

Summary Report

Summary: Analytical Overview of Femicide Reporting in Kenya (January 1–31, 2024)

1 Published by the Media Council of Kenya, Research Planning and Strategy Department.*

This report examines media coverage of femicide in Kenya during January 2024, highlighting trends, ethical concerns, and the role of media in addressing gender-based violence. Femicide, defined as the intentional killing of women because of their gender, has seen a significant rise in Kenya, with over 500 cases reported between 2016 and 2023. The report analyzes media adherence to ethical standards, legal frameworks, and the broader societal implications of femicide.

Key Findings:

1 . ****Media Coverage and Agenda Setting****:

- 1 Media played a critical role in raising awareness of femicide, with sustained coverage of high-profile cases like Scarlet Wahu and Rita Waeni.
- 1 Broadcast and print media framed femicide as a national crisis, hosting panel discussions and amplifying voices from human rights groups, activists, and experts.
- 1 However, some outlets, including Anguo FM, Taifa Leo, and Kiss FM, were criticized for sensational, inaccurate, and insensitive reporting, including victim-blaming and intrusive coverage of victims' families.

2. ****Legal and Ethical Analysis****:

- 1 Kenya's Constitution and international conventions, such as CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol, provide a robust legal framework to combat gender-based violence. However, gaps in enforcement and preventive measures persist.
- 1 The Media Council of Kenya emphasized adherence to the Code of Conduct for journalists, which mandates sensitivity, accuracy, and respect for victims' dignity. Instances of unethical reporting were flagged, including explicit descriptions of violence and intrusion into grief.

3. ****Patterns and Trends in Femicide****:

- 1 Data from OdipoDev.com revealed that 2018 recorded the highest number of femicide cases, with stabbing, hacking, and strangulation as common methods. Intimate partner violence and stranger killings were prevalent, with firearms often used by perpetrators linked to law enforcement.

- 1 Nairobi, Kiambu, and Nakuru counties reported the highest incidences, though underreporting in other regions suggests a nationwide issue.

4. ****Media's Role in Advocacy and Awareness****:

- 1 The media facilitated public discourse on femicide, prompting calls for government action, including declaring femicide a national disaster.
- 1 Coverage highlighted systemic issues such as toxic masculinity, inadequate parenting, and gaps in security, particularly in short-term rental accommodations like Airbnb.
- 1 Social media campaigns, including hashtags like #EndFemicideKE, amplified advocacy efforts but also revealed challenges like online harassment and patriarchal attitudes.

5. ****Challenges and Recommendations****:

- 1 While the media largely provided balanced and accurate reporting, pressure to break news led to sensationalism and ethical lapses.
- 1 The report calls for stricter adherence to journalistic ethics, improved data collection on femicide, and enhanced collaboration between media, government, and civil society to address root causes and ensure justice for victims.

Conclusion:

The media's coverage of femicide in January 2024 was instrumental in raising awareness and driving public discourse. However, ethical breaches and sensationalism underscore the need for greater professionalism. The report urges media stakeholders to prioritize ethical reporting, uphold victims' dignity, and contribute to long-term solutions to combat gender-based violence in Kenya.

1 References*:

The report draws on data from OdipoDev.com, UN Women, and local organizations, alongside legal frameworks such as Kenya's Constitution, the Sexual Offences Act, and international treaties like CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol.