

How Women Voices Are Presented in Media Reporting of Karamoja Conflict through the Lenses of Uganda Radio Network (URN)

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Abstract

This paper investigates the representation of women's voices in Ugandan media coverage of Karamoja conflict which has involved security operations against cattle rustlers. The paper applied a quantitative case study design using Uganda Radio Network (URN), a news agency which services news content to most of Uganda's legacy and online media outlets. URN serves over 130 out of the more than 200 operating radio stations, services major print media organisations such as Daily Monitor, Red Pepper, The Observer and The Independent includes dozens of online news sites. This study aim was to examine how Ugandan media represents women's voices during ongoing Karamoja conflict. The study using content analysis identifies that over 80% of the quoted sources in the media are men, despite the conflict disproportionately affecting women and children. Hence, the paper provides valuable insights into the gender imbalance in media coverage of the Karamoja conflict reporting. This paper applies conflict and gender and power theories to explore how structural inequalities shape the media's sourcing practices during conflicts. The theory explores how gender roles and power relations, meaning gender is not only a cause but also a consequence, instrument and embodiment of power over.

Keywords

Media, Uganda Radio Network, Cattle Rustling, Warriors, UPDF, Women, Conflict

1. Introduction/Background

The Ugandan government launched "Usalama kwa Wote" to disarm cattle rustlers, using force after voluntary negotiations failed, but legislators have criticized this approach for escalating violence (URN, 2022a). By end of 2022, the conflict

had caused death of more than 1000 people with security forces boasting that had recovered more than 600 guns and over 4000 bullets of the killed warriors.

Karamoja sub-region falls in the North-eastern side of Uganda and covers an area of more than 27,000 square kilometers. The subregion is made up of nine districts with a population of 1.5 million people (UBOS, 2024). The Karamoja cluster straddles Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, and Ethiopia (Taylor, 2022).

Uganda's president Yoweri Museveni ordered a forceful disarmament operation code named *Usalama kwa Wote* loosely translated as Safety for all with the aim of getting guns from cattle rustlers in mid-2021 after negotiations with cattle rustlers to willingly hand over rifles hit a snag (Ariong, 2021). Gladys Dorine Aneno in her 2021 research titled *addressing the persistence of child marriages in Amudat, Uganda* which is one of the region's nine districts described the area as a remote and semi-arid characterized by highly variable rainfall, pastoral and agro pastoral livelihoods. The area has minimal economic development, and perpetual security threats (Aneno, 2021). Barber in 1968 argued that Karamoja's woes trace way back to the colonial and successive regimes in Uganda that isolated the area and would only be concerned about its potential threat emanating from the cross proliferation of weapons. Barber and Ariong arguments point to the possibility that the ongoing military disarmament operations are not the first and there is no assurance that they will be the last since a series of similar incidents have been happening in the past 37 years of Museveni in power.

Aneno and Bevan's observation of 2008 highlights that despite the series of disarmament initiatives, Karamoja has hardly benefited from economic activities. Bevan, Aneno, and others have conducted studies about Karamoja and its insecurity noting that the active marginalization of the area by the central government is not a standalone explanation for the insecurity but also the historic and cultural factors of violence such as cattle raids.

Stites and Akabwai in their 2010 study titled *We Are Now Reduced to Women: Impacts of Forced Disarmament in Karamoja, Uganda*, observed that the government has not comprehensively explored the peaceful mechanisms to deal with cattle rustling in the area which is bigger than more than 30 countries in the world. Stites and Akabwai cited Uganda's parliament which also passed resolutions in the early 2000s calling for decisive measures to address the fatal incidents of cattle rustling and illegal rifles in Karamoja.

The measures that Uganda's August House passed in 2000 rotated on voluntary disarmament, prosecution in regard to cattle thefts, reorganizing security systems, and dismantling communal kraal clusters (Stites & Akabwai, 2010). The duo further noted that the Parliament and subsequent resolutions by the government have on several occasions not been clear on approaches to end violent cattle rustling in Karamoja thus resulting in face-offs between government forces and cattle rustlers.

Although Stites and Akabwai's arguments are more than a decade ago, the reigning Parliament (11th Parliament) has also been questioning the approach of

using all sorts of firearms to disarm warriors. Legislators have observed that ever since Ugandan forces opted for a face-off approach to deal with cattle rustlers, it has instead increased the presence of violent incidents and rifles have become more accessible than ever before ([The Independent Uganda, 2022](#)).

