposure to the media, which informs their lived experiences on the terrorism phenomenon as represented by the Kenyan media. This is because interpretivism refers to the approaches which emphasize on the meaningful nature of the character and participation of the people in both cultural and social life (Elster,

2007, Walsham, 1995). This statement implies that the research methods in question are based on the premise that individuals' perceptions of reality are formed through social interactions and constructs created by human actors. Consequently, these methods are distinctly different from those used in natural sciences, effectively excluding them as they do not align with the social constructivist approach (Eliaeson, 2002; McIntosh, 1997). This exclusion highlights a fundamental divergence in the epistemological approaches between social sciences and natural sciences.

The study delves deeply into how Muslim religious scholars perceive media representation of terrorism. This focus stems from the interpretivist perspective, which seeks to uncover the underlying meanings and motives behind people's behaviors and their interactions within their society and culture (Whitley, 1984). Similarly, interpretivism believes that understanding a culture involves exploring the thoughts, ideas, and significant meanings of its people (Boas, 1995). Boas revolutionized anthropology by treating culture as an interconnected system of symbols, ideas, and values, advocating for its study as a cohesive entity wherein individuals' mental processes are assessed in relation to their judgments of others (Boas, 1995; Kuper, 1999; Stocking, 1968).

The relevance of interpretivism to the study is profound, as it supports the notion that the cultural worldview of Muslim scholars in Nairobi, Kenya, may differ. This divergence makes their perspectives particularly significant in the media representation of terrorism. Interpretivism, rooted in the principles of post-positivism and the *verstehen* approach of social science advocated by thinkers like Max Weber and Georg Simmel, argues that truly objective data is unattainable. Researchers invariably bring their own biases to the study, affecting both their perception and that

of their subjects (Walsham, 1995). Lin (1998) further elaborates that interpretivists not only identify causal relationships but also explore how these relationships manifest within specific contexts, providing a richer understanding of the phenomena (Kelliher, 2005; Lin, 1998).

The interpretive approach employed in this study emphasizes that media content is subject to individual and collective interpretation. This subjectivity extends to the creation of meaning, which can influence viewers' experiences positively or negatively. According to Willis (1995), interpretivists reject the notion of a singular, correct path to knowledge. Instead, they value theories based on their relevance and interest to researchers and their subjects. This approach is characterized by deriving constructs through detailed analysis of the phenomena of interest, acknowledging that knowledge and meaning arise from interpretative acts (Gephart, 1999; Myers, 2009).

By engaging with the subjective experiences of Muslim religious scholars, the research acknowledges the interpretivist emphasis on contextual analysis. Interpretive research methods, such as interviews and participant observation, focus on the intricate process of human sense-making, without predefined variables (Reeves and Hedberg, 2003; Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994).

This methodological choice reflects the interpretive aim to explore the subjective motivations and meanings behind social actions. Interpretivists value the refinement of existing theories rather than the creation of new ones. They utilize theories in various ways throughout the research process: to guide data collection, as part of a repetitive analysis process, and as outcomes of their studies (Walsham, 1995). This study leverages these approaches, focusing particularly on the repetitive interplay between theory and data. Moreover, interpretivism encompasses a variety of paradigms with

philosophical roots in hermeneutics and phenomenology. Phenomenology, as both a philosophy and a method of analysis, provides a framework for describing data within its broader philosophical context (Boland, 1985; Klein and Myers, 1999).

Central to the study is the participation and collaboration with Muslim religious scholars, reflecting the interpretive values of engagement and co-construction of knowledge (Henning, van Rensburg, and Smit, 2004). As a participant observer, the researcher immerses himself in the research context, striving to understand the actions and meanings as they are naturally expressed within the community (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). By adopting a relativist ontology and an interpretive-constructionist epistemology, the researcher recognizes that their background as a former journalist and a Muslim shape their interactions and interpretations within the study. This self-awareness informs the use of qualitative methods, ensuring that the research is both reflective and rigorous.

3.2 Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research approach was chosen for this study to align with the perspectives of numerous scholars who support the use of qualitative methods within the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Silverman, 2000; McQueen, 2002; Thomas, 2003; Willis, 2007; Nind & Todd, 2011). Willis (2007) specifically emphasizes that interpretivists generally prefer qualitative methods due to their capacity to produce detailed reports that are essential for a deep understanding of contexts. This preference is supported by Thomas (2003), who notes that the interpretive paradigm represents a world where reality is socially constructed, intricate, and continuously evolving, making qualitative methods particularly suitable for capturing this complexity.

Unlike the positivist paradigm, which leans towards quantifiable data and observable facts, interpretivism engages with the world as it is perceived through individual perspectives. Glesne & Peshkin (1992) describe the positivist approach as one that often aligns with quantitative methods due to its focus on measurable and observable variables. However, in the interpretive paradigm, as McQueen (2002) points out, the qualitative approach allows for a more nuanced exploration of reality, accommodating the diverse worldviews of participants.

In practical terms, the study utilizes in-depth interviews with Muslim religious scholars to explore how social experiences are constructed and understood, particularly in relation to terrorism and media in Nairobi, Kenya (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). This methodology is chosen not only to gather rich, context-sensitive data but also to generate new insights that could illuminate the complex social dynamics at play. Hammersley (2001) highlight the potential of qualitative research to foster the development of new concepts that can shed fresh light on the studied issues.

Furthermore, the flexibility and fluidity of qualitative research methods made them ideal for the study. These methods are inherently adaptive, driven by data that emerge from the research context, thus allowing for a responsive approach to the unfolding realities of the field (Mason, 2006). This approach enabled me to delve deeply into the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars, offering a nuanced understanding of their perspectives and challenges.

The philosophical underpinnings of interpretivism also guide the choice of methodology. McQueen (2002) argues that interpretivists seek to capture the individualized perspectives of participants who each have their unique interpretations of reality. This personalized view is crucial for encompassing the varied worldviews

of the individuals involved in the study. Creswell (2009) further supports this, stating that qualitative research serves as a tool for exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups attribute to social or human problems.

As such, the goal as a researcher is to deeply engage with the world of the participants, gaining insights into their backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences through qualitative methods (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Creswell, 2003; Yanow and Schwartz, 2011). This approach is not just about collecting data; it is about understanding the complex differences in human experience, as interpreted through the lenses of those living it.

3.3 Transcendental Phenomenological Method

The study opted for Transcendental Phenomenology as the research method to explore the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars regarding terrorism as depicted by the Nairobi-based Kenyan media. This choice was influenced by the phenomenological focus on starting with a specific experience or condition and, through the detailed narratives of participants who share a similar incident or condition, explicating the impacts and perceptions tied to that experience. As Willis (2007) points out, phenomenology differentiates between phenomena (the perceptions or appearances as understood from a human perspective) and noumena (the essence of things as they actually are).

Transcendental Phenomenology was particularly suitable for the study as it is anchored in the lived experiences of the participants over time, capturing their profound perceptions. Czarniawska-Joerges (2004) describes it as an approach that translates lived experiences into a narrative or textual form, presenting the sequence of events or actions chronologically.

Another compelling reason for choosing the phenomenological approach is its capacity to bring out clearly the commonalities in experiences among multiple individuals regarding a specific concept or phenomenon. In such studies, the interviewer encourages the interviewee to recount their experiences in a narrative that connects the events in chronological order, thereby preserving the temporal integrity of their experiences (Uwe Flick, 2002).

The principal aim of employing phenomenology in this study was to describe, rather than explain or quantify, the lived experiences. Phenomenology seeks to distill these experiences down to their universal essence, capturing the core nature of the phenomenon (Manen, 1990). Among the types of phenomenology, which include both transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology (Yuksel, 2015), transcendental phenomenology was chosen for its methodological rigor in isolating and examining the phenomena through qualitative analysis (Moustakas, 1994).

In addition to that, the study opted for transcendental phenomenology because it adds depth to the understanding of human experiences within qualitative research. This approach emphasizes the description of experiences rather than their explanation or analysis. A transcendental phenomenological study was ideal for investigating the real perceptions of Muslim religious scholars towards terrorism, as represented by the media. A key technique used in this approach is bracketing, which is essential for obtaining a genuine and untainted description of the phenomenon under study (Moustakas, 1994).

This approach was chosen because it aligns with Moustakas's view that transcendental phenomenology is a scientific study that focuses on how phenomena appear to us in consciousness, unfiltered and described in their pure form (Moustakas, 1994;

Creswell, 2013). Moustakas (1994) emphasizes the use of transcendental phenomenology specifically when the research focus is on participants' experiences rather than those of the researcher. Since the essence of transcendental phenomenology is to unearth the inherent meanings in experiences (Creswell, 2004), it was the most suitable method for this study, aiming to access firsthand insights from those directly influenced by the phenomenon. This methodological choice enabled an in-depth exploration of how the participants perceive and interpret their experiences, contributing to a richer understanding of their lived realities.

This calls for in depth, semi-structured interviews with Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi. The goal here is both to collect rich narratives and to maintain bracketing throughout the process, possibly through researcher's journaling to monitor implicit biases. Next, the analysis proceeded through transcendental phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation. In the reduction phase, each scholar's narrative was treated as a unique text; significant statements on how they perceive media representation of terrorism, are identified and horizontally organized with equal weight. These steps revealed the essence of their lived experience, what is always true across contexts. Finally, the researcher synthesized textual and structural descriptions to articulate a composite essence: perhaps revealing a tension between religious authority and public suspicion, or resilience in scholarly identity despite misrepresentation. This step mirrors Moustakas's synthesis of experiences into a unified portrayal of the phenomenon. Using this rigorous, Husserl grounded method ensures the findings transcend individual case details towards insights into the universal structures of Muslim scholars' lived experiences with media framing of terrorism in Nairobi. And by maintaining the transcendental bracketing, reduction and

imaginative variation, the study remains faithful to the participants' pre reflective lived experience rather than researcher interpretation.

3.4 Target Population

Polit and Hungler (1999) describe the population as the comprehensive sum of all the objects, subjects, or members that meet specific criteria. Similarly, Oso and Onen (2011) define the population as the entirety of subjects displaying common characteristics observable to a researcher, or as the whole environment relevant to the research's focus. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) further refine this concept by defining the target population as the complete group of units from which data are collected for the purposes of making generalizations about a larger group.

For the purposes of the study, the population comprises Muslim religious scholars of all adult age groups who have the authority to oversee a mosque or an Islamic religious center. This group of scholars is significant in size, with estimates suggesting there are over 1,000 Muslim religious scholars nationwide, and more than 200 based in Nairobi alone, according to data from the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims.

This specification of the population is crucial as it outlines the exact subset of the community that the study aims to explore, ensuring that the findings are appropriately representative of the broader group. By focusing on these scholars, the study aims to capture insights into a key segment of the Muslim community that plays an important role in shaping religious and social discourse within the country.

3.5 Sampling

For this study, a purposive sampling method was used to recruit the participants. The purposive sampling method allows the researchers to select participants from

individuals who meet the inclusion criteria in the study experiences were useful for the purpose of the study (Patton, 2002). A sample size is the number of items to be selected from the population to constitute the sample (Kothari, 2012).

As a result, the participants in this study comprised from Muslim religious scholars who man Mosques and Islamic religious centers in Nairobi. According to Marshall (1996), the number of participants for a qualitative study becomes clear when new categories, themes or explanations stop emerging from the data that are being collected. Chandran (2004) says that sampling method is the process of selecting enough number of elements from the population so that a study of the selected sample represents the population adequately. Besides, an understanding of its properties or characteristics makes it possible to generalize such properties to the wider target population elements.

The purposive sample used in the study is also commonly called a judgmental sample, and it is one that participants are selected based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study. Purposive sampling can be very useful for situations where you need to reach a targeted sample quickly and where sampling for proportionality is not the main concern (Oribhabor, C. B., & Anyanwu, C. A., 2019).

All participants in the study were introduced through a descriptive profile. Ten Muslim religious scholars from major mosques and religious centers in Nairobi participated in this study. The participants belong to six main mosques and religious centers in Nairobi. The first is the Jamia Mosque, which serves as a mosque and a religious center for the Muslim Community in Nairobi, of which a quarter of Nairobi-based Muslim Religious Scholars either operate from or subscribe to. It is regarded as living symbol of Islam not only in Nairobi, but also in the East Africa (Nelson, 2016).

Jamia Mosque was established in 1902 and has been playing a significant role in the political and social lives of the Muslims in Nairobi, Kenya (Nandwa, 2016). The other entity is the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, a renowned body that officially represents Muslim Communities, which has official recognized at national level, and with a membership of majority of Nairobi-based Muslim religious scholars. The list also included the National Muslim Leaders Forum (NAMLEF) which is a key Islamic institution that played a major role in the political and social life of the Muslims and led Muslims to vote against the government's constitutional draft in 2005 and campaigned against the then President Mwai Kibaki in 2007 (Herve, 2008). The list also includes EFA Community centre in South C, Nairobi, which consists of a mosque and a religious centre. Others are Ummah Islamic University, Eastleigh Mosque and Pangani Mosque; which are all significant Islamic religious centers.

Participants for this study were purposefully selected based on their role in the Muslim society and their prominence and significance in the Muslim leadership. In order to participate in the study, participants had to read and agree with an informed consent form. All 10 participants were male. This is because it is only male who play the biggest role in the leadership of Muslim affairs in Mosques and religious centers. None of the participants withdrew from the study. Participants were asked the same 14 interview questions (see Appendix D), with additional questions included if clarification from participants was needed. Each interview lasted 30 to 45 minutes.

According to Rees (1997:134), inclusion criteria are “the characteristics we want those in our sample to possess”. The participants chosen for this study come from adult Muslim religious scholars who could speak English languages, and who have been involved in the propagation of Islamic religion either as Imams in the mosques or

running Muslim institutions in Nairobi. The sample from Muslim religious scholars were chosen for their significant experience in Islamic propagation and recognized by the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims (SUPKEM). In this study, participants with little experience or few years in the field were excluded, because the researcher felt that they may not have been in the field long enough to be affected by the media representation of terrorism phenomenon. Participants were also selected for their deep understanding of the Muslim community and their struggle with the terrorism phenomenon.

The primary selection criteria included extensive leadership experience, defined as a minimum of fifteen years in charge of a prominent mosque or Islamic centre, and demonstrable engagement in media-related activities, such as having significant media exposure and facilitating media interactions, during and after major terrorism events (e.g., Westgate 2013, Garissa 2015). This ensures each participant has firsthand lived experience of media representation of terrorism. Studies employing similar purposeful sampling note that choosing participants who both lead religious institutions and have navigated media landscapes enhances depth and relevance of phenomenological inquiry. This exposure is essential to capture the detailed essence of their lived experiences.

The study settled on 10 interviews, because it considered the fact that phenomenological research bases its findings on the quality and depth of the data rather than the quantity. It is from these notions that findings from an in-depth interview with the ten Muslim scholars has enabled such a rich account of the experiences and perceptions to be made and, consequently, facilitate a relevant and thorough exploration of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2023).

As a result, I have considered that I have reached saturation at around ten interviews in the course of this study. In phenomenological research, the adequacy of the number of interviews to be conducted is judged by the concept of saturation, which is when more interviews fail to yield any fresh information pertinent to the study's research questions (Creswell, 2013). The quality of methods applied in data collection also contributes to achieving saturation. In-depth interviews enable the recording of experiences due to the gathering of volumes of information on the issues surrounding the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Data was therefore collected and analyzed, then the researcher returned to the field for more data collection that could fill in gaps until there was no new information coming in their hand (Charmaz, 2006).

Smith et al (2009), argued, and supported by phenomenological methodology experts, that in-depth phenomenological work may reach saturation with as few as five participants, more so, if the interviewees were representative of experiences within the targeted demographic. This emanates from the fact that most of the previous research conducted in this area indicates that smaller focused samples are enough to reach depth in the phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994). The very nature of the topic being addressed, Muslim religious scholar's experiences and perspectives on media presentations of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya, indicates that the diversity of experience is going to have to be somewhat restricted in nature, and hence fewer interviews were able to do the necessary job of fully tapping into all the important dimensions of this aspect. Even more so, while the quantitative research sample size formulates the basis for the achieved statistical significance, phenomenology creates depth in the understanding.

3.6 Data generation

The data for this study was generated through in-depth interviews with the participants to the study. The participants in this phenomenological research were considered to be co-researchers, as they provided their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The field work spanned a total of four months from May to August 2023, where one-on-one interviews were conducted with the 10 participants from six mosques and Islamic centers in Nairobi.

The data collection process was in form of one-on-one interview with each participant at their convenience, and at their offices at the mosques or the centers. All 10 participants participated in the one-on-one interviews in their individual capacity. All 10 participants completed the one-on-one interviews.

The interview used semi-structured, open-ended questions, to give room for participants to describe their experiences. This is because open-ended questions are appropriate for a transcendental phenomenological study as it allowed participants to tell their story about the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). Moustakas (1994) explained that researchers may elect to follow cues of the participants during interviews to gather a thorough description of the experience. Each interview was recorded with an audio recorder and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist.

3.7 Data analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted by adhering to a simplified adaptation of Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology guidelines, which are designed to organize and analyze qualitative data effectively. This approach included several distinct steps aimed at ensuring the integrity and depth of the analysis. Initially, the

researcher engaged in the process of bracketing, a critical step where the researcher set aside their own perceptions and experiences to ensure that the voices of the participants were heard without bias. This was followed by the development of both textual and structural descriptions of the data, which involved a deep dive into the actual content and the context of the participants' responses.

Further, the study engaged in a detailed coding process where significant words and phrases from the participants were identified and categorized. This coding was crucial for developing common themes that addressed both the "what" and the "how" of the participants' experiences with media representation of terrorism. Through this coding, a synthesis of meanings and essences was constructed, capturing the core of the Muslim religious scholars' lived experiences as depicted by the media.

Additionally, throughout the data collection phase, the researcher practiced memoing, an essential technique in qualitative research. Memoing involved writing down immediate thoughts and insights after interacting with the data, which facilitated a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study (Creswell, 2013). This method not only helped in organizing thoughts but also played an important role in reflecting on the transcribed data to grasp the full scope of the participants' experiences.

To maintain objectivity and ensure a clear, unbiased view of the participants' stories, the researcher used bracketing rigorously throughout the analysis. The transcripts from in-depth, one-on-one interviews offered a rich source of data. By continuously bracketing the researcher's personal thoughts and diligently noting any emergent biases, has helped in minimizing their influence and focused purely on the participants' narratives. This approach helped in acknowledging and setting aside any biases, thus enabling an unfiltered reception of the participants' true experiences.

