

# The Impact of Freedom of the Press on Human Development in Kenya

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**ABSTRACT:** Political Security and more so the general Human Security theme has been a yardstick upon which all Human Rights and Freedoms are founded. Freedom of the Press has increasingly become a useful metric to gauge states' progress on the Political Security theme evident by annual ranking of countries on Freedom of the Press by international organizations such as Reporters Without Borders and annual reports such as Freedom House. Kenya has made significance strides on the Freedom of the Press evident on the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 (Articles 33-35), there are however notable concerns that rise doubts on the progress of this right such as government coercion and predatory government act against specific media houses. This paper recommends strengthening the implementation of existing laws, among them the Whistleblower Act to support journalists in their work, to ensure adequate protection in the event of disclosure on issues of public interest.

**KEYWORD:** Human Security, Political Security, Freedom of the Press, Human Development, Kenya.

## 1. Introduction

Human Security as an approach emerged at the end of the Cold War where concrete ideas of the security of individuals as pressing issues of human development gained international attention vis-à-vis the old security debate that focused on state preservation through the allocation of military resources (Kerr, 2007, p. 92). The genocides in Third World countries such as Burundi, Rwanda, and Somalia in the 90s pinpointed the weaknesses of the state-centric security approach mainly due to the character of conflict which changed to intra-state conflicts.

Human Security, according to the UNDP's 1994 HDR is protection from persistent threats such as hunger alongside safety from sudden and harmful disruption of normal daily life (UNDP, 1994, p. 23). According to Haq (1995, p. 115), Human Security is a new approach to security: security is neither the classical territorial interpretation nor just nations but rather in terms of the security of people. Development is seen as a catalyst to achieve Human Security. Human Security according to Rothschild (1995, p. 55) is a bottom-up approach that extends peoples' security and communities, upward, to the stability of international systems, multidimensional, from military security to socio-economic-political, multidirectional as it cuts across from international organizations, to regional, up to local governments, sideways to encompass non-governmental organizations and civil society.

According to Fukuda-Parr and Messineo (2012), Human Security is used to achieve different purposes (agenda setting, advocacy, and analysis) by different actors (states, international organizations, researchers, NGOs) in different contexts such as international diplomacy, analytical and development framework, and tool as a new frontier of research in international politics and security studies. This approach, therefore, has

been significant in shaping a state's global image through the adoption of various international human rights treaties as evident in European Union's, Japan's, and Canada's improved global image and soft power across time (Fukuda-Parr and Messineo, 2012) through international initiatives such as Ottawa Treaty.

The Human Development Report of 1994 outlined seven dimensions of Human Security by recognizing that threats can emerge both as natural and man-made. The dimensions are; Economic security-ability to access basic livelihood and reliable social safety nets, Food security- ability to access basic food, both physical and economic, Health security- ability to access personal health care both physically and economically, Environmental security- shield from both natural and man-made disasters, Personal security-physical protection from violent conflict and human rights abuses, Community security- cushioning communities from oppressive practices such as ethnic-based violence (ethnic cleansing), Political security- preservation of fundamental rights, freedoms and prohibition of government repression.

Two schools of thought have emerged from this approach, 'Freedom from Fear' and 'Freedom from Want'. Freedom from Fear (narrow approach) is associated with threats of violence, direct violence. According to Liotta and Taylor (2006, p. 43), the narrow approach can meet the immediate human necessities such as gross violation of human rights, and natural disasters that require intervention capability rather than the capacity building method associated with the Freedom from Want. On the other hand, the Freedom from Want (broad approach), encompasses all issues associated with human vulnerability; threats from all sources-this include threats from organized political violence to other threats such as economic downturn, unemployment, environmental degradation, and natural disasters, disease, and hunger.

Human security is associated with three main agendas: development, human rights, and security. It is a "broad and comprehensive" framework as it incorporates these three components into one agenda which is concerned with economic privatization, violent conflict, economic deprivation, a guarantee of core human rights and quality of life, freedom from environmental degradation, and ethnic conflicts. Human Security creates a conducive atmosphere for development and human rights. According to Muguruza (2018), Human Security and Human Development share conceptual space as they both are people-centered, multifaceted, long-term objectives of people fulfillment and addressing the persistence of poverty.

Human Security concentrates on the critical choices (looks at risks- negative freedoms) that might hinder people's choices and freedoms (Muguruza, 2018). For human rights (Muguruza, 2018, p. 22), they indicate how Human Security can be promoted while Human Security points out human rights at stake in each situation. The conceptual space shared with human rights is the universality and fundamentality of human rights along with the protection from violence and poverty (Muguruza, 2018, p. 22).