Legislators highlighted that there has been a resurgence of cattle rustling that is unprecedented due to the rise in the number of guns and open markets for cattle sale. Many indicated that fatalities related to cattle rustling have skyrocketed, cattle raids are on the rise, and intimidations, clouds of fear, and broad-day criminality have become the norm ([The Independent Uganda, 2022](#)). The legislators have been dis-gusted and appalled by reports that the situation in Karamoja is calm, and yet people are being killed daily ([The Independent Uganda, 2022](#)).

This has left legislator questioning why government and its forces keep describing the fighting Karamoja as for locals yet some of the rustlers come all the way from Kenya to disturb the peace. The legislator argued that using words like “*Karamojong warriors*” victimizes all residents yet many do not have any idea about who is fighting in the area ([The Independent Uganda, 2022](#)).

The furiousness of legislators resonates with Stites and Akabwai’s arguments of 2010 that the government approaches to Karamoja insecurity without involving the stakeholders like members of parliament from the area, local government officials, international and national civil society organizations that would help it understand the genesis of re-insurgency will continue to do more harm than good.

Security woes in Karamoja; Stites and Akabwai observed in 2010 were being caused by numerous factors like lack of governance, the absence of law and order, and the failure of the government to develop the region. The solution would be engaging stakeholders, and devising a strategy that encourages the peaceful surrender of firearms, and increase full-time security ([Stites & Akabwai, 2010](#)).

Even though there are holes that have been poked in the approach of handling Karamoja cattle rustling, security forces at the frontline UPDF and police have been offering extensive explanations on what prompted the lethal approach. Police in 2020 noted that there was growing insecurity and violence due to raids and counter-raids in the Karamoja region which needed the forces’ intervention ([Enanga, 2020](#)). Enanga noted that after security commanders received insecurity concerns in a meeting was held at UPDF’s *Third Divisional Headquarters* in Moroto, and response measures were elaborated including the use of lethal security operations. One of the key matters that were deliberated about Karamoja was fears of counter raids from across the borders between Uganda, Kenya, and South Sudan as a result of the porous borders, insufficient security presence, rifle trafficking, reoccurrence of guns which had been stifled some years back and hostility within ethnic groups ([Enanga, 2020](#)).

Ariong and The Independent news magazine note that security agencies first issued warnings to cattle rustling suspects but the violence and raids did not stop. Ariong and Enanga note that it was at that point security commanders opted for a comprehensive approach to combat the threats posed by raids and counter-

raids. Army's top commander and police second in command expressed the resilience of forces' intervention to counter all forms of raids and counter raids, with the view of restoring normalcy as fast as possible (Enanga, 2020).

Uganda's military commanders have often given explanations regarding to what was happening in the Karamoja sub-region before they took a decision to apply lethal force. They army claims that some of the attackers in districts like Kaabong were from neighbouring Kenya specifically in Turkana areas (Kulayigye, 2022). The military stresses that the situation in Karamoja has been calm except for the recent unfortunate skirmishes and raids by cattle rustlers to Uganda's neighbours across the border, emphasizing that any responsible leaders in authority would condemn such acts because they call immediate redress," (Kulayigye, 2022).

The Ugandan army has been giving warriors ultimatums to surrender or else they would continue facing the forces' wrath, in addition to accusing area local leaders who in the first place thought of security intervention, turning into spy agents of warriors (Kulayigye, 2022). The army, according to Kulayigye, has no any mercy for warriors who kill and rob innocent Karamoja residents. The leaders have been urged to denounce criminality, unite, and work towards a common goal because this is not a frontline engagement as leaders know and plead for some criminals amidst the communities (Kulayigye, 2022).

Enanga emphasized that the forces use lethal weapons such as fighter helicopters, heavily armed infantry and impromptu house search operations because they forces assessed the situation and realised they were befitting for the operations (Enanga, 2020). The forces left options of continuous sensitization and awareness programs across governments, diversifying means of survival through education and commercial farming, and dialogue and peace committee meetings to reduce acts of violence (Enanga, 2020). Other measures that were to be thought after were regulating Turkana movements in and out of the country, opening up security roads, effective use of Interpol, and, creating special courts with deterrent punishments for perpetrators (Enanga, 2020).