The analysis process began with a thorough examination of the research questions, which guided the entire study. Prior to diving into these questions, all extraneous notes and documents that did not directly relate to the participants' experiences with the Nairobi-based Kenyan media's representation of terrorism were removed, as per Moustakas' (1994) recommendations. The coding process started with an equal and unbiased review of the transcribed data, ensuring that each piece of data was given equal importance. This neutrality was crucial to developing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena through the participants' perspectives.

Utilizing NVivo 12 software, the data analysis process was managed and facilitated by uploading transcribed interview documents, with each participant identified by a pseudonym. This software proved invaluable in organizing the data and aiding in the systematic analysis. Following the horizontalization process, every significant statement related to the participants' experiences was listed and treated with equal importance. Repetitive statements were eliminated to refine the data set.

From this refined data set, thirty distinct codes were identified and labeled, and categories were created in NVivo 12 to organize related textual content. This categorization allowed for an organized review of the data, ensuring no critical variance in the researcher's assumptions went unnoticed as the data was thoroughly examined for significant statements (Creswell, 2012).

These codes were finally grouped into four overarching themes, reflecting the core experiences and perceptions of the participants. Table 3.1 in the study documents these codes and themes, detailing the specific codes used, the frequency of their occurrence, and the themes they supported. This structured approach not only bolstered the

robustness of the study's findings but also ensured that the representation of the participants' voices was both accurate and profound.

Table 3.1: Development and Identification of four categories from 30 codes

<i>Experience with the media</i>	<i>Impact on Muslims</i>	<i>Views on media</i>	<i>Media reforms</i>
Emotional feelings 32	Media role 14	Media bias 26	Media curriculum 20
Problem with reporting 22	Society feelings 16	Media independence 12	Suggestions for improvements 10
Linking Islam with terrorism 21	Personal experience 15	Attitude towards media 10	Muslim journalists 5
Muslim Community feelings 16	Personal effect 14	Media propaganda 10	Engagement with scholars 8
Promoting terrorism 10	Religious radicalization 7	After Viewership 7	War on terror 5
Countering media reporting 7	Muslim media 4	Commercializing news 6	Young/new journalists 5
	Media influence 10	Improving 10	Media response 7

In the last step of the phenomenological reduction process, categories with similar features were grouped together into four themes and sub-themes, and the resulting themes were arranged into a clear textural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). For example, the theme “experience with the media” comprises of the codes of emotional feelings, challenge with reporting, linking Islam with terrorism, community feelings, promoting terrorism, religious reporting and countering media reporting. Imaginative variation was used to reveal possible meanings of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). To accomplish this, different potential interpretations were examined to explain the textural meanings, and underlying themes were explored that might best reveal a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. From these themes, a composite description was developed that represented the essence of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013).

Table 3.2: Theme Categorization

Theme Number	Theme Title	Subtitles	Codes for each subtitle
Theme 1	Experience with media	1. Reactions to media reporting	Emotional feelings 32, Muslim Community feelings 16, Countering media reporting 7
		2. Challenge with media reporting	Reporting problems 22, Linking Islam with terrorism 21, Promoting terrorism 10
Theme 2	Impact on Muslims	1. Impact on society	Media role 14, Society feelings 16, Muslim media 4, Media influence 10, Religious radicalization 7
		2. Personal impact	Personal experience 15, Personal impact 14
Theme 3	Views on Media	1. Editorial issues	Media bias 26, Media independence 12, Media propaganda 10
		2. Business issues	After Viewership 7, Commercializing news 5
		3. Perceptions	Attitude towards media 10, Improving 10
Theme 4	Media reforms	1. Policy improvements	Media curriculum 20, Muslim journalists 5, Young/new journalists 5, War on terror 5
		2. Engaging Muslims	Engaging scholars 8, Media response 7, Suggestions for improvements 10

The following chapter (Chapter Four) provides a narrative of each theme and subtheme that is reflective of the participants' experiences and perceptions regarding their experiences with the Nairobi-based Kenyan media's representation of terrorism.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

It is crucial for all researchers to carefully assess the ethical dimensions associated with their studies and devise strategies to mitigate potential challenges (Creswell, 2013). As a former journalist and a Muslim, the researcher recognizes that concerns about bias may arise. Nevertheless, in transcendental phenomenological dissertations,

such biases are addressed through rigorous data gathering and analysis procedures. Specifically, the reduction process, involving bracketing or phenomenological vigilance as described by Van Kaam (1966, p. 259), which ensures that the researcher's personal views do not interfere with the participants' authentic interpretations of the phenomenon or its effects on them.

For this study, an authorization was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation to access the research sites. Given the sensitive nature of the topic concerning terrorism, the identities of the respondents, who are Muslim religious scholars, remain confidential. They are referred to simply as Respondent 1, Respondent 2, and so forth, to safeguard their privacy. The focus of the study is not on the backgrounds of the respondents but on capturing their firsthand experiences and perceptions concerning how terrorism is portrayed by the Kenyan media.

To ensure that participation was purely voluntary, all respondents were provided with a signed consent form outlining their involvement in the research. This form served to inform them about the purpose of the study and the implications of their participation (Nyambedha, 2008:773). They were advised that their involvement was entirely optional and that they could withdraw at any time without consequences. Furthermore, participants were assured that they could request the return of any personal documents acquired during the study.

To maintain the highest standards of confidentiality, advanced security measures such as password-protected files were employed to protect transcripts and other sensitive documents. All the transcripts were retained for further analysis. Additionally, a seminar was organized to disseminate the research findings and shared the results

through scholarly publications and the thesis is available at Moi University's Nairobi library. These documents are also accessible online, contributing to the broader academic and scientific community.

3.9 Trustworthiness

The question of trustworthiness in qualitative research continues to draw critical attention, particularly from positivist traditions that emphasize quantification, replicability, and generalizability. Such critiques often stem from a misalignment between paradigms rather than methodological weakness (Nowell et al, 2017). In interpretive and constructivist traditions, where the goal is to uncover meaning embedded in lived experience, validity and reliability must be reconceptualized to suit the epistemological stance of qualitative inquiry (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This is particularly relevant in this study, which explores how Muslim religious scholars make sense of and respond to media representations of terrorism, a domain deeply entangled with identity, narrative, and symbolic power.

To uphold rigor in this context, the researcher engaged in prolonged, iterative field engagement that facilitated deep contextual understanding and relational trust, consistent with the principles of methodological immersion (Tracy, 2020). Echoing the calls of contemporary scholars who argue for "rigor without rigidity" (Levitt, 2021), this approach ensured that trustworthiness was not retrofitted through positivist analogues but embedded through reflexivity, co-construction of meaning, and thick description.

Following the foundational shift proposed by Guba (1981), but updated by recent methodological refinements (Amankwaa, 2016), the study adopted the four-dimensional model of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability. Credibility was reinforced through strategies like; bracketing and field notes (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability was achieved through rich contextual detailing, allowing scholars and practitioners to evaluate the resonance of findings beyond the immediate setting (Nowell et al., 2017). Dependability and confirmability were supported through a maintained audit trail, analytic memos, and regular debriefs with peer researchers, reflecting the standards of transparency and reflexive accountability urged in recent qualitative research debates (Levitt, 2021).

Importantly, trustworthiness in this study was not treated as a checklist but as an epistemic ethic, attuned to the asymmetries of power in representation, the positionality of the researcher, and the cultural and religious sensitivities of the participants. As such, this work contributes to a growing body of literature that resists epistemological flattening and instead calls for a pluralistic understanding of rigor that is contextually embedded, philosophically coherent, and ethically mindful (Levitt, 2021).

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPERIENCES OF RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS ON MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF TERRORISM IN NAIROBI, KENYA

4.0 Overview

In this chapter, and the next three; the findings of the study are presented based on the research questions, which were: What are the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya? How do lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism manifest itself? And how do lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism shape their perception towards the media in Nairobi, Kenya?

The first question covered: the lived experience of the Muslim Religious Scholars in regards to Nairobi-based Kenyan media, and the challenges they encounter with media representation of terrorism and how that is translated in the consciousness of Muslim religious scholars. The findings are presented as: 4.1 challenges with media representation of terrorism; 4.2 feelings associated with media representation of terrorism; and 4.3 Summary.

First and foremost, the analysis presented in this study was based on a comprehensive aggregation of data obtained from in-depth, individual interviews. This analysis was informed by a blend of theoretical frameworks and extensive literature review, ensuring a robust grounding in existing research. The data from these interviews was carefully presented in a narrative format, incorporating direct quotations, concise summaries, and paraphrased content from the above-mentioned data sources. This

narrative method facilitates a clear and engaging presentation of the participants' insights and experiences.

The core of the data subjected to rigorous analysis and interpretation comprises the information gathered directly from the interviews. Within the analytical process, the quotations that were found most appropriate and pertinent to the research questions at hand were selected. The selected quotes are integral, as they highlight critical aspects of the participants' experiences and perspectives, enriching the findings with authentic voices from the data.

Furthermore, thematic analysis was employed as a means for dissecting the interview data. This approach involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. The themes developed were instrumental in organizing the data analytically, enabling a structured exploration of the complex phenomena being studied.

Each theme was used as a lens through which the data was examined, allowing for an exact understanding of the various dimensions of the research topic. This thematic structure not only enhances the clarity of the analysis but also helps in aligning the findings with the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings established in the earlier phases of the study.

Table 4.1: Symbols used to indicate sources of data

Respondent 1 – Interview with an Islamic lecturer who also doubles as religious scholar.
Respondent 2 – Interview with chairman of mosque A committee
Respondent 3 – Interview with deputy chairman of mosque A committee.
Respondent 4 – Interview with an Imam of mosque B.
Respondent 5 – Interview with chairman of a main Islamic organization.
Respondent 6 – Interview with chairman of an Islamic centre A.
Respondent 7 – Interview with Imam of mosque C.
Respondent 8 – Interview with chairman of Islamic centre B.
Respondent 9 – Interview with Imam of mosque D.
Respondent 10 – Interview with Member of mosque E committee.

4.1 Challenge with media's representation of terrorism

Respondents extensively discussed their challenging personal experience with the media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya. There are two main experiences, the first being the challenge with the Kenyan media in Nairobi when it comes to terrorism, which actually emerges as the most discussed issue from all the participants, and their reaction to how Kenyan media represents terrorists.

The participants described the main challenges they face with the Kenyan media representation of terrorists, especially into terrorism committed by people or groups who claim to go to such extent for the sake of Islam. One of the most difficult challenges that has been described by the participants is the manner in which Kenyan media in Nairobi associates terrorism with Islam in general. Furthermore, the participants also describe the ways that the media has failed to put terrorism in a holistic manner, they described it a way that it would seem like a simple matter of Muslims killing Christians. For some participants, the Kenyan media lacks the proper background to describe terrorism for they cannot be able to explain historical,

geopolitics, or even add socioeconomic issues as a leading cause of terrorism, and failure to add completeness in their explanation.

The participants also discussed how the media describes terrorism and from their perceptions, it is as if that they act like the terrorists are very powerful group in their actions. Most participants described the issue as an attempt by the Kenyan media to give air-time and space to terrorists. However, participants feared that Kenyan media's representation of terrorism may lead to stigmatization of Muslims in Nairobi, they described that the way media represents Muslims is far from being logical, and it has the capability of encouraging violent responses and actions against innocent Muslims.

The viewpoints of the respondents with regards to media representation of terrorism can therefore be summarized into three main points; linking Islam with the terrorists, biased reporting, and promoting terrorism. On the first issue of linking Islam with the terrorists, it has been described as the main issue. This is because, nearly all the participants mentioned it as part of their experience with Kenyan media's representation of terrorism. This is a current phenomenon and reflects the already established stereotype in Kenya regarding Muslims, as well as described by some of the participants.

As described by a vast majority of the participants, linking Islam with terror attacks is the main issue that has caused trouble for Muslims in Nairobi, Kenya. Some participants further describe it as unfair, and claim that rather than linking terrorism with Islam in general, the media ought to link it with the people who commit such actions.

They always associate this with Islam, they always associate with Muslim, but these are individuals who have committed this act and they should be portrayed

as such not linked with Islam. They do not differentiate between Islam and terrorism, but the challenge with Kenyan media in reporting of terrorism. It has a test of ethnicity. Sometimes there's so many issues. Sometimes they target the coastal people (Respondent 6)

For example, when they report an attack and they say, you know, this is following this and this and this which happened. and now what this is about Islamism, Islamic community, Islamic Sharia (way of life). and you know, they give, or they try to give some context. And it becomes clear that it is not individuals they are targeting, but it is the religion as a whole they are targeting (Respondent 9)

Participants were also of the view that the Kenyan media does not have a full understanding of Islam as a religion, which they think is the cause of the misunderstanding.

The Kenyan media's understanding of Islam is not correct. So, their reporting about Islam is basically how Islam isn't always a good religion and how Islam promotes killing and terrorism, and how Islam promotes wars and all of the negative things (Respondent 7).

It means, from the Kenyan media point of view, you are a violent terrorist, and that is why the media, the intention might not be to hurt every Muslim. But because of the ignorance of media and the larger society about Islam (Respondent 10)

Some of the participants also spoke about the fact that terrorism is a criminal activity and should be represented as being committed by none other than the perpetrators.

When criminals commit an act, call them criminals. don't call them Muslims. when Muslims are the victims of crime committed by any government or individuals, it should also be reported. When people use terrorism as a cover to commit crime, and not just the Muslims, the media should also cover it as such (Respondent 5)

Some of the participants question the reason behind media linking terrorism with Islamic religion. They argue that the Kenyan media does not link the religious affiliation of the criminals, in other insecurity incidents in the country, when the perpetrators are not Muslims.

What is the ulterior motive. Why do they have to mention Islam whenever a terror attack happens and it is committed by a Muslim? But when it happens and it is committed by a non-Muslim, the religion of that person becomes irrelevant. So, that is something I always ask myself and I do not know why they do these things (Respondent 4).

Participants also described the fact that some of the words often used by the media when covering terrorism are unfavorable to the Muslim community. Most of the participants said they have a problem with the selection of words that are used by the media to describe terrorists. These words range from Islamist, Jihadist to fundamentalist and the likes.

They will describe them Somali terrorism, Muslim terrorism, Muslim terrorist, Muslim radicalized, and many more words, those are the words they use. (Respondent 1).

They use for example fundamentalists. And what is it and what does it mean? It means following the original Islamic religion. So, for me, all Muslims are fundamentals, we believe in the fundamentals of Islam, you see, so unfortunately, they are trying to use that word negatively, but for us Muslims, if somebody calls me a fundamentalist that's supposed to be positive. (Respondent 3)

Concerns over manner of reporting

All participants in this study reported that they have a problem with how Kenyan media in Nairobi frames terrorism. However, some participants suggested that the Nairobi-based Kenyan media representation of terrorism in the coverage of terror incidents in Nairobi was both negative and positive. However, it could be observed from their comments that the negatives surpassed the positive.

Therefore, the participants' perspectives on media reporting of terrorism were different, and they portrayed differences in their statement. However, the majority of the participants argued that the Kenyan media had a problem of stereotyping Muslims.

Respondents also noted that media represents Islam as a violent religion, and they perceive Muslims are violent people. Some argued that this kind of perception can lead to discrimination and bias, and could skew the public views on terrorism as a problem caused by Muslims. Some expressed their concern that sensationalized or biased reporting can prompt Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments in the general society. Some participants went further to express fears that media's representation of terrorism could result in hate crimes against Muslims.

The media wants to point a negative picture of Islam so that, I don't know whether I can, let me just say, it's conscious, but so that people can somehow have a negative impact or have a negative attitude about Islam and I think that's where the problem is. (Respondent 3)

The role of Kenyan media has been, unfortunately, they think they are being patriotic to report what has been given to them by the government without checking the facts behind it. So, patriotism has got its place and factual reporting has got its own place. So, for a very long time, they give it as, what they give to us, is what they receive from government spokesman. And government spokesmen throughout the world are not fair on how they report. They report what the government in power wants. (Respondent 5)

Participants also described how media's reporting of terrorism as spreading false narratives about Islam, as a religion, which is being practiced by some of the citizens of the country.

The media fraternity's understanding is that terrorism means Islam. The Kenyan media's understanding of Islam is that it is about terrorism. So, their reporting about Islam is basically how Islam is not a good faith and Islam promotes killing, Islam promotes war and all the negative things. That's how they represent Islam as a religion, and of course that is not the truth. (Respondent 6)

it's just not reporting the news genuinely when it comes to terrorism incidents, but they must bring it in a package in a different and bad way, whereby people

are glued to the TV or to the radio or to the newspaper. But in the process, they lose their objectivity. (Respondent 4)

Participants further spoke about how Kenyan media in Nairobi selects negative words to be used against Muslims and to generalize terror attacks, as they directly link it to Muslim communities.

The words they use when reporting terrorism like the Muslim terrorist, Somalia-origin, Muslim Jihadist and the rest, have been coined by Sheitan (the devil) and I would not say that a human being was able to coin such words. (Respondent 2)

The reporting of Mandera attack is an example. I suppose in Mandera, there have been Muslims who have been additionally killed. There were many cases while Muslims and Christians have been both removed from the public transport buses and they had been shot. However, the reporting of the media was simply focusing on the Christians, who have been killed. So, there had been many such instances. An example of poor reporting or negative representation. The wordings that are used are generalizations phrasings like fundamentalists, Islamic fundamentalists, not even Muslim fundamentalists, they say Islamic fundamentalists, the jihadists. This is a clear example of misrepresentation of Islam when reporting about terrorism. (Respondent 8)

Some participants said that media reports often fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of Islam and its teachings, contributing to misunderstandings about the religion and its followers.

The Kenyan journalists do not make efforts to step back, and to use their knowledge on Muslims in other countries, where these things happen, as an example and actually, sometimes, the perpetrators were not Muslims. They have not gone to do something about it. And also, they have not tried to find out more about what Islam as religion says about terrorism, and if some Muslims in some countries have been convinced that this [terrorism] is the right thing to do. (Respondent 6).

Other participants said the Kenyan media's representation of terrorism was mixed between negative and positive and that there were some positive instances in which the media reported favorably about terrorism incidents in the country.

There are instances in which the Kenyan media gets it right. I think the persons who are handling some of these cases are people who can relate to the issues at hand. Some of them are Muslims. Yes, some of them are Muslims. The ones who were reporting some of these cases. some of them are Muslims. Young men, who, alhamdulillah (praise be to the lord), understood what terrorism and the associated war on terror means, and who understand why those things happen. And therefore, the reporting was good. Even those ones that were not Muslims, they have been enlightened. (Respondent 1)

Wrong perception of Islam

The participants mentioned that the media often misses to play its crucial role of informing Kenyans in Nairobi about real Islam. But instead, they said it antagonized the religion by linking the crimes being committed by a few misguided individuals with the mainstream religion. Some participants were of the view that the media failed to distinguish between Islam and terrorism when representing terrorism. Majority of the participants argued that it was important for the media to note that Islam and extremism are two different things.

When I hear that, I find it to be very unfair, as a Muslim, you know, I find it to be very unfair. I find this to be oppression, because why is my faith associated with terror. (Respondent 10).

Participants argue that Islam is a faith observed by many Kenyans in some parts of the country, and that extremism is a political ideology of relatively very small group that have deviated. Some participants say their challenge with the media is that it does not differentiate.

I know the statistics say that we are about 10%, but although we believe we are about 30%, now if you take a 30%, we are about 12 million out of 12 million people, how many have committed terrorism? And I think the problem is that a lot and a lot of exposure is given to the negativity and little exposure is given to the positivity. (Respondent 4)

Other participants said that the Islamist groups like the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab Movement use violence against non-Muslims with the aim of establishing a political institution based on shariah law. However, this is not supported by the Muslim religious scholars and the majority of the Muslim population in Kenya.

As Muslims, we do not support what is being done by a few people who have misconceptions or extreme views. And the people who they influence, some of them are not even Muslims. And the people who participated in it, the terror of the things, do not represent Islam. (Respondent 6)

Promoting terrorism

Participants were of the view that the terrorists were using the media to propagate their violence to a point where some accused the media of promoting terrorism. They described how the media houses promote the agenda of terrorists which they argue is aimed at dividing the country along religious lines. This is because some participants said in most cases the media houses in Nairobi, Kenya find terrorism incidents as news worthy and that it interests their audiences, and so they represent it in a sensational manner.

The media is promoting terrorism because of the words that they use like the Jihadists, the language like the Somalis, the Muslims, and the likes and the likes. So, in the process, the media is promoting, is bringing up a new phenomenon, especially language, used against the Muslim religious. (Respondent 8)

Historically, terrorists have recognized the power of the media to amplify their message. Participants however insist that the Kenyan media sometimes covers live events of the terrorist attacks, which at times portrays the extremists as heroes. Some participants said this is not a good image to portray in a country that struggles with terrorism.

The relationship between the police and our youth is not very good, and they could look at anyone who stands up to them as a hero. This could encourage our youth to join the terror group with the sole aim of humiliating the police. Also,

over-emphasizing on the gains of the terrorists could encourage some Muslim youth who do not understand their religion very well to join the group. The media needs to be careful on how they represent terrorism so that they do not promote the terrorist groups. (Respondent 5)

Some participants also said that the Kenyan media coverage provides a platform for the terrorist to disseminate their message to larger audiences. This is because they argue the media's representation of terrorism is not controlled.

The Kenyan media is very notorious for amplifying terrorism messages by giving uncensored and unregulated coverage of terrorist attacks. This encourages them to carry more attacks as the media is giving them satisfaction, and by just following the media, they would know the impact their criminal activities had on the country. (Respondent 9).

4.2 Feelings associated with media representation of terrorism

Participants described their reaction to Kenyan media representation of terrorism with all of them focusing their personal feelings and the feelings of their Muslim flock in response to the media's representation of terrorism incidents. They used the words "furious", "offended", "hurt", "bitter", "angry", "rejected" and so forth. Participants also described the mechanisms they have developed to correct media representation of terrorism like carrying out anti-terror activities and at times, engaging the Kenyan public to inform them of the correct Islam, which they say does not support terrorism and criminal activities. In the process, some participants said, their engagement with the members of other religions in Kenya often led to inter-religious dialogue as they engaged Christians and Buddhists to convey the right Islam to the other Kenyans, just to counter what the media was propagating about Islam. Some participants also said they made attempts to engage the media, but not all of them were successful in their attempts.

Participants reactions to the Kenyan media representation of terrorism can therefore be summarized through the following; Personal feelings, feelings of Muslim congregation and action taken by the participants to counter what they described as media's misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims.

Personal feelings

Participants in this study spoke about the impact of Kenya media representation of terrorism on them at personal level. They used strong words to describe their feeling towards the Kenya media representation of terrorism. These words include the feeling of “bitterness”, “alienation”, “anger”, “insecurity”, and “sadness” that arise from how the Kenyan media represents terrorism and associate it with Muslims.

Some participants described their feeling as alienation and rejection, lamenting that they feels rejected by their own society due to negative media representation of terrorism.

I feel alienated. I feel that actually I am being rejected by my own society. even the coverage which we get from the government officials is quite negative.
(Respondent 5)

Participants further described their personal reaction to Kenya media representation of terrorism as feeling of offense and bitterness at being falsely associated with activities contrary to their beliefs as Muslims.

I feel bitter, bitter, bitter and bitter. You just feel that you need to get that person who has reported at least to explain to him that, that's not the right thing to do. I feel offended as a Muslim, because me as a Muslim, I don't subscribe myself to such activities, now when you find that such activities are being associated with me, and you are really do not believe in me, one must feel offended, so I feel, personally, I feel offended, if such activities are reported as if they are associated with Islam (Respondent 1).

Some participants were of the view that Kenyan media representation of terrorism led to anger and anxiety among the Muslim religious scholars, as a response to the what they described as an injustice being inflicted on Muslims.

It makes me angry, you know it makes me angry, because I feel this is injustice. I become anxious, because I feel that now the media indirectly is going to

polarize. I feel insecure for my people, even sometimes my own children, you might have somebody who sees them in a hijab, for example, because of what the media has said, these are the people who are killing our people, and I feel sad in the sense that the media should do what is right. (Respondent 3).

Participants also described their personal feelings in reaction to Kenyan media representation of terrorism as being hurt and insecure, due to what some of them described as blanket statements against Muslims, even when they do not support radicals or extremists.

The use of that blanket statement against Muslims hurts me, and of course, that will not make me support the radicals and the extremists, but it hurts me, and I feel, I cannot even give my position. (Respondent 6).

There was an emphasis on the feelings associated with media representation of Islam and some participants likened it to a false image being sold around. As a result, they said they feel anger and pain in reaction to Kenyan media representation of terrorism, which reflects deep emotional impact.

As a person, I do feel bitter because I do feel that my religion has been hijacked and a bad image is given about my religion. It definitely makes me angry because that's a misrepresentation of my religion how would you feel if you are misrepresented how do you feel when people give false image about you and it's being sold around. (Respondent 4)

It's painful, most of it is 99% is not true, 99% is a creation of the media. Therefore, having had that kind of feeling and urge in me every time, and when I had to look at this and listen to some of this, I used to get angry, (Respondent 2)

Participants also described their feeling of being either hurt or psychologically oppressed as a result of the blanket accusations against all Muslims when terrorism is being represented by the Kenyan media.

It concerns me and it pains me. The usage of that general accusation for all Muslims when representing terrorism hurts me, and causes pain to me. (Respondent 7)

The feeling that comes to me when the media talks about terrorism is psychological oppression. I feel furious I feel furious in light of the fact that this is foul play to us two I feel restless on the grounds that I am stressed on how the non-Muslims might respond with such reports. (Respondent 8)

Majority of the participants provided a poignant and personal insight into the emotional toll of Kenya media representation of terrorism on them. However, there were some participants, albeit very few, who described their positive feelings when the Kenyan media represents terrorism incidents professionally, saying it makes them feel good and associated.

You feel associated, you feel you, you count yourself to be, you subscribe yourself as being part of the media, you are part of the media that is reporting, and any time, any time, such incident happened, or they are reporting, that media that reported positively you are able to follow them, and you are also to link with them or to even to subscribe to their channels. (Respondent 1)

Reactions by the Muslim society

Participants were of the view that the Kenyan Media has immense power to shape public perceptions, and its representation of sensitive issues like terrorism can have profound effect on Muslim community. Participants described the feelings of their Muslim followers or flock on the media representation of terrorism as feelings of offense, alienation, suspicion, and marginalization.

Some participants highlighted the complex situation facing the Muslim community in Kenya, who they describe as being caught between the threat of terrorism and how media depicts them when representing terrorism, which often paints them as suspects. They said this dual challenge puts immense pressure on the Muslim community and complicates their sense of belonging within society.

Muslims are part of the Kenyan society, and when the media represents terrorism as though it is a problem caused by Muslims, they feel the heat. They are caught between the terrorists who target them as well and a hostile media which portrays them as suspects. (Respondent 8)

Participants also emphasized that few people understand the harm caused by media representation of terrorism to an entire community or members of certain faiths. They insist that this lack of understanding contributes to the cycle of misrepresentation and perpetuates negative stereotypes.

Unfortunately, very few people understand how those words would harm an entire community or members of certain faith. (Respondent 2)

Other participants also spoke about the perception that Muslims are not taken into consideration in media representation of terrorism in Kenya. This lack of representation can lead to feelings of frustration and disenfranchisement within the community. They argue that when Muslims feel that they are not part of the dialogue surrounding terrorism, it can perpetuate a sense of isolation.

The Muslims feel that they are not taken into consideration. They are not considered. Every Muslim feel that they are the subject of discussion. (Respondent 6)

Some participants captured the sentiments of many Muslims when they say they "felt targeted and offended."

They felt targeted, they felt offended by it, and they felt being targeted by the media. (Respondent 1).

Participants also expressed a common feeling among Muslims in Kenya, stating that they "feel bad" because they are "viewed suspiciously." They added that this suspicion

often leads to a sense of alienation within society, as Muslims feel as though they are being treated as potential threats rather than as fellow citizens.

Muslim society in Kenya feel bad, I believe so, because we are being viewed suspiciously. Respondent 3

Other participants highlighted the very real fear within the Muslim community in Kenya, as media representation of terrorism, raising concerns over the safety of their children.

The media coverage affects the Muslims very badly. Sometimes we are scared for our girls. It might reach a time when attacks can be made against them and we cannot wait for that to happen. We need to counter this narrative and protect our children and protect our sisters. (Respondent 4)

Some participants said that media representation of terrorism in Kenya influences the perception of Muslim communities as being marginalized by mainstream media. They are of the view that this sense of marginalization can lead to frustration and a feeling of being excluded from the broader societal discourse.

it influences the Muslim community who feel that they are been marginalized by the mainstream media. (Respondent 7)

Participants also reflected on how Muslims often feel ignored by the media when it comes to covering terrorism incidents. This feeling of being disregarded further compounds the sense of isolation and frustration within the community.

The Muslims that I interact have on several occasions expressed their concerns on the media representation of terrorism. They say they feel ignored by the media when they are covering terrorism incidents. (Respondent 9)

Countering Media representation of terrorism in Kenya

According to participants of this study, media representation of terrorism in Kenya has had far reaching consequences, particularly for the Muslim community. As a result, they had to respond at individual and organizational level. Participants said that they are playing a critical role in countering media misrepresentation of terrorism in Kenya. The responses of the Muslim religious scholars in Kenya to media representation of terrorism are therefore multifaceted. Participants said they have taken it upon themselves to disassociate Islam from acts of terrorism, empathize with victims, and engage in efforts to promote the true values and teachings of their faith. Through open days at the Mosques, condemnation of terrorism, and outreach efforts, some participants in this study said they are working to counter media misrepresentation and build bridges of understanding with the broader society.

Some participants highlighted how the Muslim religious scholars, including the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims (SUPKEM), has consistently responded to media attacks by unequivocally disassociating themselves from acts of terrorism. This disassociation sends a clear message that terrorism goes against the core principles of Islam.

The reaction by Muslim community to feeling that they have been attacked by the media is that they have reacted as Muslim leaders, SUPKEM (Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims), and many other leaders they have come out clearly to disassociate themselves from these acts of terrorism. (Respondent 9)

Furthermore, other participants emphasized the importance of empathy with victims, with Muslim organizations stepping forward to condemn acts of terrorism and mitigate the harmful effects of media reports on Muslims.

In our organization, whenever there are such kind of attacks, we come in the forefront to try and you know make sure that we empathize with the victims and

we condemn any acts of terrorism, so that we can mitigate whatever harmful effects can come from the kind of media reports that are going on. (Respondent 3)

This, as participants indicated, provided a unique insight into how some mosques in Kenya have responded to media representation of terrorism in Kenya by organizing for open days at Mosques where non-Muslims are allowed to interact with Muslims and understand the religion.

To counter that many Muslims now have started open days at Mosques, because you see, most of Mosques, and Muslims have been a closed society and mosques have been exclusive to Muslims only, and now if the mass media will be talking about negative about the Muslims and terrorism, the public will believe them that even the madrasa (Islamic schools) are being used to teach people terrorism. Therefore, it almost affected or created an animosity in the community and to counter that, many mosques have now started having an open day where the non-Muslim public will be allowed to interact with those institutions. (Respondent 1)

Participants were adamant on the need to use religious platforms to condemn acts of terrorism. Muslim scholars, through various avenues such as mosque sermons and community gatherings, have consistently condemned acts of violence perpetrated by terrorists. They have reiterated that terrorism does not represent Islam and that the media should avoid associating the faith with such acts.

I myself I have used my platform a number of times, example when we had the Dusit attack, I condemned it in the mosque. We have always said there are several other Muslim leaders who are very concerned about these acts of terrorism. (Respondent 10)

We have to do extra work just to portray how Islam is and sometimes it's it could be a blessing in disguise because it has made the Muslims to open up more and to show what the true picture of Islam is. In fact, before terror attacks, we never had open days in our mosques. But to counter that narrative we invite the non-Muslims inside the mosques. it's been here for a few years, and we've been doing it twice almost a year where we have the non-Muslims coming into the mosque let them see how we worship. We invite them and we have a panel of scholars who are open to questions. They can ask any question and they can feel free and they are guided and they are not judged. So, in the end, the media has awakened us, and so not everything is bad, because it has made the Muslims

to wake up and realize that, okay, if this is already happening, how do we counter it? So, it has made the Muslims to do that in a different way. (Respondent 4)

Some participants gave a broader perspective on how the Muslim religious scholars are countering media representation of terrorism by explaining the true picture of Islam to non-Muslims and the general public in Kenya.

I have utilized this foundation most, for instance, when we have a terrorist attack and followed by media reporting blaming Muslims, I censured it in my mosque and we have consistently said terrorists do not represent Islam and the media should not associate it with Islam. (Respondent 8)

4.3 Summary

In this chapter, findings were presented based on the first question of the study, which was: What are the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya? The scope of this question covered challenges the Muslim religious scholars have with the Kenyan media representation of terrorism, their reaction and the reactions of the Muslim community to that and their action to mitigate the Kenyan media representation of terrorism.

Table 4.1 is a summary of findings of in this chapter. In the next chapter I present findings in relation to the second question of the study, which was: How does the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism manifest itself?

Table 4.1 Summary of key findings in this chapter

• Muslim religious scholars highlighted the significant challenge they have faced with the Nairobi-based Kenyan media's associating terrorism with Islam, which could lead to stigmatization of Muslims. • Stereotyping in media reporting was seen as promoting Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment, potentially leading to hate crimes and discrimination. • The use of unfavorable terms, such as "fundamentalist" and "jihadist," was seen as contributing to the misrepresentation of Islam. • The media was seen to be providing a platform for terrorists to disseminate their messages, potentially encouraging further recruitment among gullible youth and further attacks. • There was general feelings of alienation and rejection as a result of negative media representation of terrorism, causing psychological oppression. • Disassociation from terrorism and condemnation of acts of violence, as well as opening inter-faith dialogue were identified as key responses by the Muslim scholars to media attacks.

CHAPTER FIVE

MANIFESTATION OF LIVED EXPERIENCE ON MUSLIM RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS OF MEDIA IN NAIROBI, KENYA

5.0 Overview

In this chapter, findings were presented based on the second research question, which was: How does the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism manifest itself? Manifestation is the observable impact of media representations of terrorism on Muslim religious scholars, as filtered through their emotional, social, and professional realities. It refers to how their experiences is not just as private discontent but as tangible disruptions in their public roles, community relations, and psychological well-being. It covers; 5.1 personal impact of media representation of terrorism on Muslim religious scholars, 5.2 Muslim religious scholars' reaction to media representation of terrorism, and 5.3 impact of media representation of terrorism on the Muslim Communities.

5.1 Personal Impact on Muslim religious scholars

The impact of media representation of terrorism on Muslim religious scholars is a complex and it often relates to their feelings on the issue. Majority of the participants said it had some negative impact on them, while few mentioned instances where media representation of terrorism had a positive impact on their lives. There were participants who were of the view that it prompted them to act on behalf of the Muslim communities. Participants were also of the view that some aspects of Kenyan media representation of terrorism have led to feeling of stereotyping against them at

individual level, which they believe, resulted in prejudice and discrimination against them.

The issue of societal pressure on the Muslim religious scholars as they were obliged to come out clearly to condemn the acts of terrorism without being given an opportunity to explain the true picture of Islam by the media fraternity in Nairobi, Kenya. Some participants said while the call for condemnation of terror attack gave them the opportunity to disassociate themselves from the criminal groups, it sometimes put pressure on them, and at times diverted them from their religious obligations.

I was heading to the mosque when I received a call from a journalist, who asked about my take on the Al-Shabaab attack on Dusit Hotel. I told him as Muslim religious scholars; we do not agree with what the Muslim radicals are doing. He immediately asked me to go straight to his station. And this was such a major incident, I had to cancel all my religious activities at the Mosque. However, the reporter who spoke before me kept on associating my faith with the criminal act, and introduced me to prove a point, like to show how even some Muslims are against them. (Respondent 9)

I have been at a hotel wearing Muslim attire when all over sudden some youth gathered around me, and asked me, why we were killing them. I was surprised. I mean how could that happen, and I knew back in my mind that the Kenyan media is to blame. (Respondent 10)

On the positive side, some of the participants pointed out that the media representation of terrorism opened avenues for them to educate the public on the true teachings of Islam, and they used the opportunity to debunk the extremist ideologies, and foster inter-religious dialogue. One participant went ahead to explain that they had been given platforms in the big media houses to give a correct reflection of Islam. For example, he shares that on one occasion during a live telecast over a national TV station, he was able to call out a clear misrepresentation of Islamic teachings.