While the usefulness of Human Security as a policy guideline for states cannot be overlooked, the approach has equally faced criticism. According to Muguruza (2018, p. 27), the 9/11 terrorist attack in the US distorted the Human Security agenda and goals. At the onset, Human Security was presented as both a development and security concept to aid various countries in their policy formulation and allocation of resources; this however changed as it inclined more to security and was seen as a justification for the West to meddle in East agendas. In addition, the approach has been used as a tool for drawing attention and resources (Duffield, 2005) as the general feeling of investments in "their" security is beneficial to "our" security.

According to the Feinstein International Centre, the approach has been incorporated into a Western political and security agenda, an action aimed at alleviating the suffering in countries that have experienced internal instability such as Afghanistan (Feinstein International Centre, 2015). This has had a reversing effect on the earlier progress in the human security literature that aimed in promoting a universalistic human right. In addition, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) presented Human Security as a selective and narrow concept to suit the Northern security agenda against the War on Terror as evident in Afghanistan and Iraq while the

prevention emphasis of R2P has resulted in intervention.

Further to the above challenges associated with Human Security, the concept is fragmented in various United Nations (UN) economic and security agencies which have increasingly made it hard to deliver the Human Security goals due to duplication and the overlapping of activities. Despite these drawbacks, the use of Human Security cannot be overlooked: a clear conceptual framework needs to be established for a more coordinated and sustained international effort. This will make the Human Security approach relevant in addressing issues such as poverty reduction, human rights, and sustainable development with the incorporation of soft and hard security (Muguruza, 2018, p. 31).

This approach can therefore be essential in the analysis of the correlation between the Kenyan political security state (freedom of the press) and human development. This approach would help us appreciate the political-security situation in Kenya and how Kenya can improve the various elements of political security to advance human development in the country and Kenya's image in the community of nations.

## **2. Scope**

The place of the press is critical in the Human Development agenda evident by the role the media play in the society. Guseva et al (2008) investigated the relation between press freedom and the different aspects of development; their conclusion supported the positive role of the press on development, poverty, governance, and peace.

Considerable efforts have been made toward advancing political security (freedom of the press) in relation to human development. This has been evident by the ratification of international human rights treaties by most states (United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies), in addition to the regular ranking of states by international organizations to help them advance the human rights agenda (freedom of the press). Annual reports on freedom of the press such as Reporters Without Borders (RSF) have become important benchmarks for states to improve their global image. This, however, does not reflect on the actual political-security situation globally. On the freedom of the press front, journalists continue to face physical attacks and discrimination as this freedom greatly depends on the political environment of a state.

Domestic efforts by many states have not borne desirable fruits. In Kenya, for instance, despite the progressive Constitution of Kenya, 2010 (Articles 33-35 advocating for the media freedom), journalists continue to face physical attack; a DW correspondent was attacked by police forces while reporting from a coronavirus demonstration in Nairobi (DW, 2021), the resignation of eight columnists over increased media regulation and a 'worrying pattern' of government influence (DW, 2021). This has impacted Kenya's global image, particularly how it is viewed in the community of states in so far as freedom of the press is concerned.

## **3. Freedom of the Press**

Press freedom has been defined differently over time. In the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), under resolution 59 (I), freedom of information (press) is viewed as a primary right commodity and the yardstick of all the freedoms on which the UN is founded. The resolution expanded the scope of freedom of information to encompass the gathering, transmission, and publishing of news anywhere and everywhere without filters. Article 19 of the 1948 UDHR views freedom of the press as the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Further, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) asserts that this includes entitlement to hold independent views without impingement.

According to Guseva et al (2008), press freedom has a positive influence on human development from poverty reduction, creation of a business-enabling environment, creation of an avenue for more effective public participation to holding government accountable for violence and crime. The press serves as a bridge between citizens and the state (Guseva et al, 2008). Further, Guseva et al (2008) assert that in a country

where citizens' engagement exists, the press can deal freely with societal problems, and large-scale violence is minimum. Additionally, in a state where violence and crime level are high, journalists are liable to be in danger thus affecting the quality of the press (Guseva et al, 2008).

According to Hachten (2005), freedom of the press is the right of the media to observe, reveal, and criticize the government without retribution from the government. According to Sen (1982), a freer press is able to report policy disasters enhancing their salience in the public mind and invigorating public dissent.

A research was conducted in 2021 to investigate the impact of Political Security (freedom of the press) on Human Development in Kenya. The respondents were drawn from employees of Media Council of Kenya, Amnesty International Kenya, and Civil Rights Defenders-African Segment. A sample of 10 from each group was used as this was an ideal representation of the organization's population.

The research interpreted freedom of the press as the independence of the press from government oppression and the ability to run their operations and editorial independence without control by governments or any other interests.

The independent variable that led the research was Freedom of the Press. The dependent variable was Human Development analyzed through mortality rate which is easy to measure since deaths are recorded (Gerring et al, 2016).

#### **4. Methodology**

The researchers adopted hypotheses: H1: Freedom of the press has an impact on human development in Kenya, H0: Freedom of the press has no impact on human development in Kenya. Descriptive study design was used in the research. A cross-sectional research method was employed in the study. Semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect qualitative and quantitative data. For reliability, a reliability coefficient of 0.70 was achieved and questionnaires were standardized.