Kulayigye further stresses that the progress and measures the army has registered in Karamoja is a testament to its resolve to counter all forms of cattle raids in the sub-region. The military extolled its soldiers and police officers for their bravery while countering and pursuing armed criminal elements (Kulayigye, 2022). The Ugandan government notes that Usalama Kwa Wote' has achieved a lot in terms of arms and livestock scores have been recovered (Kulayigye, 2022). The forces note there are five categories of criminal networks which include: armed warriors, warriors with bows and arrows, warriors with sticks to drive stolen animals, collaborators, and leaders that are involved in such criminality. The military commander argued that different categories of criminals and their accomplices shall be dealt with, apprehended, and prosecuted in the relevant courts of law (Kulayigye, 2022; Enanga, 2023).

The lethal force in Karamoja has attracted local and international condemna-

tion whereby several Ugandans including those outside the country wonder whether there is a civil war in the area or it is just a conflict that has been wrongly approached (NTD, 2022). Politicians and human rights defenders have repeatedly raised concerns over the lethal weapons being used in Karamoja, challenging local and international media to put attention to what is transpiring in Karamoja describing the occurrences as brutal killings (NTD, 2022).

Some of the human rights abuses such as extra-judicial killings and arbitrary ar-rests have been raised at human rights and democracy summits hosted in countries such as Switzerland where it was argued that Karamoja was under “bombardment” with hundreds being exterminated mercilessly, locals’ houses being burnt and also women are being raped in the insurgency (Lumu, 2022). However, the Uganda government has denied human rights abuses insisting that the forces are fighting armed rustlers who have terrorized the region, ending the lives of helpless citizens and stealing their cattle, goats, and sheep (Lumu, 2022).

1.1. Why URN?

The researcher chose *Uganda Radio Network* (URN) as a case study because of its supply of news content to more than 130 media houses that include radio stations, newspapers, and online news sites. URN is a non-profit-oriented media organization majorly funded by European countries (Tumusiime, 2016). URN articles prominently feature on radio stations, and on websites of famous and grounded newspapers like *The Daily Monitor*, *The Observer*, *The Independent Magazine*, and other online news sites with a quite good readership.

Tumusiime observes that the legacy media are no longer making much money anymore despite the country’s media being seen to be vibrant. The failure to make money has forced many media houses to continuously lay off staff to minimize costs. As a result, URN has stepped in as a rescuer for such struggling media houses, increasing reliance on its content (Tumusiime, 2016). Reliance on URN news content has become more important to media houses than ever before because of COVID-19 lockdown which caused tremendous hiccups in business and advertisement sectors. Authors Walulya and Alemeyahu’s stress in their study titled *The Sustainability and Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Media Houses in Uganda and Ethiopia*, that COVID-19 caused unprecedented financial challenges to the media industry. This was because a number of businesses were shut down during lockdowns intended to control the spread of Covid-19 and yet such entities were a big source of revenue for media houses through advertisement (Walulya & Alemeyahu, 2022).

Once advertisement which is the major source of income for most media houses in any part of the world, the reliance on news agency such as URN becomes inevitable to many media houses (Tumusiime, 2016; Walulya & Alemeyahu, 2022). COVID-19 outbreak and its economic consequences for businesses, most organizations cut their advertising budgets, which adversely affected media houses, hence the loss of advertisers became the source of most of the problems that the

media faced during the pandemic (Walulya & Alemeyahu, 2022).

The increased dependence on news agencies such as URN after Covid-19 is also argued about by Jamil and Appiah (2020) who explain that the pandemic shook business sectors thus ravaging the world's commercial entities. The authors add that ravaged businesses worldwide led to the crushing of stock markets and closure of businesses and this left the global economy on the verge of economic depression.

Walulya and Alemayehu explained that the loss of advertising resulted in income reduction for media houses because businesses had no reason for advertisement since everything was on standstill due to lockdowns. Because of limited income, subscribers such as hotels that regularly bought print products like newspapers drastically reduced since they had no guests (Walulya & Alemeyahu, 2022). Some newspapers like Orumuri, Etop, and Rupiny that were being published under *Vision Group* were closed while another independent weekly paper *The Observer* suspended its operations (Walulya & Alemeyahu, 2022). All these, challenges emanating from financial constraints, left many media houses especially broadcasters resorting to URN which charges slightly over \$40 to access more than 40 stories a day and for entire month. This means proprietors and managers are able to sustain the media house operations incurring very little costs to access news from all parts of the country (Tumusiime, 2016). Thus, justifies why URN was chosen for this term paper.