I once appeared on Citizen TV with a very senior politician, this country, I don't want to mention his name. And we were addressing this subject. So, this guy sitting in front of me, and another Muslim senior politician who was for the

government, both of them supporting the government's actions that particular time. The politician mentioned that, you know, these Jihadists are fighting so that they can get 72 virgins in heaven. So, this is what people are fighting for. And then I asked him, where does this come from? And he says it comes from the Quran. Then I asked him, which verse of the Quran? He couldn't answer. Then I told him, you know, you're a very senior man, a respectable man, sitting on a public media, where the whole of the country or probably globally are being watched. And you make statements that are not factual. Don't you feel embarrassed? I had to do corrections on a live TV. (Respondent 5)

The respondents also viewed the media as a means for encouraging the stigmatization and stereotyping of Muslim religious scholars. They described how media representation of terrorism, particularly during the Westgate attack, in September 2013, led to the public having preconceived ideas and negatively judging Muslims. They forced out that the media's negative framing of Islamic radicalization, as a problem caused by the entire Muslim community, was an issue that led to the violation of their rights, particularly affecting their freedom to freely practice their faith.

Yes, in fact, after the first attack on Westgate Mall. Immediately after the first attack and the way it was reported. It prompted me to write an article on the criminalization of radicalization in Kenya and its impact on freedoms, especially freedom of worship. I developed that paper following the way that incident was reported, because it was reported that it is the Muslims who have attacked Kenya and now the community should rise up to fight Islam. That was the perception that the media created. (Respondent 1)

Respondents equally described how the media representation of terrorism has created a general feeling in Nairobi, Kenya where profiling of the members of the Islamic religion has been rampant in the country. Some participants described how they were subjected to extra security procedures due to their mode of dressing as Muslim religious scholars, by having an attire associated with Islam, which further shows how the issue has had an impact on the scholars at personal level.

I have experienced an incident at the airport when I was travelling out with two of my colleagues none-Muslims and I think this media coverage has led to profiling you know, religious profiling, so I was after something out of the country with people who are my business partners. They were allowed to pass through the security, then I was asked to step aside for further screening. (Respondent 3)

Other respondents noted how the media's tendency to emphasize and disseminate anti-Muslim sentiments and prejudices has resulted in undue scrutiny of Muslim religious scholars, as well as religious centers and seminaries. They argued that this highlights the significant impact of media representation of terrorism on Islamic scholars and institutions.

There was a case, the Garissa University attack, for example, the attack on students, where one of the perpetrators was a University of Nairobi graduate; Kenya School of Law graduate. But the security people and the media followed the high school where he studied. Because it was a Muslim institution. This is after even the university colleagues and the teachers of the perpetrator have reported that he was not a very good practicing Muslim, or he was not a radical at his time at the university. He was just an ordinary Kenyan student. But maybe this student was recruited by radicals in the university. But the media focused on the high school, because the high school was a Muslim school. Similarly, many Muslim institutions were affected during the terror attacks. (Respondent 6)

Participants expressed difficulties in utilizing the media to communicate the perspectives of Muslim religious scholars on terrorism. They noted that they are often met with suspicion and are sometimes perceived as sympathizers of the terrorist organizations that purport to represent Islam.

When I try to present the right position of Muslim scholars on the issue and the right position of Islam, as a religion, on the terrorists and all that, what do we get as feedback from both the journalists who are interviewing us, and who are taking to us, and even the security officials is that we are sympathizers. (Respondent 7)

It usually affects my position. when I try to present the right role of Muslim religious scholars and the true picture of Islam, as a faith, and it's stand on the terrorists and all that, I do not get the attention of journalists and media houses.

They only call you for specific reason, serving their own agenda most of the time. (Respondent 8)

On a brighter note, some participants shared that media coverage of terrorism can also lead to positive outcomes for Muslim religious scholars and the wider Muslim community. This underscores the potential for the media to drive positive change when it approaches its responsibilities with fairness and integrity.

I have witnessed media reporting on court cases related to terrorism. Some of them made it to the court of appeal and the decision made and the coverage was good, because they cover as this person who has been convicted with an offense or found guilty of an offense relating to terrorism without linking them to Islam. Even after conviction, and the person is in custody, they are still human beings and are entitled to all rights. So, in the court cases I have followed and were reported by the media, I believe they have been properly represented. Sometimes the coverage of the media has led to people being released from custody, especially when the police kidnap suspects, and the media exposes them, they tend to release them. (Respondent 1)

Some of the participants, though they were few of them, were of the view that the media representation of terrorism has had a positive impact on their lives, as individuals, as they noted few occasions where the media involved them on the discussions over issue.

5.2 Impact on religious scholars' relations with leaders from other religions

In a context where media plays a major role, the participants articulated that the way terrorists are depicted significantly influences global perceptions and interfaith relations. The influence of media representation on these dynamics cannot be understated. Participants highlighted that within the Kenyan context, Muslim religious scholars are seen as highly influential figures within society, wielding substantial authority in shaping interfaith interactions. These scholars have actively engaged in inter-religious dialogues and have been instrumental in addressing national issues,

including constitutional matters, even prior to the onset of terrorist activities in the country.

However, participants consistently reported that they often found themselves affected by the problematic representation of terrorism by the media. This portrayal occasionally links them with terrorist activities, placing them unwittingly at the center of controversy. According to the participants, such media representation has periodically placed them in a precarious position, complicating their relationships with other religious groups within Nairobi, Kenya. They narrated that this has posed numerous challenges for them, disrupting interfaith relations and fostering an environment of mistrust and tension.

Despite these challenges, a few participants noted that the situation also opened doors for proactive engagement. They saw these challenges as opportunities to enhance interfaith dialogue and work towards countering the negative media narratives that often cloud public perception. By engaging in these dialogues, they aimed to promote understanding and foster a sense of community and harmony among different religious groups.

The representation of terrorism in the media, especially when linked to individuals claiming to represent Islam, was frequently cited by participants as a primary source of tension and mistrust among religious communities. This depiction often perpetuates stereotypes and fuels divisiveness, highlighting the need for a more balanced approach to reporting on terrorism. The participants expressed a strong desire for media practices that support peace and understanding rather than exacerbating conflict and suspicion among different faith groups.

I have been working with Christian and Buddhist religious leaders, and we had a very good relations with them, until the terrorism incidents happened, and the media started reporting it, I have noticed my very good Christian and Buddhist friends have changed. Some of them were honest enough to tell me what they felt inside, that my religion is becoming a problem in the country. (Respondent 5)

At one point, during the worst terrorist incidents in the country, I felt that I was losing my Christian friends. They were respectfully distancing themselves from me. (Respondent 9)

Some participants said it has even taken them a while to convince the government that they are available to work with it on preventing the Muslim youth from joining the terror groups.

There was such a time when all Muslims were viewed with the same lenses as the media, and it has been very difficult for us to approach people who mattered to convince them we are together in this. (Respondent 7)

Despite the fact that majority of the participants spoke about the difficulties they have with the media representations of terrorism, in terms of their relations with people of other faiths and the government, few participants said it has at the same time offered an opportunity for Muslim religious scholars to improve relations with other religions.

When we finally decided to counter media representation of terrorism by directly engaging, things have started improving. We opened our mosques for the people of other religions, and the senior government officials started visiting us at the mosque. That is when I felt that we got an opportunity to have good relations with Christian leaders and they were very understanding. (Respondent 10)

Few participants said that media representation of terrorism has pushed them to establish relations with the main media houses in the country.

I have made it my responsibility to look for the reporters and opinion writers who targeted all Muslims in their reporting or articles, and tried to convince them. This has led to me establishing relations with them, and sometimes advise them. I believe it had an impact in small ways. (Respondent 4)

Participants were of the view that the negative representation of Islam and Muslims often perpetuates stereotypes, which worsens relations between Muslim religious scholars and senior people in the government, which poses a challenge for Muslim scholars, who would normally work towards spreading peace and understanding.

5.3 Impact on Muslim Society

The research participants argued that the media has a significant impact on society and has contributed a lot in the creation of negative views and opinions towards the Muslim society. In the case of Nairobi, Kenya, and in other parts of the world, one of the main topics of concern was the media representation of Islam and Muslims in the media that has caused a negative attitude towards the Muslim community.

Research participants have also explained the negative role of the Nairobi-based Kenyan media in how they have been representing terrorism. Regarding how the media uses the frame of terrorism and how it can be harmful to the Muslims, the respondents highlighted the creation of disharmony as one of its consequences.

It leads to More division, more disharmony, and that poses danger to unity and peaceful coexistence of Kenyan communities. (Respondent 6)

Media has disfranchised the Muslim community, because its perspective on the role of Muslims has caused mistrust, not only between Muslims and non-Muslims, but between Muslims themselves. (Respondent 9)

For others, the role of the media narrative is also highlighted in capturing many relevant cases after large-scale terror attacks. They argued that the media sensationalized and stereotypes the negative about Muslims has a huge impact on the

opinion about Muslims, as a community, making it difficult for them in integrating with members of other religions.

I find it to be negative, and unfortunately that is what sells that narrative is what sells especially after the September 11th, the media coverage of Islam has really changed, though people are trying to counter that we have through big media houses that's what they do. (Respondent 4)

Participants also reflected on the negative historical role of the media in Kenya, highlighting its past involvement in the incitement of hatred and divisions, particularly against Islam, Muslims, and the Somali community.

The role of media initially was that one of inciting, inciting whether intentional or not but it was in form of inciting communities against another and perpetrating also hatred against Islam against Muslims and by extension against Somalis but it has now improved. (Respondent 1)

However, some participants raised a critical point regarding media intentions. They argue that while media outlets may not necessarily intend to promote hatred, their representation of terrorism can inadvertently breed such sentiments against Muslims.

They might not be doing out of hatred. however, the outcome of their work is hatred. So, they are breeding hatred and that does damage the Muslims alone but the whole country. (Respondent 7)

It is not honest, it is not honest, it is not right, it is all the time negative-sided against Muslims. (Respondent 2).

Moreover, the participants pointed out the role of media in the promotion of terrorism and its portrayal of Muslims, emphasizing that what happens on TV influences how people perceive and read Muslims. Participants also noted that Muslims might be stereotyped, which might trigger people who then attack them, including their women on the streets. Some members also observed that some of the media houses portrayed

the religion as an enemy and a group of bandits, which they felt contributed to the increased Islamophobia.

Because the media influences the people at such times here, I can't exactly remember when or what incident occurred here, we had Muslim women being harassed on the streets because the media has actually also conditioned the population to think that you know when you see a Muslim you see a terrorist. This is because citizens are being bombarded with this information that the Muslims and Islam is the enemy. And so, the fight is against the religion.” (Respondent 5)

Whether we like it or not, non-Muslims will be affected by the media narrative, and as much as the media might try to cover itself, they go at any length to sell the story just to get more readership but the damage is already done, whereby, we find people who walk into, for example government offices, they find them to be biased, and they have this animosity towards Muslims. At the end of the day, if the image of Islam is tarnished, then it will lead to violence against Muslims. (Respondent 8)

However, some participants observed disparities in how the media reports insecurity incidents involving followers of religions other than Islam. They gave the example of the Shakahola incident, where a radical Christian cleric made his congregation starve to death; the incident was largely ignored by the media until the scale of the tragedy became apparent at a very late stage. Interestingly, some participants contrasted this with the reports of insecurity incidents in Muslim areas in Kenya, which are often labeled as terrorism even when similar realities are seen.

Look at what happened at Shakahola. The Shakahola incident did not get similar attention as terrorism incidents, until very late when it was clear many people were killed. And of course, if the Shakahola would have taken place in anywhere in Muslim areas of northern or coastal Kenya, then it would have been represented as a terrorist incident, and not ideological deviation issue. (Respondent 6)

There is the issue of Christian fundamentalism or even within the different faiths. just like Muslims, what is happening in India is a superb example, in which Hindu extremists are becoming, you understand, radical and extremists. However, whilst representing, the media is distinctive. However, the situation is different for Muslim related incidents or extremist ideologist that is not found in mainstream Islam. (Respondent 7)

Besides, some participants articulated themselves about how the media has made the community to be perceived that the Muslims are connected to bombings in the US, and it has affected the surveillance among the active members of the Muslim community. They said that it has contributed to paranoia and mistrust.

Many Muslims felt that they were being pursued or followed, just because they have a relative, who maybe, is suspected of having links with the terrorist groups. Many have disappeared never to be seen again. Until recently, the media did not bother to look into the extra-judicial killings against Muslims. (Respondent 10).

Other participants were of the opinion that the Kenyan media representation of terrorism has had huge impacts on the Muslim Youth. Most of the Muslim youths are facing what they called the identity issue, that is, being identified with Islam and terrorism has become a national shame and some Muslim youths are torn between showcasing their religious identity and at the same time, keeping it a religious subject.

I have witnessed situations the youth feel ashamed to be identified as Muslims. To be a Muslim means to them everyone will focus on them. We have been offering sessions to help them recover from the trauma caused by terrorism, with the issue of likelihood of being targeted becoming an issue. (Respondent 9)

5.4 Summary

In this chapter, findings were presented based on the second question of the study, which was: How does the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism manifest itself? The scope of this question covered the impact of the Nairobi-based Kenyan media's representation of terrorism on the Muslim scholars and their relation with fellow leaders from other religions in the country, along with the impact on the Muslim society in the eyes of the scholars. Table 5.1 is a summary of the findings in this chapter.

Table 4.2: Summary of findings in this chapter

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- Majority of Muslim religious scholars noted a negative impact on their lives due to media representation of terrorism, though some also highlighted positive outcomes.
 - There was an overwhelming frustration and difficulties that the Muslim Scholars faced in using the media to clarify their positions, with concerns about being labeled terrorism sympathizers.
 - Media representation of terrorism negatively impacted relations between Muslim scholars and leaders of other religions, creating a lot of challenges, but also few opportunities.
 - Negative media representation of terrorism influenced how Muslims were viewed in governmental circles and in public arenas.
 - Despite challenges, scholars noted the media offered opportunities, though rarely, for them to educate the public, counter extremist ideologies, and engage in interfaith dialogue.
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CHAPTER SIX

PERCEPTIONS OF MUSLIM RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS ON MEDIA IN NAIROBI, KENYA

6.0 Overview

In this chapter, findings were presented based on the third research question, which was: How does the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism shape their perception towards the media in Nairobi, Kenya? The scope of this question included: how Kenyan media's representation of terrorism shapes the perception of Muslim religious scholars in regards to media. The findings are presented as: 6.1 Views on media; 6.2 Business Influence; 6.3 Perceptions towards media; 6.4 Media reforms; and 6.5 Summary.

6.1 Views on Media

Views of the participants in this research, drawn from Muslim religious scholars, towards the media, particularly in relation to its representation of terrorism, were mostly negative, but with some rare positive views. Though majority of the participants expressed negative attitude, very few described instances in which they were happy with the media. Participants focused on the editorial aspect. However, some common themes and considerations have emerged. These are; editorial issues, media independence and business influence.

6.1.1 Editorial issues

Participants in this research scrutinized Kenyan media's behavior when reporting about terrorism. Nearly all the participants expressed their view that the Kenyan media representation of terrorism is not editorially objective. Some of the participants were

of the opinion that media representation of terrorism in Kenya was done in an openly biased manner. This biased representation of terrorism, as the participants argue, contributes to a distorted public understanding of the religion and its followers. The impression formed, according to the participants is that the media's outright bias can be seen in the manner in which handles its reporting.

I find that the media is one-sided. Whenever a terror attack happens, normally they refer to the perpetrators as Muslim terrorists. But if the attackers are not Muslims, they just stick to the fact that an attack happened. (Respondent 4)

Generally, when terrorism or when terrorist act has happened specifically in Kenya, you will find that the media tries to report it biased towards or against Islam or associating those terrorist acts to Islam. The first impression that comes to me when the media speaks about terrorism is that they are bias and they always want to associate the acts of terrorism with Islam. (Respondent 3)

Other participants gave a specific theme where the media did not give a fair coverage. Some respondent focused on what they termed as extra-judicial killings against Muslims, conducted as part of the crackdown on terrorism suspects, saying that the media either refused to cover these incidents or covered it in a manner that was supportive of the government.

To describe the coverage of the issue it's unfair coverage, unfair coverage that will go to biasness, it's unfair, it's really unfair. (Respondent 8)

When there was all that extra judicial killings and Muslims lost a lot of them, the media refused to cover. even when we did a procession in the streets of Nairobi and I talked about it publicly, they gave me a complete blackout, because they were not comfortable with what I said. (Respondent 5)

Participants also had issues with what they described as selective reporting when it comes to the issue of terrorism. They argued that major contributions by Muslims to the country in this regard go unnoticed, while minor incidents involving non-Muslims receive extensive coverage.

“The Kenyan media, from the Muslim point of view, seems to be not understanding the context at all. There is a lot of language problem, and there is a lot of biases.”(Respondent 6)

6.1.2 Media Independence

Majority of the participants in this research raised serious concerns regarding the independence of the Kenyan media, when it comes to covering terror incidents, and its susceptibility to influence, particularly from Western media. Some participants emphasized on the significance of fact-checking and independent thinking in the Kenyan media representation of terrorism. They noted that this is not something that is unique to Kenya only, but is also a concern for most of African countries.

I think first is that they don't have independent minds, they don't have an independent mind, they are quick to jump to conclusion, you know, its breaking news, it is hot news, they are thinking initially is very much influenced by the way the western media shows terrorism. (Respondent 3)

A lot of influence on our media comes from the Western countries. I want them to do their fact check. I want them to be on their own, you know, it is a reality, today that Africa is being controlled economically and politically by their former colonizers. So, I hope in this, the media is going to be independent and think like African and Kenyan. (Respondent 5)

Other participants pointed out that the Kenyan media was borrowing most of the terminologies it uses when representing terrorism from the Western media. They suggest that the Kenyan media is dependent on others and thus could compromise its objectivity on the matter.

Now, the Kenyan media, is not very independent. They always borrow their terminology and their everything from the Western media. (Respondent 9)

It seems that Kenyan media is influenced by the international media. So, it has adapted to the negativity of international media on terrorism reporting and that is what influenced the Kenyan media. Their report is therefore more negative towards Muslims.”(Respondent 6)

Some other participants introduced a government perspective, suggesting that the Kenyan media representation of terrorism is not solely a product of external influence but is also influenced and supported by the state. They say that the media, sometimes, acts as a tool of the government, specially, the security agencies.

