

Summary Report

Summary: Femicide in Kenya – Media, Legal, and Ethical Perspectives

Foreword

Femicide, defined as the intentional murder of women because of their gender, is a growing concern in Kenya, violating women's rights and necessitating urgent intervention. Media coverage has been pivotal in raising awareness and pressuring government action, though some outlets (e.g., Anguo FM, Taifa Leo, The Star, Kiss FM) have been criticized for sensational and insensitive reporting. The Media Council emphasizes the need for ethical reporting aligned with professional standards.

Introduction

January 2024 witnessed a surge in femicide cases, including high-profile murders like those of Scarlet Wahu and Rita Waeni, sparking public outcry. Kenya's patriarchal society exacerbates gender inequality and violence against women. Globally, Africa recorded the highest number of intimate partner and family-related femicides in 2022. This report evaluates media adherence to journalistic ethics in covering femicide from January 1-24, 2024.

Background

Femicide, a term coined in the 1970s, refers to gender-based killings of women, gaining prominence through feminist activism. Globally, approximately 66,000 women are killed annually, with 45,000 by intimate partners or family members. In Kenya, femicide violates the 2010 Constitution, with 150 cases reported in 2023, predominantly in Nairobi, Kiambu, and Nakuru counties. Media coverage of past cases (e.g., Sharon Otieno, Ivy Wangechi) has sustained public interest but raised concerns about professionalism.

Legal Analysis

The Kenyan Constitution guarantees gender equality, the right to life, and protection from violence (Articles 19, 21, 27, 28, 43). Key legislation includes the Sexual Offences Act (2006), Prohibition of FGM Act (2011), and Children's Act (2022). However, the Penal Code inadequately addresses gender-based violence. Kenya is party to international treaties like CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol, and the Rome Statute, which mandate action against gender-based violence. The government's lack of comprehensive measures and swift legal action raises concerns about its commitment to protecting women.

Media Content Analysis

- 1 ****Broadcast Media****: Framed femicide as a national issue, featuring panel discussions and expert opinions. However, some outlets (e.g., Anguo FM, Kiss FM) were criticized for victim-blaming and insensitive reporting. Activists and organizations like FIDA, Zamara Foundation, and NGEK were featured, though engagement was often short-lived. Media provided updates on investigations, arrests, and autopsies.

- 1 **Print Media**: Outlets like Taifa Leo and The Star were criticized for sensational and gory headlines, violating ethical standards.
- 1 **Digital Media**: Hashtags like #Silencingwomen, #TotalShutdownKE, and #EndFemicideKE trended, highlighting gender equality struggles. Social media activism advanced social justice but also revealed patriarchal attitudes and online harassment.

Conclusion

The media played a crucial role in reporting femicide, setting the agenda, and providing a platform for discussions. However, ethical challenges, including sensationalism and insensitivity, were evident. The Media Council calls for adherence to ethical standards and the Code of Conduct in reporting.

References

The report draws on international treaties, Kenyan laws, and academic research, referencing organizations like UN Women, WHO, and the African Union.

This summary highlights the media's role, legal frameworks, and ethical challenges in addressing femicide in Kenya, emphasizing the need for professional and sensitive reporting.