1.2. Why Women?

The researcher focused on how Karamoja women's voices are being presented in the media in the ongoing conflict because of numbers killed warriors and arrested suspected warriors as revealed by security forces regular updates. For instance, in a space to less than two years, security forces noted they have killed 654 warriors and arrested more than 21,000 suspected cattle rustlers (warriors) means hundreds of families have been left to be headed by women. The United Nations Children's Fund (Ntabadde, 2017) observes that the school dropout rate in Karamoja stood at 86% meaning only 14 percent of girls and boys would cross over the Primary Seven level (Eninu, 2017). Because of the high dropout rates, studies have shown that Karamoja experiences high numbers of children who get married at a very tender age. Most girls get married even before reaching Primary Six in exchange for cattle (TheirWorld, 2017).

There have been reports that girls are forced into marriage on a daily basis provided they are 10 years and above. Some NGOs have reported receiving more than 20 cases of girls being forced to get married every week (Eninu, 2017; Ariong, 2021). A number of reasons have been given for early and forced marriages in Karamoja like teachers' absenteeism, poor learning environment, and lack of necessities for a conducive learning environment (TheirWorld, 2017).

However, the government has blamed parental negligence as the key factor fueling school dropouts in Karamoja. The government notes that it has put a number

of incentives to enable children to enroll and stay in school, but such efforts are being trodden by parents' laxity (Ariong, 2021; Eninu, 2017). Factors such as lack of books, sanitary towels, food, and uniforms have been cited as the causes of school dropout and early marriages in Karamoja. The government believes there is a need for parents and area leaders to devise means of ensuring children are kept in school (Ariong, 2021; Eninu, 2017).

All these issues give justification for this study because the more than 600 killed warriors have left widows and similarly, the more than 21,000 jailed cattle rustlers have left behind wives whose voices are expected to be captured in the media regarding the ongoing security operations in the Karamoja Sub-region.

2. Literature Review on Uganda Media Reporting

The Ugandan media has often been blamed for neglecting women voice as sources of news (Semujju, 2014). Semujju conducted a study about women voices in climate change coverage where he observed that it was almost impossible to find an article where women were equal to men as sources. Nassanga observed in her study 1997 study titled *Women, Development and the Media: The Case of Uganda* noted that there was very little reporting about the lives of women in the Ugandan media. Even the little stories that are carried women issues were in most cases in negative context (Nassanga, 1997). This trend, Nassanga observed is influenced by their interpretation of gender. Bwewusa (2008) made a similar observation in his study *The Representation of Gender in Media: Role of Media in Reinforcing Gender Stereotypes*, where he noted that most of the front cover pages of newspapers are occupied by men's images. Despite Uganda having laws that promote gender equality, and protects women's rights, the imbalance between men and women in news sourcing was still a critical matter (Bwewusa, 2008).

Semujju noted in 2014 that men lead as sources almost in all categories of news stories. Men lead in terms of prominence which is often determined by where an article is placed in a newspaper page (Semujju, 2014). Women activists have developed a notion that stories reported by a female journalist slightly have increased number of female sources. The Uganda Media Women Association (UMWA) in 2022 indicated in its report titled: *Women visibility increases by 4 percent in Uganda Media*, that there was gender selective reporting of news.

UMWA emphasized that there was a relationship between the gender of a reporter and sources quoted for a story especially in print media because female reporters covered more female news subjects and quoted more females in their stories as opposed to the male reporters. In equal measure, male journalists gave more audience to male sources but also within talk shows of purely male presentation, women suffered a low engagement under similar likelihood (UMWA, 2022).

Additionally, UMWA observed that stories where the reporter was a woman, they had a 35% representation of female news subjects and 65% male. However, for stories where the reporter was a man, female sources had a 27% representation

as news subjects while 73% went to males as news sources (UMWA, 2022). It was found that female reporters are more likely than males to directly quote more female news sources than their male counterparts. Overall, the stories by female reporters had a 36% representation of female news sources and 64% male, while those by male reporters had a 30% representation of female news sources and 70% male (UMWA, 2022). Therefore, this paper examines how the media is presenting women's voices in its coverage of Karamoja conflict in respect to previous literature showing the consistent media exclusion in stories as sources.

3. Theoretical Frames

The study utilized the 2013 Connell's theory of gender and power to analyse how gender and power determine the news sources during a conflict like the one in Karamoja sub-region. The gender and power theory originally published in 1987 offers a basis for understanding social structures that give the distinction between men and women and roles attached to each. The three social structures composing the description between men and women include the sexual division of labour; the sexual division of power; social norms and affective attachments around femininity and masculinity (Connell, 2013).

Power is defined as an element of social associations that rotates on meanings of domination, control, authority, and influence. In his observation, Connell discusses social structure as imbalances based on gender and power hence resulting into social inequality. This is strengthened by social norms that attach roles to men and women basing on their masculinity and femininity (Connell, 2013). Descriptions and attachments of roles based on gender and power are sources of poverty among women since in terms of jobs they are offered the lesser paying ones, females perceive themselves as meant for marriages and thus young girls may end up rushing into marriage. Fourie argued in 2007 that media often describe women as sex objects by attaching unnecessary description of house wife or mother. Fourie notes that such media portrayals of females tend to prioritise men at the expense of the former in news reporting, and newsroom assignments.

The paper borrows opinions of Johan Galtung's conflict in order to explain whether what is happening in Karamoja is war or a conflict lethally approached. Galtung's description of a conflict is built on the notions of contradiction and incompatibility. Therefore, a conflict can be discussed as a disagreement that emanates from developed goals that an individual or group intends to realize and any obstacle toward the attainment of the goals could result in a conflict (Galtung, 1958). In nutshell, Galtung argued that a conflict is a contradiction where the acceptability region is located inside the incompatibility region. This results in the point of departure, separation, or difference. Conflicts arise when incompatible goals are pursued (Galtung, 1958). Probably, there is a need to examine what is the ultimate goal of cattle rustlers' goals in the Karamoja scenario and whether government's presumed goals of keeping its citizens and their property safe can be achieved by using force. But for this paper, the focus is on how women's voices

who are disproportionately affected by the conflict are being presented in the media's reporting of the conflict.

4. Methodology & Findings

The applied a quantitative approach that conserves the formula and content of human communications which are habitually in the form of texts and are assessed for their quality (Keyton, 2006). The researcher used content analysis as the only tool to study how Uganda media is presenting Karamoja women's voices in the ongoing insurgency and also to find issues the target audience is raising through the media.

The research analysed 22 stories published by URN about Karamoja in the month of July, 2022 which marked the first full year of *Usalama kwa Wote* operations. Thus, the 22 stories represent the entire coverage by URN reporters in Karamoja during July, 2022. The focus was on the number of women quoted per story since they are the widows of the killed 600 suspected warriors and wives to more than 21,000 arrested as suspects. The study also analysed how the type of story affects the likelihood of quoting women in the reporting of Karamoja conflict.

First, the researcher established that URN has two reporters in Karamoja region and these were coded as R1 and R2. The review of the articles was not for purposes of establishing number of stories written about the Karamoja conflict but how the journalists have presented women's voices in their articles, how type of story affects the likelihood of quoting women as news sources and also the issues the quoted women are raising.

After noticing that URN has two reporters in the sub-region, the researcher coded each one's stories differently. For instance, main reporter who is referred to Bureau Chief was coded as R1 while the part-time reporter was coded as R2. During content analysis (story review), it was observed that R1 had fifteen (15) stories in the month of July, 2022 while R2 had seven (07). This brought the number of stories altogether to 22.

The researcher noted that R1 in the fifteen articles quoted 53 sources. On average, R1 had three news sources per story. R2 had 20 persons quoted as sources and this brings the total number of quoted persons in the 22 stories altogether to 73.

Another highlight of the findings is that R1 quoted women only 14 times as news sources out of the 53 sources for his fifteen stories. This translates to only 26.4% of women quoted as story sources. The observation was more or less the same with R2 who quoted women only twice out of the 20 people used as news sources for the seven stories. This means only 10% of R2's stories quoted women as news sources.

However, the analysis found that most of the stories about Karamoja were about security operations, attacked villages, killed civilians and politicians providing aid and incentives as one of the ways to persuade the youth not to engage in cattle rustling. For instance, 59% (13 out of 22) analysed stories were related to security

operations in Karamoja and the sources were military, intelligence and police commanders. Most of the commanders in Karamoja according to the 22 analysed stories are men who serve as military division commander, deputy military division commander, regional police commander, commander of anti-stock unit, district police command and officer in charge of station. There was no any women mentioned as a commander of any security unit in the stories reported by URN. This decreases of women being quoted as sources.