As far as the media misinformation is concerned, I would not hesitate that the pen pushes the people who hold the hand of the who is who in this country. They have a hand in it. Because, if the media did not have the support of the state, some of the things would not have happened. The media is therefore a tool used by the government.(Respondent 2)

Of course, as usual, the media and the misrepresentation of the data came to play because of the worldwide reporting, and because of the security interferences, I presume, and all that have an influence on them.(Respondent 7)

6.2 Business Influence

Participants in this study are of the view that there is a strong relationship between media representation of terrorism incidents and profit-making, describing it a complex issue for the media in Nairobi, Kenya. They discussed the delicate dynamics that exist between the Kenyan media representation of terrorism and the pursuit of profit.

Others clearly focused on the intense competition between various media outlets for audience attention, which sometimes leads them resorting to sensational reporting and clickbait tendencies when representing issues related to terrorism due to their potential to attract more viewers, readers, or online clicks. This pursuit of audience engagement can lead to skewed representations that prioritize shock value over objectivity in reporting thus forgetting the human nature of news subjects.

One thing which is important is that all the time what the media is doing is commercializing the lives of human beings, (Respondent 2)

When terrorism incidents happen, people look for more and more information, and the media has to satisfy the need and use the opportunity to generate

income. They then sensualize their report and accuse Muslims and Islam and misrepresent facts about my religion. (Respondent 9).

when it comes to news is no longer about just saying what happens and reporting what happens. it's about getting more viewership. (Respondent 4)

Some participants further spoke about how the commercialization of terrorism has had an impact on the Muslim communities.

Terrorism has been commercialized. And so, it has affected Muslim agencies, it has affected the Muslim people and the scholars and preachers whose aim is to guide the Muslim faith. (Respondent 7).

Other participants spoke about how some media outlets feel the pressure to meet the expectations of majority of their audiences. They are of the view that this could lead to a selective representation of terrorism that aligns with the beliefs and biases of majority of their subscribers.

In some cases, profit-making becomes part of the need to maintain a loyal audience, potentially affecting the objectivity of reporting. This is even more serious when the matter relates to terrorism which leads to killing of many innocent people. (Respondent 8)

6.3 Perceptions towards media

Participants were of the opinion that the Kenyan media representation of terrorism has had a huge impact on how they perceive the media and journalists. Majority of them expressed negative attitude towards the media and journalists, though some of the participants said they have noticed a gradual improvement in media's representation of terrorism over time.

Some of the participants have gone to an extent where were reluctant to engage with Kenyan media in Nairobi, citing a lack of preparedness to present the truth about

terrorism. Others expressed their unwillingness to accept interview requests from Kenyan journalists due to perceived preference for negative representation of Islam.

I even turn away from being interviewed by the Kenyan media personnel because I know they are not prepared to listen and air the truth about terrorism. (Respondent 7)

I am not comfortable being engaged by Kenyan media personnel, because I cannot give what the media wants. When a Kenyan journalist is interviewing Muslim scholar, what they usually prefer is you to talk about only negative issues about Islam. Well, should I focus on the terrorist, the criminal and wrong doer, or I talk about my Muslim community. The two are different. When you talk of Islam, the media gets discouraged. When you talk positively about Islam, and how it perceives terrorism, and all that, and incidents, in positive way, as a Kenyan, they consider you as not telling the truth. Then of course, start to make me either to switch off or close the discussion. (Respondent 6)

This has resulted in some participants indicating that they have taken a drastic step by disconnecting from various media channels, expressing a distrust in the commercial motivations driving news content. They say that the Kenyan media in Nairobi is trying to capitalize on human suffering for financial gains, especially when it comes to the issue of media representation of terrorism, with some saying that exposure to media has affected them negatively.

Today, I don't have a radio in my house. I don't have a TV in my house. I don't buy the newspaper. I don't read the newspapers and the social media, because I know, all that is there is commercial. It is as a result of business, you know, to some people it is business. And I don't like supporting people who are using the blood and human lives for commercial gains. (Respondent 2)

That's what has now put me in a situation where I don't want to listen to anything about media.”(Respondent 9)

Participants also indicated that media's representation of terrorism has led them to lose interest in following the media. Some focused on the Kenyan government's

Usalama Watch operation in 2014 in reaction to series of terror attack, as an example, saying that it has led them to switch to alternative media.

Before the terrorism incidents, I have been an adherent follower of Kenyan news, but after the many incidents and the negative media representation of Muslims. I have found myself not having an appetite to listen or watch the Kenyan media.”(Respondent 10)

I started disliking the Kenyan media during the 2014 Usalama Watch operation, when people were mistreated and gathered at Kasarani Stadium. They were cheering unlike the BBC and the VOA, who were bringing out the suffering of the people.”(Respondent 5)

However, there were few participants, who were positive about Kenyan media representation of terrorism, citing specific examples. This has often led to change of attitude towards the media.

They have started reporting in my case positively, and in my view, my attitude actually towards journalism has changed radically.”(Respondent 1)

But this sentiment was challenged by the vast majority of the participants who insisted that all the incidents where the media represented the terror issues positively was either as a result of the involvement of human rights groups, like Amnesty International Kenya, or professional entities, like the Law Society of Kenya.

6.3.1 Media efforts for improvement

Participants also focused on some notable improvement in the Kenya media landscape when it comes to representation of terrorism, though not to the standard satisfactory to them. They noted some recent positive transformation in the media narrative surrounding Islam, slightly moving away from a historical trend of negativity and hostility. Participants’ views also suggest the existence a growing awareness within the media community about their representation of terrorism.

Some participants emphasized on the fact there were some positive changes over the last five years, and noted a decrease in hostility towards Islam and Muslims.

There has been a positive change. not the degree required. but the hostility has come down. I think there is a new thinking among the media of what terrorists are doing. So, the whole condemnation of Islam or Muslims is being turned down. I think having realized that the Muslims themselves are victims of terrorism. then I think they are taking a few steps backward. So, the amount of hostility that was there has reduced.” (Respondent 5)

Other participants did a comparison on the media representation of terrorism in the last two decades, and looked at the historically negative trend in media coverage but expresses optimism about the changing landscape they have experienced recently.

For over 20 years or so it has been absolutely negative. it is changing a little bit now. And we hope that that trend will continue. (Respondent 8)

Participants also focused on the increasing role of media that emerged recently, where it gives some Muslim scholars an opportunity to represent the true picture of Islam. Though majority of participants were of the view that such opportunities are rare, few participants expressed their satisfaction with offering of such by the media.

I think, let us give them that credit, when these events come, you will find that they sometimes invite speakers from Muslim, to come and discuss this issue and that is when speakers use the media now to actually present the issue of there is a difference between terrorists and there's a difference between Muslims.” (Respondent 3)

I believe we should give them that credit when some occasions come you find that they would welcome speakers from Muslims to come and discuss the issue and that is when Muslim scholars can utilize the media.” (Respondent 7)

Some participants, looking at the media representation of terrorism during the major terrorist attacks, acknowledged improvements in reporting, particularly during events like the Dusit attack, the last major terror attack in Nairobi in 2019.

There was some improvement, a little bit in reporting. There were some attempts to make it neutralized so that it should not be made that the Muslim are targeting non-Muslims, because that one can bring a very serious repercussion. There was even more improvement when it happened in Dusit attack, there were clearly some Muslim media, but the media in general not only Muslim media. But even the public media or the national media, they managed to make interviews or conducted interviews with even victims or families of the victims who are Muslims and who are also affected, so they have been gradual improvement in reporting.”(Respondent 1)

I can say here is a slight shift to positivity. I don't think we have arrived yet, but we have the way to get into a better journalist's environment in the future.” (Respondent 9)

I think the media in Nairobi, Kenya, is not as bad as people pursue compared to the Western media, especially we have media like Fox News we have media in France who are very anti-Islam and they like to portray Muslims as terrorists and in fact that is what sells for them and that's how they get viewership but in media in Kenya they are much, much better than them. (Respondent 4)

Though most of the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the Kenyan media representation of terrorism, some of them did acknowledge that the media is making efforts to improve. This despite them insisting that it is not yet to their satisfactory and that the media needs to do more to be fair to Muslims as a community and Islam as a religion when representing issues related to terrorism.

6.4 Media Reforms

Participants in this research focused on areas they believe the Kenyan media should and can improve on in regards to its representation of terrorism. Their suggestions focused on the journalism curriculum to enhance ethical journalism. They also discussed the need to educate journalists about mainstream Islam to differentiate it with Islamic terrorism, which they view as minority. They further called for collaboration between the Kenyan media and Muslim religious scholars to further improve the Kenyan media representation of terrorism.

6.4.1 Journalism Aspect

Participants focused on the need for responsible journalism when reporting on terrorism, and the use of terror incidents by promoting unity. They also emphasized on upholding the truth, educating journalists, or advocating for a more independent African and Kenyan media.

Some participants emphasized the importance of leveraging moments of crisis, such as terrorist attacks, to foster unity among Kenyans. The call is for a collective identification as Kenyans, transcending racial, religious, and ethnic boundaries.

Whenever there are terrorist attacks, they should possibly present a fair and also try and break any stereotypes and use that opportunity to call for a unity of purpose and many Kenyans, you know, come together people, from different races, who have faith and all that, so that they become identifying themselves, first as Kenyans, against these acts of terrorism, and that is the only effect these acts have, to clarify that they have nothing to do with a given race, a given people a given faith. (Respondent 3)

The media should be the media of the truth. You know, today when you look at every journalist what he says, there is fake news. We don't want the media to be branded fake all the time. So, they should report what is the truth. They should report things as it is. When something is bad, they should report as bad. When they are not sure they should report as it is, but not take sides and not be influenced by foreigners. (Respondent 5)

Other participants spoke about the issue of media literacy regarding Islam and terrorism. They are of the view that to combat stereotypes and misconceptions, media professionals need to be educated on Islam.

I feel the Kenyan media needs to be educated on Islam, on terrorism. Terrorism is a negative thing, it's not Islam, it has nothing to do with Islam. They must have in their work areas, library, where they have Islamic books, literature on Islam, and learn main stream Islamic views on terrorism. (Respondent 6)

Participants also focused on media's responsibility to report truthfully without inciting violence against any particular group, particularly Muslims. They basically see that

there is need for responsible journalism to resolve the misunderstanding between Muslims and the media.

I think the media has a responsibility of being genuine and they have a responsibility of covering a story but do not be to not in a way to incite violence against Muslims. I think what we are advocating for is responsible journalism. (Respondent 4)

Some of the participants proposed a comprehensive change in the curriculum for journalism education at universities, colleges and media centers, arguing that journalists need to be well-versed in the issues related to Islam and terrorism to avoid inadvertently using language that could be inflammatory. They call for an agreed-upon terminologies that can guide journalists in reporting on terrorism incidents without perpetuating stereotypes.

It should be changed in the curriculum of teaching, probably journalists they need to know about Islam, they need to know Islam, and they need to be enlightened on Muslims and other communities. Secondly, there should be terminologies, people should come up with and determine or agree on terminologies to be used when reporting on terrorism incidents because failure to that without knowing it will use a word that is inflammatory. (Respondent 1)

Participants also touched on the broader issue of media autonomy and independence. They insisted on the need for the Kenyan media in Nairobi to have its own voice on sensitive issues like terrorism, and be free from the influence of former colonizers.

I want them to do their fact check. I want them to do their own, you know, it is a reality today that Africa can rightly have their own message, instead of being controlled by others. (Respondent 8).

Some of the participants were categorical that for the media to change its representation of terrorism, they need to engage new crop of journalists and they suggested inclusion of Muslim journalists in newsrooms, who are well versed with the issues surrounding terrorism, and that the new generation of journalists should be given an opportunity in the mainstream media, as they are less judgmental.

I would wish from the media is to have Muslim journalists dedicated to some of these issues, because if we have a Muslim journalist. I am sure they can protect the image of Islam and they have a big responsibility on their shoulder. (Respondent 9)

6.4.2 Engaging Muslim Scholars

Participants focused on the importance of the media in Nairobi, Kenya, engaging Muslim religious scholars to help them in positively shaping media's representation of Islam and terrorism. They also suggested that engaging the Muslim community will give media representation of terrorism the balanced coverage needed.

Some participants were very clear that there is a significant gap in the media's approach to representing terrorism, particularly due to their lack of serious engagement with Muslim scholars and international experts.

There was no serious engagement on the Muslim scholars, and international scholars on this. It was not done at all. So, in the process, my position as a Muslim scholar, as a Muslim leader, might not change from the Kenyan media representation of terrorism. (Respondent 6)

Other participants called on the media to avoid lazy journalism and take a proactive approach by digging deeper into the subject matter instead of relying only on the government's narrative on issues related to terror attacks. They stress the significance of studying the underlying reasons and trying to understand Islam by consulting with Muslim religious scholars.

I would tell the media or I would wish from the media is let them not be lazy let them dig and study and understand, by getting in touch with Muslim scholars, so that they give the true clear picture not just what's being told and you know you just go with the popular narrative. (Respondent 4)

Some participants warn that emotional reaction and public reactions should not blind journalists from the truth when representing terrorism and they suggest that a long with engaging Muslim scholars, the media should also be sober and objective.

Whenever the media engages the Muslim scholars or the representatives of the Muslim people, they always get a balanced representation, but most of the times, they are carried away by emotions, and they miss the point. (Respondent 6)

I urge them to engage Muslims and have them in mind when talking about Islamic terrorism. Sometimes by just thinking about how Muslims will feel about this or that will change a lot in their narrative. They should always have in mind that Muslims are also human beings. (Respondent 3)

Few Participants, however, noted that there were some positive media engagements that gave them an opportunity to give their side of the story and represent the true picture of Islam. They also expressed their satisfaction with media response whenever an issue was brought to their attention in regards to their representation of terrorism.

Lately I noticed that they invite Muslim scholars and give them opportunity to explain terrorism. I was very happy when one of the TV stations, invited Sheikh Ibrahim Lithome, who explained the word Jihad in Islamic context. (Respondent 7)

The response from the mass media has been also good because whenever they are told that some words were offensive, they have also responded. (Respondent 1)

Most of the participants were of the view of the need for a mechanism to establish relations and regular engagement between the Muslim scholars and the media houses to ensure the media captures the true feeling of Muslims on their representation of terrorism. This works according to some of them by appointing Muslim journalists or editors of Muslim affairs, who could act as a bridge between the Muslim community and the media houses. They also believe that such an appointment will enrich the Nairobi-based Kenyan media representation of terrorism in terms of facts and context.

6.5 Summary

In this chapter, findings were presented based on the third question of the study, which was: How does the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism shape their perception towards the media in general? The scope of this question covered the perceptions of the Muslim religious scholars towards the media acquired as a result of their lived experience, and their suggestions for reforms to improve their representation of terrorism. Table 6.1 is a summary of the findings as presented in this chapter.

Table 6.1 Summary of key findings in this Chapter

- There was a general perception among the Muslim religious scholars that Nairobi-based Kenyan media's representation of terrorism is biased against Muslims.
 - There was also a perception among the Muslim religious scholars that the urge to increase audience figures driven by commercial interests as well as influence by Western media play a major role in the negative media representation of terrorism.
 - The negative perception towards the media has led some Muslim religious scholars to express reluctance in engaging with Kenyan media in Nairobi, while others resorted to fully disconnecting from various media channels.
 - Despite the negative perception towards the media's representation of terrorism, some Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi noted slight improvement and shift towards positive reporting in recent years.
 - There was also an emphasis by the Muslim scholars on the need for reforming the Kenyan media in Nairobi, in terms of training or incorporating in their curriculum some lessons on Islam and Muslims' view on terrorism.
 - There was an overwhelming perception that there should be more engagement and communication between Muslim Scholars and Muslim representatives on one hand, and the media, on the other hand, to create a better understanding. They were of the view that such engagement, though rare, has had a positive impact.
 - The Muslim religious scholars were also of the view that there is need to employ Muslim journalists in the mainstream media, or at least, Muslim affairs editors, to improve coverage and context.
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CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.0 Overview

In this chapter, summary of key findings and discussion were presented with reference to the literature review in Chapter Two, then some conclusions were drawn, where the contribution and implications of the study for policy and practice were focused on. Finally, the researcher reflects on his experience during the PhD study process.

7.1 Summary of key findings

This study was based on three research questions, which were: What are the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya? How does the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism manifest itself? How does the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism shape their perception towards the media in Nairobi, Kenya?

I carried out in-depth interviews in order to address these questions.

The key findings are summarized in the table below.

Table 7.1: Summary of key findings

Q1. What are the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya?

- Majority of Muslim religious scholars noted a negative impact on their lives due to media representation of terrorism, though few highlighted positive outcomes.
 - There was an overwhelming frustration and difficulties that the Muslim Scholars faced in using the media to clarify their positions, with concerns about being labeled terrorism sympathizers.
 - Media representation of terrorism negatively impacted relations between Muslim religious scholars and leaders of other religions, creating a lot of challenges and few opportunities for Muslim religious scholars.
 - Negative media representation of terrorism influenced how Muslims were viewed in governmental circles and in public arenas.
 - Despite challenges, scholars noted the media offered opportunities, though rarely, for them to educate the public, counter extremist ideologies, and engage in interfaith dialogue.
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Q2. How does the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism manifest itself?

- Muslim religious scholars highlighted the significant challenge they have faced with the Kenyan media's associating terrorism with Islam, which could lead to stigmatization of Muslims.
 - Stereotyping in media reporting was seen as promoting Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment, potentially leading to hate crimes and discrimination.
 - The use of unfavorable terms, such as "fundamentalist" and "jihadist," was seen as contributing to the misrepresentation of Islam.
 - The media was seen to be providing a platform for terrorists to disseminate their messages, potentially encouraging further recruitment among gullible youth and further attacks.
 - There was general feelings of alienation and rejection by the Muslim religious scholars as a result of negative media representation of terrorism, causing psychological oppression.
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- Disassociation from terrorism and condemnation of acts of violence was identified as key responses by the Muslim scholars to media representation of terrorism.
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Q3. How does the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism shape their perception towards the media in general?