**Table 1. Units of Analysis**

Category	Respondents	Target Population
Freedom of the press	Amnesty International Kenya	10
	Civil Rights Defenders-African Segment	10
	Media Council of Kenya	10
Total Respondents		30

*Source: Mwadime & Kasyula, 2022*

The researchers looked at validity in three ways: Internal, External, and Construct as follows. For construct validity, questionnaires were carefully structured with guidance from the university supervisor to capture relevant information without causing diversion. For internal validity, participants were randomly selected to remove any biasness in the population under study. For external validity, gender and age were considered to ensure inclusion and exclusion of the target group.

The researchers relied on regression analysis to test the hypotheses. The level of significance adopted was .05. Quantitative data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis; coming up with interpretations through analysis and accurate ascertainment of specific features of information as the basis to relate to trends.

#### **5. Data Analysis and Presentation**

From the sampled population, 18 dully filled questionnaires were submitted which was adequate to facilitate data analysis.

**Table 2. Questionnaire Return Rate**

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Response	18	60
No response	12	40
<b>Total Response Rate</b>	30	100

(Source: Mwadime & Kasyula, 2022)

**Table 3.0. Summary of Reliability Test on Independent Variable**

Serial No.	Variable	No. of Items used	Cronbach's alpha
1	Freedom of the Press	13	$\alpha=0.85$

(Source: Mwadime & Kasyula 2022)

### Hypothesis Testing: Assessment of the Freedom of Press and Human Development

Indicators of freedom of the press were measured by assessing responses to the following questions: the state of freedom of the press in Kenya basing it on the provisions put by UDHR, the number of journalists who have been lost/imprisoned/tortured due to the government's oppression from 2002 to 2017, strategies in place to address incidences of journalists intimidation, torture, and murder in Kenya, strategies needed to be adopted to foster freedom of the press in Kenya, the relationship between the right to vote, media freedom and free and fair elections, the role of media in ensuring the right to vote and free and fair elections, challenges facing the attainment of freedom of the press in Kenya.

**Table 4. Influence of freedom of the press on human development**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.814 <sup>a</sup>	.663	.671	.70895		
ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.118	1	3.118	6.199	.013
	Residual	26.156	52	.503		
	Total	29.274	53			
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.948	.175		22.570	.000
	Freedom of the Press	.221	.149	.126	2.491	.013
Dependent Variable: Human Development						
Predictors: (Constant), Freedom of the Press						

Source: Mwadime & Kasyula (2022)

### Regression Model

Human Development = f (Freedom of the Press)

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$



From the above,  $r = 0.814$ , indicating a positive slope between the independent variable (Freedom of the Press) and the dependent variable (Human Development). The R-Squared was .663, meaning that 66.3% of the variation in human development was explained by variation in the freedom of the press. 33.7% were for other factors. The model was statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ ) for the ANOVA results. The results indicate that the  $p\text{-value} = 0.013 \leq 0.05$ ,  $t = 22.570$ ,  $p = 0.013 < 0.05$ ,  $r = 0.814$  and  $r\text{ square} = 0.663$ . Hence based on these findings we accept the research hypothesis that freedom of the press has an impact on human development in Kenya.

## 6. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The study found that the respondents expressed that the state of freedom of the press in Kenya was fair albeit with some restrictions such as the attack against journalists/killing that are unresolved, government coercion and predatory government act against specific media houses, oppressive laws/policies/lack of laws to protect journalists and therefore the need for more strategies to address these incidences through; adaptation of international standards on freedom of the media provided under Article 19 of United Nations' 1948 UDHR.

The study recommends strengthening the implementation of existing laws, among them the Whistleblower Act to support journalists in their work, to ensure adequate protection in the event of disclosure on issues of public interest so that they are not victimized for doing their job. Even though the right to information is guaranteed in Article 35 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, the enabling legislation, the Access to Information Act, 2016 is yet to achieve the intended objectives since the associated regulations have not been promulgated yet. The ATI Act was envisaged to be instrumental in allowing the public and indeed the media access to information held by the state on a wide range of issues in the public interest. Kenya can borrow lessons from Namibia, which is ranked the first in Africa (and 24 globally while Kenya is ranked 102) according to the World Press Freedom Index 2021 by the Reporters Without Borders (RSF). In Namibia, for instance, press freedom, besides being guaranteed by the constitution, is also strongly supported by the courts whenever it is under attack from the state or other quarters (RSF, 2021).

Finally, the study recommends that the country takes necessary measures to safeguard its international reputation based on the annual rankings undertaken from time to time on a wide range of issues of international concern, including its performance in the political security realm. This is important because Kenya's image among the community of nations is key in securing the country's gains within the space of the internal relation, particularly in pursuit of its foreign policy objectives.

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