Five stories out of the remaining nine quoted politicians who serve as district chairpersons or speakers. None of the nine districts that make up the Karamoja region has a woman a district chairperson. This also limits chances of quoting women as news sources. Stories where women were the main subjects were started by women themselves such as district woman Member of Parliament who was donating food stuff to women whose husbands have been killed or arrested in security operations.

In nutshell, the two reporters had 22 stories about the ongoing fight between security forces and warriors. The reporters quoted 73 people for their stories but only 16 were women. In percentages, it indicates that 80.8% of the story sources for the reviewed period were males while women's voices were presented by 19.1%.

Other than establishing how the Ugandan media is presenting Karamoja women's voices in the ongoing cattle rustling conflict, the researcher also intended to observe issues being raised by the women quoted by the media.

The few women whose voices have been presented in the media raise issues like insecurity that has forced them to abandon economic and farming activities. In the July 20, 2022 story titled *Museveni's Goats Near Army Detach for Protection*, a woman was concerned about insecurity and death of their domestic animals.

"I doubt whether we shall really prosper in this project, the raiders are giving us hard times while the goats are also dying, the government should redesign this project" a woman argued (URN, 2022b)

<https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/moroto-residents-take-musevenis-goats-near-army-detach-for-protection>

Another woman in the same story regretted restocking of stolen animals as a mistake since insecurity wasn't ending sooner. She said the animals had increased their exposure to being attacked by rustlers.

"Insecurity, lack of pasture and water, are the major factors to fail the goat's project and we shall not accept the government to continue bringing projects which are not workable in Karamoja" a woman observed.

The biggest number of women quoted descried torture by government forces and insecurity. These views were captured in a story by R1 published on July 19, 2022 under the title *Karamoja Women Decry Torture by Security, Rustlers*. A woman said they were being targeted by military and warriors because they are involved in the struggle for peace in the region.

“I thought we could work with the security forces to eliminate the wrong elements from the community. But unfortunately, when they come for their operations we are not spared. Yet the warriors are also on our neck for leaking secrets to the army,” a woman argued.

A mother four children accused security forces of torturing her during cordon search operations and she was victimized to confess that her husband owns an illegal firearm yet she had no idea:

“We have seen several government officials come here to document whatever is happening but we have never seen them taking action against those tormenting us,” a mother cried out (URN, 2022b)

A female advocate for peace in the area noted that she was receiving numerous outcries from women that their spouses and other men in the area were threatening for leaking secrets to forces. The peace activist further highlighted that whereas they had hope in the security forces, the situation was running out of hand because the attacks are coming from both security and warriors.

Another female peace activist noted that they were tired of being mistreated by security agencies whenever they conducted cordon and search operations.

“We are being tortured by our own husbands who are accusing us of leaking information to security forces. However, when the security forces come for their operations, they search our houses and beat us for the same reasons that we are harboring raiders, we really need the intervention from the government to save us,” a female peace activist noted (URN, 2022c)
<https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/karamoja-women-decry-torture-by-security-rustlers>

A female legislator from Moroto one of the nine districts making Karamoja region and infested with full scale fire confrontation between warriors and government forces opined that many women in the villages were enduring torture at the hands of security operatives. She further noted that majority of the tortured women were fearing to come out to share the inhumane treatment they have been subjected to by the military.

R1’s story on July 10, 2022 titled *Moroto Shocked at UPDF Soldiers’ Killing Blind, Lame 80-Year Elder*, had women decrying brutal killings in the area. A woman reasoned that the forces had messed up with the operations in the region by violating people’s rights. She decried of the security forces commanders for not punishing errant officers despite them raising concerns about the heinous actions.

“It is very awkward for the security personnel to arrest everyone in the family for a crime committed by an individual and yet the law stipulates clearly that everyone is responsible for his or her own crime,” a woman leader noted, (URN, 2022d)
<https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/moroto-leaders-demand-updf-soldiers-punished-for-killing-an-80-year-old->

Another woman on July 8, 2022 observed in the story titled *Now Cattle Rustlers Punish Moroto Residents for Snoring at Night*, that they had lost sense of peace because of goats supplied by government. She noted that it was like an area that completely had no security forces because cattle raiders were opening people's houses at night asking for the goats.