- There was a general perception among the Muslim religious scholars that the Nairobi-based Kenyan media's representation of terrorism was biased against Muslims.
 - There was also a perception among the Muslim religious scholars that the urge to increase audience figures driven by commercial interests plays a major role in media representation of terrorism.
 - The negative perception towards the media has led some scholars to express reluctance to engage with Kenyan media in Nairobi, while others resorted to fully disconnecting from various media channels.
 - Despite the negative perception towards the Kenyan media's representation of terrorism, some Muslim scholars in Nairobi noted slight improvement and shift towards positive reporting in recent years.
 - There was also an emphasis by the Muslim scholars on the need for reforming the Kenyan media in terms of training or incorporating in their curriculum some lessons on Islam and Muslims' view on terrorism.
 - There was an overwhelming perception that there should be more engagement and communication between Muslim Scholars and Muslim representatives on one hand, and the Kenyan media in Nairobi to create a better understanding.
 - The Muslim religious scholars were also of the view that there is need for Muslim journalists in the mainstream media, or at least, Muslim affairs editors, to improve coverage and context.
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7.2 Discussion

Overall, the key findings of this study are based on the research questions; What are the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism? How does the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars manifest itself? And how does the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media

representation of terrorism shape their perception towards media in general? The main findings respectively are; the relationship between media representation of terrorism and theories of Representation and Phenomenology, stereotype in media representation of terrorism, and the complex relations between the Kenyan media and the Muslim Communities in Nairobi. These are discussed in the subsequent sections (7.2.1, 7.2.2, and 7.2.3).

7.2.1 Media Representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya, and theories of Representation and Phenomenology

This research demonstrates how the experiences of Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi, Kenya, are profoundly shaped by media representation of terrorism, and this relationship can be effectively explored through the lens of phenomenological theory and in the philosophy of Transcendental Phenomenology. Influential works such as Melissa M. Martirano's (2016) and James G. Hart's (2019) offer deep insights into the ways in which lived experiences and individual perceptions mold personal realities.

This theoretical foundation is essential for a clearer understanding of how Muslim communities internalize and react to media representation of terrorism in the broader Islamic context. For example, many Muslim scholars have raised concerns about the detrimental effects of media's representation of terrorism, illustrating the significant influence of "news frames." As described by Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marian Just (2004), news frames serve as interpretive structures that journalists deploy to situate specific events within a larger narrative, selectively emphasizing certain aspects of reality to shape public perception and moral evaluation of the issues at hand.

The study found that Muslim religious scholars have adopted means to counter media representation of terrorism. They have initiated directly engaging the Kenyan public through the opening of mosques to non-Muslims, and using available channels to condemn terror attacks to distance it from Muslims. These interventions embody Hall's "oppositional code," in his encoding/decoding theory, where the message conveyed in media representation is rejected and recoded through a different ideological lens. The findings on the inability by the Muslim religious to clarify the position of Islam through the media is also testament that the implications for cultural communication are profound. Media no longer simply informs; it governs who is intelligible, whose suffering is visible, and whose voice counts. In this context, Hall's model is not merely descriptive but politically generative. It demands that scholars attend to the cultural politics of meaning-making, to the infrastructures of representation, and to the strategies of resistance that emerge from the margins.

For Muslim religious scholars, their expressed positions that media representation of terrorism in Kenya within the dominant media discourses, which at times considers them as sympathizers further exemplifies Hall's (1997) encoding and decoding model. Thus, media representation of terrorism are rarely objective; they are situated within broader discourses of Islamophobia (Cesari, 2013), which Hall (1997) would identify as the "dominant-hegemonic code", a code which aligns with institutional ideologies of state power, nationalism, and racial ordering. In practice, and as evident from the findings in this study, Hall's encoding/decoding model reveals the complexity of the audience.

From the findings, Muslim religious scholars, often deeply embedded in high-context communicative traditions do not simply internalize or accept these representations.

Instead, they engage in oppositional readings(Hall, 1997), actively rejecting the encoded associations and seeking to re-code their own subjectivities through sermons, media interventions and opening of mosques for non-Muslims. This act of decoding and re-signifying, as per the findings of this study, is an epistemological intervention; it is a resistance to being rendered legible only through securitized or pathologized lenses.

The findings further reveal that Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model offers a compelling analytic lens through which to understand Muslim religious scholars' predominantly negative perceptions of media representations of terrorism. When scholars interpreted these narratives through their lived experiences of media stereotyping, they arrived at what Hall described as "dominant interpretation" of media as hostile and reductionist. These views are not only subjective reactions, but are grounded in structural and discursive practices that reproduce Islamophobic tropes (Mertens & de Smaele, 2021).

Hall (1997) also theorizes that decoding is not always symmetrical with the encoding process, audiences can negotiate or oppose the intended message. A minority of Muslim scholars interviewed, interpreted media coverage through what Hall calls the "oppositional code". These scholars actively reject the encoded dominant ideology, instead seeing media representation of terrorism as positive or improving over time (Eide et al., 2021). Their positive perception emerges not from naivety but from a strategic reappropriation of media tools, framing their public religious discourse in ways that challenge stereotypes and offer alternative representations of Muslim identity. In essence, Hall's model not only explains the plurality of in interpretations

but also underscores the contested ideological terrain within which Muslim religious scholars negotiate their mediated identities.

The research further uncovers that the framing and representation of terrorism by the Nairobi-based Kenyan media have seriously impacted the lives of Muslim religious scholars, frequently leading to unfair accusations and blame for terrorism-related incidents within the country. According to Norris, Kern, and Just (2004), these media representation of events, though appearing to be automatic, often mirror the influences of various stakeholders, including government authorities, public figures, and the inherent ideological biases that pervade journalistic practices, with a particular focus on proximity or emotional appeal.

This feeling of marginalization experienced by Muslim scholars due to the media's representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya, brings out the profound and far-reaching effects that journalistic practices can have on the individuals and communities in their area of coverage. Tacaks (2012) likens this to the Manichean Binary model of information processing, which crudely categorizes narratives into binaries like "us vs. them" or "good vs. bad," oversimplifying complex social realities.

Moreover, this study challenges traditional mass communication theories, including the Transmission Model of Communication, Hypodermic Needle Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory. These theories generally conceive of communication as a straightforward process in which audiences passively absorb and interpret the meanings intended by media producers. However, Stuart Hall (1980) identified significant discrepancies between the encoding (by producers and reporters) and decoding (by audiences) processes, suggesting that these interactions allow for multiple interpretations and the emergence of oppositional viewpoints.

Therefore, this research advocates for a re-evaluation of the oversimplified view that media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya is just about the direct transmission and reception of messages. Rather, it calls for a more detailed understanding of how these media messages affect specific audience segments, particularly the Muslim community, guided by their religious scholars. Adopting an approach that examines the processes of reification and conceptualization, as Howarth (2006) suggested, could provide deeper insights into the social psychology of communication. This approach is crucial for disentangling the complex dynamics between media representations and their impact on community perceptions and intergroup relations, offering a richer context for understanding the intersection between media narratives and societal responses.

The study also focused on how media narratives in relation to representation of terrorism can cause affected communities to react in a certain manner. Moustakas (1994) gives a clear description of the process of "phenomenological reduction", which is a key element in the transcendental phenomenology, because it allows individuals to reflect on their experiences; with media narratives, separating personal perceptions from imposed biases, which is crucial in analyzing Muslims' reactions to media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya.

Even with the existence of studies on media representation of terrorism, it was difficult to compare this to a wide range of similar studies, as there were few studies that were carried out on the terrorism phenomenon from the perspective of Muslim religious scholars, and this gives very few options to do a comparison on the impact aspect. However, there were studies, albeit few, that were carried out to investigate the experiences of Muslim religious scholars towards media representation of terrorism.

Among them is research conducted by Wibawa, (2023), which, like this study, also used phenomenology as a theory and a method of inquiry, and found that the Muslim religious scholars in Indonesia faced a real challenge with the unfair association between the Islamic religion and terrorism by the media when covering terrorism incidents. This is very much consistent with the findings of this similarly phenomenological study on the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi, Kenya, over media representation of terrorism, which provides additional insights and agrees with results found in previous research on the coverage of terrorism and Islam.

Another study by Brown, Brown and Richards (2016) also focused on the unique experience of International Muslim student leaders on media representation of terrorism. The presented findings on the impact of media representation of terrorism are similar to the findings in this study. They found that the international Muslim students perceived Muslim countries to be represented by the media as sympathetic to terrorism, the same issue raised by the Nairobi-based Kenyan Muslim scholars in this study. The fact that they are being labelled as sympathizers while they are doing everything in their power to combat radicalization has an everlasting impact on them.

The other issue that came prominently in the findings of this study, which is also related to the theory of Phenomenology, is the impact Kenyan media's representation of terrorism had on relations between Muslims and other religious groups in Nairobi, Kenya. There were feelings of fear and mistrust among religious communities, affecting good working relations that prevailed in the period before 2011, when the Somalia-based terrorist group, Al-Shabaab started series of attacks on Nairobi and other Kenyan cities. This is in line with research by Berkeley Centre (2017), which

found that the terrorism phenomenon has strained the good relations between Muslims and Christians in Kenya, where religious tensions became a central concern of the Muslim-Christian relations. They further argued that the Al-Shabaab attacks in Nairobi, Kenya, and subsequent media interest has led to frosty relations between Muslims and Christians. Maina, (2017) argues that, the Christians view themselves as the main target of the terrorist groups. This is mainly affirmed by the terrorist tendency of selectively attacking Christians and their worshiping places (Maina, 2017). The Kenyan media in Nairobi has been focusing on the terrorist attacks as being targeted attacks against Christians, especially the attacks that targeted churches and Christians working in northern Kenya. The terrorists' targeted selective attacks and the media's focus on these attacks from the perspective of Muslims against Christians has no doubt created deep rifts between Muslims and Christians in Kenya (Maina, 2017).

This study is also very well related with the key concepts in Transcendental Phenomenology, which serves as a method of inquiry and theory for this research, such as intentionality, the lifeworld (Lebenswelt) and intersubjectivity. For instance, the concept of intentionality from Transcendental Phenomenology is very well related to the findings of this study on the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism in Kenya, as it has explained how these scholars perceive, interpret, and respond to such representations. Intentionality, a core concept in phenomenology introduced by Edmund Husserl (1931), refers to direct consciousness towards objects, ideas, or experiences — consciousness being about how conscious one is about something. As a result, Muslim religious scholars' consciousness was directed towards certain aspects of media representation of terrorism, like linking Islam with terrorism and the use of words the scholars

perceived to be offensive. The other aspect of intentionality is the fact that the Muslim religious scholars have, in some instances, adopted a pre-mediated stance on the media as a whole, as a result of their lived experience on media representation of terrorism.

The concept of the lifeworld (Lebenswelt) in Transcendental Phenomenology, which was also developed by Edmund Husserl (1931), refers to the taken-for-granted world of daily experiences in which individuals live and act. Therefore, in accordance with this study, it is very clear how the historical context of the relationship between the media and the Muslims on one side, and the relations between the government and the Muslims on the other hand, has shaped their perceptions, interpretations, and interactions with the media.

7.2.2 Stereotypes in Media Representation of Terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya

The findings of this study indicate that the Nairobi-based Kenyan media representation of terrorism is characterized with generalization of the issue of terrorism and associating it with Islam as a religion. This generalization is seen as contributing factor to the stigmatization of Muslims, reinforcing negative stereotypes, and potentially leading to feeling of rejection and resentment. The media's failure to provide a holistic representation of terrorism, often simplifying it to a narrative of Muslims targeting Christians, lacks the necessary context of the historical, geopolitical, and socioeconomic factors that contribute to terrorism. The main issue that came out of this study as a problematic aspect is the linking Islamic religion directly with terror attacks. This linkage is seen as a reflection of existing stereotypes against Muslims in Nairobi, Kenya, causing significant troubles for the Muslim community. The media, therefore, fails to distinguish between the acts of individuals

or groups and the religion of Islam as a whole. Participants in this study argue that the media does not apply the same standard when reporting on crimes committed by non-Muslims, where the religious affiliation of the perpetrators is often deemed irrelevant.

This is in line with the findings by Amos (2014): whose work critically assessed the media coverage of insecurity in Nairobi, Kenya, providing insight into how the Kenyan media's representation of terrorism may contribute to the association of Islam with terror attacks. He offered a perspective on the ethical and professional dilemmas faced by the media in covering terrorism, which is relevant to the findings in this study on the issue linking the Islamic religion with the terrorism incidents.

The findings in this study on the experience of the Kenyan Muslim scholars in Nairobi with the media representation of terrorism is also in line with Li K. & Zhang Q. (2022), Luqiu LR & Yang F. (2018) and Bassoni M. (2001). Li K. & Zhang Q. (2022) for instance used critical discourse analysis to examine the representation of Islam and Muslims in American media and found that the language and discourse in media can shape public perception and contribute to the stigmatization of entire religious communities. This approach is vital in understanding the media's role in linking Islam with terrorism and the subsequent psychological impact this can have on the Muslim communities. Luqiu LR & Yang F. (2018) explored Islamophobia in the context of Chinese media, discussing how news coverage stereotypes shapes the perceptions of Muslims about themselves and Islam.

The findings of this study can be used to understand the broader implications of Islamophobic media representation of Islam and their traumatic impact on Muslim communities and Muslim religious scholars. This is very much consistent with Bassoni (2001), who found that there is relationship between media reporting and

public perception of terrorism. The repercussions of such media representations on Muslims are huge and could have a far reaching implications. The study found that it has resulted in psychological impacts, including feelings of alienation and stigmatization. This is consistent with what was highlighted by Awan (2016), who notes that Muslims often find themselves having to navigate a social landscape marred by suspicion and discrimination. This sentiment is echoed by Love (2017), who discusses the social and political ramifications, including increased surveillance and discriminatory policies targeting Muslim communities, further entrenching feelings of marginalization and injustice.

The study also found that the Muslim religious scholars are concerned with what they perceive as Nairobi-based Kenyan media acting as a propaganda tool for terrorists by amplifying their attacks and giving them undue attention. This representation can as well depict terrorist groups as powerful entities and could contribute to further recruitment and attacks. Lowenthal (1989) is very well consistent with the findings in this study and is of the view that without the intervention of the media, terror attacks would not have an impact in the context of the society. Lowenthal (1989) adds that by dramatizing the terrorist threats and demands, the media often contribute to the moral confusion which tends to glorify the terror attacks and leave their victims forgotten. Walter Laqueur (2002) says the media play a serious role in making any terrorist operation a success and this was one of the main reasons for the shift from rural guerrilla to urban terror in the 1960s.

The findings in this study, in which Muslim religious scholars were concerned over the Nairobi-based Kenyan media's role in turning the public, majority of whom are Christians, against them, is very much consistent with Archetti, (2013), who explored

terrorism in the global media age and offered a communication approach to understanding how terrorism is reported and perceived. He found that media plays a major role in shaping public perception of terrorism, which is crucial for understanding the link between Islam and terrorism in media narratives. This is very much similar to the findings in this study, where Muslim religious scholars raised serious concerns on the negative impact of media representation of terrorism on their individual life as well as the Muslim community in Nairobi, Kenya.

The findings in this study on media's role in representing Islam negatively can also linked to Wibawa, D. (2023), in research on perceptions of Ulama (Muslim religious scholars) to terrorism news in Indonesia (a country with Muslim majority), who found that there was perceived negative repercussions for Islam due to the media's representation of terrorism, including the possibility of tarnishing Islam's image and the exacerbation of Islamophobic sentiments.

The findings in this study can further be linked to Stuart Hall (2013) on how cultural representations and signifying practices is significant for understanding how media representation construct and represent cultural and religious identities. This perspective is essential to understand how Islam is represented in the media, particularly in the context of terrorism, and how these representations contribute to the challenges faced by Muslims. Religious scholars, however, noted the few instances when the media was objective in its representation of terrorism and they cited some examples. This can be an example of how the media made efforts to differentiate between Islam and terrorism can have a positive impact. This very well agrees with the findings by Sikorsi *et al* (2021) who examined how Muslims are depicted in connection with Islamist terrorism and to what extent journalists use undifferentiated

coverage – that actively links Muslims to terrorism – and differentiated coverage - that actively differentiates Muslims from terrorism. They found out that undifferentiated coverage occurs in almost every other article. They also found out that proximity of a terror event resulted in more undifferentiated and less differentiated coverage.

The study found that the Kenyan media in Nairobi, in its representation of terrorism, has made efforts, though rarely, to accommodate Muslim religious scholars, and at times, differentiate between Islam and terrorism, which was noted and appreciated by the Muslim religious scholars. Even so, majority of the religious scholars said most of the media representation of terrorism did not differentiate between Muslims and terrorism.

For Muslim religious scholars, the media's negative representation of terrorism is further compounded by the media's use of specific terminologies and phrases that are seen to be unfavorable to the Muslim community, like 'Islamist', 'fundamentalist', and "Jihadist; terms associating terrorism directly with Islam. This, however, departs from Hoffman, 1998, who opines that "the religious imperative for terrorism is the most important defining characteristic of terrorism today". Hoffman further contends that "for the religious terrorist, violence is first and foremost a sacramental act or divine duty..." (p. 94). For that reason, religious terrorists are not constrained by political, conventionally moral or practical boundaries (Hoffman, 1998).

The study also found that the use of the words "Islamist", "Fundamentalist" and "Jihadist" is seen to be very offensive by the Muslim religious scholars, because they view these words to be part of Islamic teachings and principles and are misused by not only the terrorists, but also by the media. This is also very much different from (Shay, 2002) and (Kramer, 2003). For instance, (Shay, 2002), views the origin of the

term ‘fundamentalism’ being from Christian-Protestant, where it referred to religious and ideological fanaticism (Shay, 2002). The term ‘Islamist’ is used to refer to radical groups that (often violently) espouse a politicized, fundamentalist and ideological Islam (Kramer, 2003). It is used to differentiate from the mainstream religion of Islam (Kramer, 2003). But the Muslim scholars have an issue with the use of the word Islam or Islamist in this case to refer to what they view as groups that deviated from the Islamic religion.

The study further found that media representation of terrorism has had a negative impact on the Muslim Communities, and it is associated with a range of emotions, including bitterness, alienation, anger, insecurity, and sadness. There is also feeling of rejection from the part of Muslims due to the negative media representation of terrorism. This negative representation has encouraged some of them to take action to counter these narratives, such as engaging in anti-terrorism activities and public outreach to clarify the true teachings of Islam. Despite these efforts, some participants feel that the media’s representation has created barriers in their engagement with other religious groups and the general public. This is consistent with Brown, Brown and Richards (2016) who focused on the unique experience of International Muslim student leaders on media representation of terrorism in Britain. The study brought out that the Muslim student leaders believed that media representation of terrorism led Muslims to be viewed by other communities with suspicion. The study also found that this has had an impact on the students’ self-esteem and sense of cultural identity.