“We don't know these raiders but they come when they know your names, in fact all your details, they order you to open your door for them and they enter to check if there are goats” a woman said (URN, 2022e).

In the same article, another woman said warriors were beating them for snoring instead of keeping goats <https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/now-cattle-rustlers-punish-moroto-residents-for-snoring-at-night->

A female legislator in R1's article of July 1, 2022 noted that peace talks were a better option because they believed it helps to foster a culture of peace and promote reconciliation amongst the conflicting communities. She argued it was better for the community to come up with their own local solutions and have the trust of key stakeholders which they can influence to successfully mediate the conflicts. <https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/kotido-leaders-lose-hope-in-peace-meetings->

A mother in R2's story of July 29, 2022 titled *Karimojong Rustlers Successfully Attack Army/Police—Protected Kraal, Take 40 Cows*, cried that she had lost all her animals that were a source of income yet they were in an area heavily guarded by government forces.

“I don't know where to start life from because these three cows have been my livelihood and saviour from this hunger because I was getting milk from them just for survival,” a mother was concerned (URN, 2022a).

<https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/karimojong-rustlers-successfully-attacks-armypolice-protected-kraal-take-40-cows>

5. Discussion

The fact that 80.8% of the sources quoted in the media about the ongoing Karamoja conflict are males, it resonates with Semujju's 2014 findings that it is very rare in Ugandan media to find a story where women are the biggest number of news subjects. In all the 22 analysed stories, there was no story where a widow of the killed 654 men suspected to be warriors was quoted in the media for the period that was reviewed. This finding agrees with Nassanga's findings of 1997 that Ugandan media gives very little attention to women issues. There is a strong possibility that if the reporters prioritise human interest stories such as tales of widows, orphaned children or the increased women headed homes in Karamoja since more than 21000 men have arrested, the voices of women could probably increase in media reporting about the conflict. This argument identifies with observations of Nassanga (1997), Semujju (2014) and UMWA (2022) that political related stories and politicians who are majorly men are often prioritised by the

media. The quoting of men who are security commanders is merely political as their aim is to justify whatever actions are being done. This is because in every conflict, violence or war commanders often want to show that they are succeeding in their operations even though in the context of Karamoja, the situation has turned from worse to worst as argued by area legislators in the opening sections of this paper.

The study established that URN reporters for Karamoja area are both men. This perhaps conforms to Uganda Media Women Association (UMWA) observation of 2022 that men give little attention to females as news sources compared to their fellow males who take a lion's share. Perhaps if any of the two reporters was a female, Karamoja women's voices would have been presented somehow differently. UMWA noted in 2022 that female journalists give at least 35 percent of their news sources to women compared to men who give not more than 27 percent.

6. Conclusion

In respect to studies and media reports as shown in the literature section that Karamoja girls get married when they are less than 16 years, chances are that majority of the killed 654 warriors left widows or the biggest number of the more than 21,000 arrested and jailed men left behind wives. However, these women's voices have not been presented in the media since there was no story that quoted a widow or a wife to any of the detained suspects.

Most of the few women quoted in the media have decried torture, insecurity and loss of their income generating activities. But these issues were raised by secondary sources such as Woman Member of Parliament, Female Councillor or female charity service providers. This continues to reflect that women are part of the vulnerable groups that are mostly affected by conflicts but the media hasn't sought out the actual victims.

As [Pedovani et al. \(2019\)](#) and [Pierre \(2011\)](#) argue that media gender inequality has been reduced in some situation by educating the media on key issues to focus on when reporting conflict, the researcher also believes the Ugandan media can do better if they are given sufficient training on gender equality reporting ([Pedovani et al., 2019](#)). This would reduce incidents of leaving human rights stories that would give women upper voice being left out in media reporting which increases male voices since they are in key decision making positions such as command and politics in the case of Karamoja ([Pierre, 2011](#)).

There is also need to revise Uganda's policies to increase women's presence to key positions such as command. Perhaps if some of the key security commanders including intelligence personnel who serve as district security officials as highlighted in the media reporting were females, voices women could have been more ([Pedovani et al., 2019](#); [Pierre, 2011](#); [UMWA, 2022](#); [Semujju, 2014](#)).

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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