7.2.3 The complex relations between the Media in Nairobi, Kenya, and the Muslim Community

The findings of this study offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between the Kenyan media in Nairobi and the Muslim community, particularly the Muslim religious scholars, in the context of media representation of terrorism. A significant concern for Muslim religious scholars was the perceived bias in media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya. This resonates with the observations made by Archetti C. (2013), in his work "Understanding Terrorism in the Age of Global Media: A Communication Approach" which discusses how media narratives can shape public perceptions of terrorism. The labeling of perpetrators as "Muslim terrorists" aligns with the concept of 'framing' in media studies, as discussed by Entman R. M. in "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm" (1993), where the media's choice of words and emphasis can significantly influence public interpretation. This is what the Muslim scholars refer as the main basis for the media bias towards Islam and Muslims. The issue of unfair coverage and selective reporting by the Kenyan media in Nairobi highlights an important aspect of media ethics in the context of terrorism coverage and is a main catalyst for the poor relations between the Muslim community and the media in Nairobi, Kenya.

The study found that there is a strong perception that incidents involving the contributions of the non-Muslim citizens to the national discourse on counter-terrorism receive more attention from the media, while positive contributions by Muslims are overlooked, an issue that further worsens the mistrust between Muslims and the media in Nairobi. This underscores a serious lack of balance and objectivity in reporting. This issue can be contextualized within the broader discourse on media representation and stereotyping, as explored in Stuart Hall's (2013). The lack of

contextual understanding and language barriers cited by participants point to a deeper issue of cultural competence in journalism. It reflects a gap in the media's ability to accurately report on events involving Muslim communities, an issue that is consistent with W. James Potter (2013), which emphasized on the importance of understanding and correctly interpreting different cultural contexts in media reporting.

The other issue that reigned supreme in the findings of this research is perceived lack of independence of the Kenyan media in Nairobi when it comes to representation of terrorism, which further deteriorates the relations between Muslim Communities and the media. Muslims scholars were of the view that the Kenyan media in Nairobi was not acting independently, due to its susceptibility to influence by the Western Media. This echo concerns raised in global media studies as this phenomenon can clearly be understood through the lens of "Media Dependency Theory," which suggests that media content often reflects the influences of more dominant media sources (Ball-Rokeach S. J. and DeFleur M. L. 1976). The findings also indicate the issue of the commercialization of terrorism, which aligns with the concept of 'sensationalism' in media reporting, where audience attraction for purpose of advertising was identified as the reason for the negative media representation of terrorism. This is consistent with the findings of Wibawa, D. (2023), where Muslim religious scholars in Indonesia strongly perceive that economic motives were one of the main reasons that negatively influence media representation of terrorism and negatively impacted on the relations between Muslims and the media fraternity.

The study's findings included the perception that the Kenyan media in Nairobi is influenced by the emotions and feeling of patriotism when representing terrorism in an attempt to move with the feeling of the majority on the phenomenon to attract more

audiences and hence more advertisement. This has hugely disadvantaged the Muslim community and it is in line with Allan S. (2004), who discusses how the pursuit of profit can lead to sensationalist and unbalanced reporting, especially in the context of terrorism.

The study also found that Muslim religious scholars are urging for media literacy and educational reforms so that they are exposed to Islam, as a religion, and Muslims, as part and parcel of the Kenyan society, particularly in the context of reporting on Islam and terrorism so as to restore the damaged relations with the Muslim society. This highlights the need for ethical and responsible journalism in Nairobi, Kenya. Therefore, the focus is on the need for changing the journalism curriculum to include more ethical reporting practices resonate with the principles outlined by Frost C. (2011) in his "Journalism Ethics: A Casebook of Professional Conduct for News Media". He notes the need for ethical and objective journalism, which is paramount in modern societies. The consensus by the participants in this on the need for media to engage with Muslim scholars for a more balanced representation of Islam and terrorism is an essential step towards responsible journalism. This is in line with Wahl-Jorgensen K. and Hanitzsch T. (2009), who emphasizes the importance of diverse news sources and perspectives in journalism.

The findings in this study sheds light on the complex dynamics between the Kenyan media and Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi. The lack of engagement and understanding is a critical issue that echoes broader concerns in media studies about representation, stereotypes, and the ethical responsibilities of journalism. Participants were of the view that the lack of engagement between the Kenyan media and Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi was a result of media's unwillingness to balance their

stories. This very well agrees with Edelman (1971) who notes: If a political leader symbolizes ability to cope, his followers perceive his specific acts, redundantly, as evidence of that ability and may be oblivious both of information calling that meaning into question and of the frequent impossibility of proving either his competence or his incompetence. Thus, if the media engaged the Muslim religious scholars, seen as leaders of the religious followers in Nairobi, Kenya, it would have given them the opportunity to clarify things, or at least cope.

The findings in this study of the lack of communication and engagement between the media and the Muslim religious scholars has led to some of the scholars abandoning the Nairobi-based Kenyan media since they could not tolerate what they described as an outright bias. This is in line with Adhoch (2016), who did a critical evaluation of media representation of terrorism in Kenya through content and discourse analysis and found that the Kenyan media has effectively fanned public indignation and perpetuated what the study referred to as “a moral panic” in the society, ignoring the perspectives of the Muslim communities in the process. Another research by the international center for counter-terrorism (2020) dealt with mitigating the impact of media reporting terrorism through content analysis with specific focus on government communication during Westgate and Dusit2 attacks (in 2013 and 2019 respectively) and found that Nairobi media reporting of terror stories is laced with patriotic sentiments often encouraged by the state. This is an indication of how the findings in this study also focuses on the failure by the media to give space to Muslims and listen to their side of the story, which is consistent with Akbarzadeh, Shahram, and Bianca Smith (2005), who conducted a study on media representation of Muslims in Australia. They found that the local Muslims got less than 8% of coverage in

Australian newspapers when representing terrorism. Muslim religious scholars also emphasized on the need for media reforms and inclusion of Islam in their curriculum.

7.3 Conclusions

This study set out to explore the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars regarding the media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya. Through a qualitative approach grounded in Transcendental Phenomenology, in-depth interviews were conducted with ten Muslim Religious Scholars to understand how they experience, interpret, and respond to media representation of terrorism and its implications for their identity, authority, and community standing. While the thematic findings clearly show deep discontent with the persistent linking of Islam to terrorism, what emerges more subtly, but critically, is how these scholars actively negotiate, contest, and sometimes internalize these representations in complex ways. Crucially, participants did not only express grievance or frustration; they also revealed layered and sometimes ambivalent ways of making sense of this media representation. Some described moments of strategic engagement with journalists or recognition of broader political pressures shaping news production. Others interpreted the media's failure to consult or include Muslim perspectives as a symptom of wider societal indifference or institutionalized Islamophobia. However, rather than being passive recipients of dominant narratives, the participants revealed various interpretive strategies, ranging from outright rejection of media narratives to reluctant accommodation, and even selective collaboration with certain media actors. This multiplicity suggests that Muslim religious scholars are not a monolithic group, but active meaning-makers whose interpretations are shaped by a web of factors: civic responsibility and personal encounters with media. Thus, the study's central contribution is not only in

documenting the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars and their negative perceptions, but in revealing the interpretive labor these actors undertake in making sense of, and responding to, dominant media representations. It is within this tension between perceived misrepresentation and attempts at reinterpretation that the real complexity of media relations with the Muslim community unfolds.

This study therefore concludes that Muslim religious scholars in Nairobi experience media representations of terrorism as not only misaligned with their faith and identity, but as a daily site of negotiation, resistance, and meaning-making in a contested public sphere.

7.4 Contributions of this study

This study serves as a contribution to the body of research on media representation of terrorism in several ways. First and foremost, it focuses on the Muslim Community's experiences and perspective of the Kenyan media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, by responding to the need for data on the experience and perceptions of the Muslim community represented by their religious scholars.

Secondly, the study focuses on the challenges the Muslims face when it comes to media representation of terrorism and how it stigmatizes them. The study provides suggestions to policy makers, media practitioners and media institutions on means of creating a more inclusive media representation of terrorism that takes into considerations the feelings and aspirations of the Muslim community in the country.

Thirdly, most studies on media representation of terrorism focused on content analysis and journalists' perspective. Therefore, by focusing on the experiences and perceptions of the Muslim religious scholars, the study brings new insight from the

perception of the Muslim Community; the very people affected by media representation of terrorism, which was not previously done in Kenyan and African context.

Fourthly, this study has adopted a unique methodology. There is tendency in Kenya for majority of studies to use quantitative survey, and there are few that utilized qualitative approach (Ong'ondo 2009:233). The study therefore in its uniqueness, provides a reference point for academics, media outlets, policy makers and journalists, and provides a framework for re-assessing media representation of terrorism.

7.5 Implications for policy and practice

This study was aimed at shedding light on the media representation of terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya. The main aim being the lived experiences of the Muslim religious scholars on the phenomenon. I would, therefore, like to highlight the possible implications of the study for policy makers, media stakeholders and Muslim religious scholars, and the areas they need to improve on their representation of terrorism. These implications are as follows;

7.5.1 Guidelines on terrorism coverage

There is no single agreed formula, between the media stakeholders and the Muslim community, or even agreeable set of rules that govern media representation of terrorism in Kenya. This has made the Kenyan media representation of terrorism leaning towards negativity as per the perceptions of the Muslim religious scholars and the Muslim Community, who have shown that they believe it is being framed against them, and without taking their side of the story into consideration. There is need for creation of a single and comprehensive guidelines or policies on terrorism reporting that is agreed upon by all stakeholders, including the Muslim Community. This is the

approach being favored by responsible mass media organizations as voluntary self-restraint to void the danger of manipulation and exploitation by terrorist organizations (Altheide, 2007).

Policy makers and media outlets need to come up with a mechanism to avoid the issue of linking terrorism with Islam, which is a global problem for the Muslim communities. As a result, media outlets should come up with their own internal means, or as part of terrorism coverage guidelines, to differentiating between Islam as a religion, and terrorists, as groups, who do not represent the mainstream Muslims. Based on our findings and previous results stemming from effect studies, we call journalists to explicitly distinguish Muslims from terrorists, because undifferentiated media coverage can promote Islamophobia and negatively affect intergroup relations between Muslims and non-Muslims (von Sikorski, C., Schmuck, D., Matthes, J., Klobasa, C., Knupfer, H., & Saumer, M., 2022).

7.5.2 Implication for media colleges and institutions

There is an overwhelming need for universities and colleges in Kenya to train journalists on the sensitivities surrounding the media representation of terrorism for the Muslim communities in the country. It seems that majority of journalists are not aware of the pitfalls associated with linking Islam and Muslims with terrorism and the use of terminologies perceived to be offensive by the Muslim community. Therefore, there is need for deliberate efforts at all levels; from policy makers to media institutions, to design training modules on terrorism reporting for all journalists. Targeted training that includes a focus on basic facts about Islam as well as raising awareness of the resources that are now available to journalists may go some way

towards improving reportage of Islam and Muslims (Ewart, J., O'Donnell, K., & Chrzanowski, A., 2018).

7.5.3 Implication for Muslim Religious Scholars

On the part of the Muslim religious scholars, it seems that there is an overwhelming need to establish communication channels between the media in Kenya and the Muslim communities through various forums. This is in line with the need for establishment of a mechanism for media engagement of the Muslim community in Kenya to bridge the huge gap in perception, like creating of working group between the Muslim religious scholars and entities representing media stakeholders. The establishment of engagement mechanism can be done either through Media Owners Association, Editors' Guild or journalist unions. This can play a major role in minimizing the largely negative perception towards the media by the Muslim religious scholars, who are very important in the context of all issues surrounding the Muslim community in Kenya. The most important roles are engaging representatives or leaders of the Muslim minorities to be used as role (models) for the Islamic religion, participating in the media programs to show the correct image of Islam (Gamal, 2007).

7.5.4 Implication for Media Houses

There is an overwhelming need for media houses to increase their expertise in the field of religion, in general, which will give them an opportunity to deal with sensitivities around their representation of terrorism issues. This is because religion is increasingly becoming source of spiritual guidance in Kenya, but is also a tool that can easily be misused by rogue groups and individuals. The recent Shakahola mass graves, where a rogue pastor led to the starvation and killing of hundreds of his followers, have shown that it is not only Islam that is prone to abuse, but also Christianity. There

is, therefore, need for Media outlets to employ qualified staff and experts on religious affairs who could be used to guide the newsroom during the religious-related sensitive issues like terror attacks. The nature of terror attacks is that news unfold too quickly, which dictates the need for live coverage of events. This does not give room for pondering and laying an elaborate editorial strategy. That is why it is necessary for the media houses to employ an in-house editor or an expert on religious affairs, who could offer context, analyze events and guide reporters and anchors covering the first changing events.

The BBC News, Britain's main media outlet, has recently appointed a Muslim as its religious affairs editor, aimed at religious-related stories (BBC, 2021). Media Houses need to re-examine and strengthen the reporting of religious issues in order to overcome the weaknesses associated with religious stories and opinion articles (Mwangi, 2014). Mwangi Further suggests that streamlining religious coverage will avoid sliding down the path of serious religious confrontation between Christians and Muslims in Kenya. This becomes more important considering the fact that religion is a very sensitive issue in Kenya and in most of the developing world. It may well be the case that risk sensitivity needs to be applied (Kuznar & Lutz, 2007).

7.6 Suggestions for future research

Though I establish the experiences, challenges and perceptions of the Muslim religious scholars on the media representation of terrorism in Kenya, focusing on Nairobi, there is need to carry out similar research on the experience of Muslim religious scholars in counties with Muslim majority to see whether their exposure to local/vernacular media stations could yield a different result.

Similarly, there is need to study the gaps in existing media ethics and policy frameworks in regards to media representation of terrorism. This is because, following the findings in this research, questions are arising whether the editors and policy makers are aware of the sensitivities surrounding the media representation of terrorism and what steps they are taking to mitigate them.

7.7 Researcher's reflections as a PhD scholar

First and foremost, the researcher, besides being a PhD student, is a long-term media practitioner where they have reached the level of head of a language section at the BBC World Service. His experience in journalism extends to close to 20 years. The researcher also served as part-time lecturer at Moi University, Nairobi campus. They, therefore, believe that this study has benefitted a lot from their knowledge and experience as a journalist and later as leader in the field, because it is the reason as to why they settled on terrorism as a subject. This, however, did not influence the study as they acted professionally. The other reason the researcher settled on terrorism theme is because they were an active journalist in the period between 2011 and 2019, when majority of terrorism attacks have happened in Kenya, and they have seen its impact on the victims, of not only terror attacks, but also subsequent security operations.

For the researcher as an individual, the process of the PhD studies has been challenging and beneficial at the same time. It has made them more focused, analytical and evaluative, and directed them to look at the bigger picture, than dwelling on the insignificant details. The process has also confused the researcher, but things improved slowly, as they moved from one chapter to another.

The process has also made the researcher appreciate qualitative research approach and more importantly, the phenomenological method of inquiry, which is rarely used in communication studies. Though the researcher had come across the Phenomenological method in their previous levels of education, they did not fully understand the practicality aspect of it in the field of communication until they used it in their study.

Phenomenology was used as a method of inquiry to bring out the lived experience and perceptions of Muslim religious scholars, because, as a journalist, the researcher was always conscious of how journalist's actions of producing and presenting stories to the audiences can have a far-reaching impact on their lives.

The topic chosen, a study on the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism, was influenced by the researcher's religious and career background. The study has, therefore, exposed the researcher to the different philosophical paradigms as well as existing research methodology approaches in the field of communication and social sciences.

The other challenging issue for the researcher was the field work, and difficult task of interviewing participants, most of them, prominent religious scholars with very busy schedule. The researcher grappled with the actual interviewing, as well as, other important issues in field work around ethics, such as access, consent, confidentiality, privacy and anonymity, among others. The researcher did not at any point imagine the amount of commitment and hard work required in analyzing data and writing the report, which has taken many months. It was indeed an engaging and challenging process. The researcher has also learnt a lot on the issues related to experiences and perceptions of Muslims on media representation of terrorism in Kenya, which has given them an interesting dimension to their experience as a researcher.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix I: Letter to Religious scholars

Dear [Participant]:

As a doctorate student at the Moi University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to study the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars towards the terrorism phenomenon as represented by the Kenyan media, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are willing to participate, you will be asked to attend an interview that will take two hours approximately with a follow-up transcription review. Your name and/or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but this information will remain confidential.

Please sign the attached consent form and return it to the researcher at Abdullahi.abdis@gmail.com or deliver it by hand at a time of convenience. In the body of the email, please include your name and the best contact information, which includes your telephone number and email address. Once I receive your email, I will contact you to schedule an interview. A consent document is attached to this document. The consent document contains additional information about my research, please sign the consent document and return it via email, Abdullahi.abdis@gmail.com or through hand delivery within a one-week period of receiving this letter if you would like to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you will not receive any remuneration as a result of your participation in this study.

Thanks in advance.

Sincerely, Abdullahi Abdi Sheikh,

Doctoral Student, Moi University; Email: Abdullahi.abdis@gmail.com

Appendix II: Consensus Form

Moi University

Department of Publishing, Journalism and Communication Studies,

School of Information Science

CONSENT FORM

Media Representation of Terrorism in Kenya: Phenomenological Study on the experiences of Muslim religious scholars

You are invited to be in research that will study the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars towards terrorism phenomenon as represented by the Kenyan media.

You were selected as a possible participant because you meet the criteria of having been a religious leader who has been registered with Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) for the last 10 year and who is well versed on issues affecting Muslims in relations to terrorism phenomenon as represented by the media.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. Abdullahi Abdi Sheikh, a doctoral candidate in the department of Publishing, Journalism and Communication Studies at the School of Information Science, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this research is to study the lived experiences that you had as a religious leader in Kenya with terrorism phenomenon as represented by the Kenyan media. I would like you to take part in one-on-one interview that will take two hours approximately. Your participation in this interview will be recorded and transcribed.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit or remuneration as a

result of their participation in this study. Indirect benefits to society may include providing advising and recommendations for stakeholders, such as media specialists and media regulators academic advisors. Understanding any practical information that may arise from this study that can contribute to the journalists' approach to terrorism phenomenon.

Compensation: Participants will not receive any compensation as a result of their participation in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. All transcripts, participant documentation, and notes from the study will be stored digitally on a password protected computer at all times. All records from this study will be destroyed three years after the study has been completed. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Audio recordings for the interviews and all written transcripts and documentation will be stored securely for three years in a locked office at the personal residence of the researcher and will then be shredded and/or erased and destroyed. Only the researcher and the professional transcriptionist will have access to these recordings.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Moi University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next

paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Abdullahi Abdi Sheikh. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact at +254729033654 or at Abdullahi.abdis@gmail.com. You may also contact the researcher's Head of Department, Dr Jared Obuya at jared.obuya@gmail.com.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I consent to participate in the study. The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant Date

Signature of Researcher Date

Appendix C: Interview Protocol for All Interviews

Pseudonym: _____

Age: _____

Years of experience: _____

Date: _____

Appendix III: Interview Checklist

- Introduction.
- Discussing the purpose of the study.
- Providing informed consent.
- Asking if the participant has any question.
- Testing the audio recording.
- Making the participant feel comfortable.

To begin by saying;

I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I am a doctoral student at Moi University in Kenya and I am conducting this interview as part of my dissertation. The focus of my dissertation is to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of Muslim religious scholars on terrorism phenomenon, specifically their lived experiences with media representation of terrorism in Kenya and how this experience has shaped their perception of the media. I expect that this interview will last for about two hours. I would like your permission to record this interview so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

Then, with your permission, we will begin the interview.

Appendix IV: Questions Guide

Research question one:

What are the lived experiences of the Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism in Kenya?

1. How was/is it like listening to media when they are reporting about terrorism?
2. Would you describe your experience in listening the media as a positive or negative experience? Why?
3. Tell me about a positive experience with media representation of terrorism?
What made this experience positive? Can you give me examples? What feelings did you experience during these particular instances with the media?
4. Tell me about a negative experience with media representation of terrorism?
What made this experience so much less positive? What feelings did you experience during this instance with the media?
5. How does media representation of terrorism make you feel about your role as a Muslim religious leader? • How do you think it affected your role as a religious leader? How do you think it has affected your flock in the Muslim community?

Research Question two:

How does the lived experience of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism manifest itself?

1. Using examples, how would you describe the words and sentences used to refer to terrorism perpetrators?
2. How would you describe what you feel when listening to those words and sentences frequently used by the media when representing terrorism-related

news?

3. How would you describe the most important things that you have learnt from how media represents terrorism news in Kenya?
4. Think of a word or a phrase to describe media representation of terrorism in Kenya? • Why did you use that word or phrase? What does that word mean to you?

Question number three:

How does the lived experiences of Muslim religious scholars on media representation of terrorism shape their perception towards the media in general?

1. Based on your experience, how do you describe the role of media in Kenya in regards to representation of terrorism?
2. What would you want to be changed about how media represents terrorism?
3. How do you think your experiences with media representation have influenced you as a religious leader?
4. Have your views on media representation of terrorism changed over time? How? What influenced your view?
5. Do you have anything else that you would like to add regarding your experience in media representations of terrorism in Kenya?

Appendix V: Research Permit

Permit from Kenya's National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA Ref No: 865330	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION Date of Issue: 31/May/2023
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Mr. Abdullahi Abdi Sheikh of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF TERRORISM IN KENYA: A (PHENOMENOLOGICAL) STUDY OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS for the period ending : 31/May/2024.	
License No: NACOSTI/P/23/26294	
Applicant Identification Number 865330	Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Verification QR Code 	
NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.	
See overleaf for conditions	

Appendix VI: Sample Interview
Transcribed Interview with Respondent 1, a lecturer of Islamic Shari'ah (Islamic Jurisprudence) at an Islamic university and a lawyer.

Q: stands questions from the researcher,

P: stands for Respondent 1,

Q: Professor, how was it like or is it like listening to the media when they are reporting about terrorism?

P: Generally, when terrorism or when terrorist act has happened specifically in Kenya, you will find that the media tries to report it biased towards or against Islam or associating those terrorist acts to Islam and at times if the casualties for example the victims are Christians, they will try at times you find them in writing that Christians killed instead of just reporting Kenyans were killed. So, at times, the reporting is biased and now for example now instead of at times calling just terrorists you find them at times using the word jihadist and now outside Kenya especially in Western Africa and North Africa especially the media that speaks in French you find them that instead of saying terrorists attacked, they are branded and they classify as jihadists. They do even just call them jihadists, so there is some bias in some of the reporting.

Q: And how do you feel when you listen to the media reporting of terrorism?

P: I feel offended as a Muslim, because me as a Muslim I don't subscribe myself to such activities, now when you find that such activities are being associated with me, and you are really do not believe in it, one must feel offended so I feel personally, I feel offended, if such activities are reported as if they are associated with Islam

Q: And how will you describe your feelings?

Because me, I've been a public figure, I read not only this one media, I understand it, and therefore, I do not develop any afterthoughts to start thinking probably planning or to start to worry, because I already know that I have already been classified, that the media, especially in Western media, and even some local reporters do it without knowing that, at times they tend to be biased, so that is why, myself I feel offended, but I feel that if I could meet some of them, I need to clarify or when we meet in some more fora here, to clarify that there's no reason to tell them that they (terrorists) are not representing Muslims. They are just groups and they are representing themselves, and so it should be reported that those acts are associated with them and not the entire Muslim community

Q: How would you describe your experience in listening to the media when reporting about terrorism as positive or negative and why?

P: Generally, generally, they were trained at early stages. for example, after the Kikambala attack, and also at early stages, it was more biased because anything was being associated with Islam. That experience improved a little bit when it comes to the attack on the Westgate attack. During Westgate attack, there was some improvement, a little bit in reporting. There were some attempts to make it neutralized so that it should not be made that the Muslim are targeting non-Muslims, because that one can bring a very serious repercussion. There was even more improvement when it happened in Dusit attack, there were clearly some Muslim media, but the media in general not only Muslim media. But even the public media or the national media, they managed to make interviews or conducted interviews with even victims or families of the victims who are Muslims and who are also affected, so they have been gradual improvement in reporting. More so, now personally when I was arrested by the anti-

terror police, and you know, they do it in a very secret way, by kidnapping someone and then there will no information that flows, from where you are being held to the community. It is the attention of the media by the family, and cooperation between the media, my family and the LSK (Law Society of Kenya) that give rise to or resulted in me being released so media coverage personally, I have seen that it has improved and the coverage is not as biased as it was before

Q: And following on that, it looks like you had a positive experience with the media representation of terrorism issues, can you tell me an incident, one incident where you think the media representation of terrorism was positive?

P: Yes, yes, I have handled even reporting of or reporting on terrorism cases. I have handled several terrorism related cases. Some of them made it to the court of appeal and the decision made and the coverage was good, because they cover as this person who has been convicted with an offense or found guilty of an offense relating to terrorism. He has served his penalty and the expectation is that he has reformed, and even if during his imprisonment when the person is in custody, he is still a human being and he is entitled to all rights of or as a human being, so the cases that have been involved in and reported by the media, I believe they have been properly presented. I can now mention just one of them, in fact two of them, they were two clients, one from Israel, a Palestinian origin, and another one from Morocco who were charged with an offense relating to terrorism. The reporting for both was good. The Israeli one served and he was deported back to his country and he has been integrated, yes, in fact he integrated back into the community. In fact, it only took him two months for him to be integrated back to the community. The other one, the Morocco one, has been put into prison, I think for rehabilitation or some other process for about four years and I

think he has two years remaining; one or two or so. The way the media represented these two cases by the media, I can say it was or they were positive

Q: And what made it positive?

I think the persons who were handling those cases are people who can relate to the issues at hand. Some of them are Muslims. Yes, some of them are Muslims. The ones who were reporting those cases. some of them are Muslims. Young men, who, alhamdulillah (praise be to the lord), understood what terrorism and the associated war on it, and who understand why those things happen. And therefore, the reporting was good. Even those ones that were not Muslims, they have been enlightened. There was a lady who was doing by then, was doing her masters at the University of Nairobi. I think she was doing something dealing with press or media. She also participated but in a very good way. in that, these acts should not be made to victimize Muslims. So, I think it's because either they are Muslims or they have now learnt the truth or known the truth about Muslims [and this could be the reason for the positive representation of Muslims]

Q: What feelings did you experience when you were following positive media reports on terrorism incidents? I mean, how did you feel?

Mashallah, you feel associated, you feel you, you count yourself to be you subscribe yourself as being part of the media, you are part of the media that is reporting, and any time, any time, such incident happened, or they are reporting, that media that reported positively you are able to follow them, and you are also to link with them or to even to subscribe to their channels to know what is happening. Because, they are reporting in a good way. But the others those are so negative, you can even just block yourself not to follow them.

Q: Do you have an incident or a situation that you think is an example of negative media representation of terrorism in Kenya?

P: Yes, I think I was in Mombasa, then I was in Mombasa, and then some people were travelling in a bus in northeastern Kenya, and it was reported that Somali Shabaab terrorists killed Christians. It really felt, it hurt me and in fact you see what you expect. You can think of the worst happening because you see it can antagonize Christians and incite them to start now attacking Muslims, thinking that now they are under attack by Muslims. So that incident, which I experienced personally was a very bad one.

Q: How did you feel hearing those reports or seeing those headlines?

P: You feel bitter, bitter, bitter and bitter. You just feel that you need to get that person who has reported at least to explain to him that, that's not the right thing to do.

Q: How did the media representation of terrorism make you feel as a Muslim scholar?

P: You see as I have said, I have two different experiences; first of all, when it was negative it was bitter

Feeling of being offended, but when it was positive, I felt that, we are in the same cause to inform people and give people the right information of what has, of what has, what has happened, so we feel That, we feel that we are in the same port and that were our part of the solution when it is positive and we feel that media is part of the problem when the reporting is negative.

Q: And on that, since you are a respected Muslim scholar, did anyone approach you to speak to you as a result of how Kenyan media represents terrorism?

P: Definitely, you see, I teach Umma University, and those ones in Umma know what is happening but even before that, we developed a programme to inform them about

the danger of misinterpreting the Islamic religion with them and to tell them that we are in the same problem or that we don't have a problem. And in other universities, for example, the Catholic University, where I teach. Those students who did not have interaction fall for the media. When they see you, they would think that this is the right time to give the message that Islam is a bad religion and that Islam is teaching terrorism. So, you take a lot of time to explain to them and convince them that that is not Islam. This also affects or related to some of our colleagues in the [legal] practice. You find a colleague has developed a notion or an attitude that Islam is a bad religion and that Islam is terrorism. She believes that, and that is it, however you try to convince her she does not understand whenever she sees any Muslim, she says that this is just, just one of the terrorists because she has been affected or influenced by the media; that negative reporting.

Q: And looking at that, how did that affect the Muslim people as a whole, I mean, the media representation of terrorism?

P: They felt targeted, they felt offended it, and they felt being targeted, and Alhamdulillah (praise be to the lord) to counter that many Muslims now have started open days at Mosques, because you see, most of Mosques and Muslims has been a closed society and mosques have been exclusive to Muslims only, and now if the mass media will be talking about negative about the terrorism, the public will believe them that even the madrasa (Islamic schools) are being used to teach people terrorism and therefore it almost affected or created an animosity in the community and to counter that, many mosques have now an open day where the public will be allowed to interact with those institutions.

Q: Now we are going to the next section, and we are looking at how he lived experience of Muslim religious scholars or scholars on media representation of terrorism manifests itself and I want to ask you the words and sentences in the media representation of terrorism in Kenya

P: I have said that the international media is biased, and the Kenyan media, we are looking at the Kenyan media like they use Somali, Muslim word, as they subscribe to them or to the international ones they will describe Somali terrorism Muslim terrorism Muslim terrorist Muslim radicalized Muslim yes, they will those are the words but the international they use some local journalists who have tried to try to call the terrorists as Muslim jihadists, but yeah, the situation is now improving from now on.

Q: And how do you feel when you hear those words?

P: Those words are offensive, they are offensive. Because they provoke. You don't play with the religion when you use those words, the community and religious groups are emotionally sensitive. They are emotionally sensitive

Q: And how will you describe the most important thing you have learned from your experience of Kenyan media representation of terrorism?

following the media reporting on terrorism incidents in Kenya what I have learned, we learned from our mistakes. I have learned especially the youth journalists and the Muslim reporters also joined the media and things are improving, things are improving, because nowadays using of those offensive words has reduced. Though some individual journalists keep on using it, but the use of those words has at least decreased compared to 2012-2014 during Salama watch operations and when all those things happened.

Q: And now you think things have improved in terms of the way they cover terrorism?

P: Yes, they have improved,

Q: Why do you think so?

P: First of all, the reaction by Muslim community to feeling that they have been attacked, they have reacted as Muslim leaders, SUPKEM, and many other leaders they have come out clearly to disassociate themselves from those acts. Secondly, the response from the mass media has been also good because whenever they are told that some words were offensive, they have also responded. And in terms of the mass media especially like the news bulleting, I think the check and balances that have been put in place by different mass media has been good the only the only one that is still a problem is the social media that is the enemy that is still on loose.

Q: Now if I tell you to use one word or one phrase to describe media representation of terrorism in Kenya which word or phrase will you pick?

it is improving, it's improving, because we learnt from our mistakes; the positive interaction between the Muslim community and the other even in church leaders have come clearly and say these should not lead us to war among Muslims between Muslims and Christians so that is that interaction and also the media themselves the self-censor and the checks and balances that have been put there especially by instruction or by following instructions of the national cohesion commission and their recommendations. I think things are improving

Q: Okay now we will go to the final bit and it looks like how does the lived experience of Muslim scholars on media representation of terrorism shaped their perception towards the media in general, and I want to ask you the first question

which is based on your experience, how will you describe the role of media in Kenya in regards to representation of terrorism?

P: The role of media initially was that one of inciting, inciting whether intentional or not but it was in form of inciting communities against another and perpetrating also hatred against Islam against Muslims and by extension against Somalis but it has now improved that it is informative, it is informative, meaning that if an incident has happened the citizens have a right to know. That is a constitutional right and the media cover it to make people know and by avoiding those provocations or inciting incitement, incitement, inflammatory statement, their role is improving. So, the role of the media at the moment is informative, but with or without intention, sometimes, that role has changed into a role of inciting a community against another or a group against another but it should be informative.

Q: And what will you want to be changed about how media represent terrorism?

P: It should be changed in the curriculum of teaching, probably journalists they need to know about Islam, they need to know Islam, and they need to be enlightened on Muslims and other communities now people thought it is just Islam that can be misused. Now other religions like Christianity are also been misused. For instances, the Shakahola incident, so change of curriculum is needed to include enlightenment or creating awareness about other religions. Secondly, there should be terminologies, people should come up with and determine or agree on terminologies to be used when reporting this reporting on terrorism incidents because failure to that without knowing it will use a word that is inflammatory. And then, another thing is they should be at least, what can I say, new reporters or new entrants in the field of reporting they should be at least a training that should enable them to be familiar with the journalists

and some people who are new and may use dangerous terminologies and then we go back to square one.

Q: Will you say there should be differentiation between Islam and terrorism?

P: Yes, yes, if the perpetrator is Al-Shabaab or an element let it be Al-Shabaab, why you describe them as Muslim and not just Al-Shabaab, and that is enough to describe them with what they are. Because this is not Somali or Muslim issue. it is a phenomenon of misinterpreting of Islamic scriptures.

Q: How do you think that media representation of terrorism in Kenya have influenced your role as a religious scholar?

P: Yes, in fact, after the first after the first talk after the Westgate attack. Immediately after the first attack and the way it was reported. It prompted me to write an article on a criminalization of radicalization in Kenya and its impact on freedoms, especially freedom of worship. I developed that paper following the way that instant was reported because it was reported that the Muslims who have attacked Kenya and now the community should rise up to fight Islam. That was the perception that the media created and I remember by the President of the Egypt has been also overthrown and that's a political context and the people in power were trying to portray that if one used a slogan that Muslims, are terrorists. Egypt wanted to sell to Kenya and the way of selling it to the Kenya media is also reporting on such its data and especially, the people's daily, which is free and the way they were trying to portray those instances and reporting on also what was happening in Majengo in a very in a manner as though they are trying to justify certain goals to be taken against the people of Majengo in the national conference. I presented that and he published it.

Q: And you think the minority Muslims radical groups have succeeded in isolating the general Muslim population and turning others against them in the media narrative?

P: No, no, no, the Muslim communities have not responded positively to that and they have convinced other communities, who also responded well, because you see Kenya is ours, people who are believing in different religions, and yet it seems the different communities responded well. Therefore, they have not succeeded.

Q: And have your views on media representation of terrorism changed over time?

P: Yes, yes. They have changed over time, because in the early days we felt that they are targeting us now alhamdulillah it is improved from time to time and more so, Muslims now coming in to be also reporters in media houses. They have started reporting in my case positively, and in my view, my attitude actually towards journalism has changed radically.

Q: What influenced that change?

P: Yes, the Muslim personalities in the media, the likes of Yasin Juma and Feisal Hussein of Horizon. These Muslim personalities have been reporting positively about Muslim issues and who have been actively reporting about it. And now there is also those who cover cases in court whom we have interacted and known one another. So, these personalities made a difference. Secondly, the work of the media itself has improved and now instead of saying Muslim terrorists most of them now say just terrorists which means their work has also contributed towards changing my views and attitude towards the media

Q: Now what is your recommendation to the media practitioners, to government and to all stakeholders

P: Yes, first of all they should be where our intentions should be good, and we should have common understanding parameters. The common ground should be based on the fundamentals of what we are doing. First of all, it should be known and agreed by the media that Kenya is for all Kenyans. That nobody should be privileged to be more Kenyan than others. Secondly, we should understand our diversity and that our diversity is our strength not our weakness. We should accept co-existence. Given that, we can now isolate the terms and terminologies that are offensive to other communities so that we accept that diversity and any element whether Muslim or not who comes up to divide people for political reasons for any other reasons, should be attributed to his criminal acts and should be personally held responsible. Therefore, here we are addressing the law enforcement they should be no victimizing of people and the rule of law should be applied properly.

Q: And do you think that Muslim religious scholars should play a role towards improving media representation of terrorism in Kenya?

P: Yes, by talking and educating the masses. By them also educating the media personalities on what are the offensive what is the terminology to be used and what are the steps for them to know from the mass media if an incident happens what are the steps that are supposed to be taken so they have a role of teaching people. More so, you see when we are talking about Islamic terrorism perpetrated by Muslims, it happens because of the misconceptions and misinterpretation of the religion and the Muslim scholars have a role to clear these misconceptions. Because the religious scholars can clarify them and answer those misconceptions and respond to the

concerns that are being raised by them. So, community interlock is very important which will include religious leaders

Appendix H: Plagiarism Awareness Certificate



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