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VOLUPTUOUS VACUOUS VAMPS: STEREOTYPED REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN KISWAHILI PRESS

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ABSTRACT In Tanzania, the press is the second most accessible type of mass media after the radio, a key source of information and entertainment. Short stories in two Tanzanian daily newspapers published in the national language, Kiswahili, were analyzed to investigate how authors represented women. Readers and non-readers of newspapers were also interviewed. The content and linguistic analyses revealed that more than two thirds of the stories depicted women negatively, by using linguistic devices such as derogatory terms, metaphors, diminutive forms, compliments, self-incrimination and the assignment of talk-turns. Derogatory language and content in the stories reflect and perpetuate negative attitudes and beliefs about women in society, are counterproductive, and perpetuate low self-esteem in women. The press should become an agent of social change, towards gender parity and promote a gender-sensitive representation of women.

Key Words: Sexual derogation; Fiction; Kiswahili; Language; Press; Sexuality; Tanzania.

INTRODUCTION

This study presents and discusses the negative portrayal of women in fictional short stories in two Kiswahili daily newspapers. It is based on a research conducted in 1996/97 (Swilla, 1999) which focused on "women being talked about"—what is said about them and how it is said. Although the study examined both content and language, this paper focuses on language. The derogatory linguistic representation of women encountered in the stories reflects stereotyped beliefs and attitudes about women, all of which contribute to the construction of gender and perpetuation of unequal relations.

Investigation into the relationship between language and women has mainly focused on how women use language in single-sex or inter-sex, face-to-face encounters. The dominance and difference approaches have dominated the feminist interpretation of differences observed between the dialogue of women and men. The dominance approach advocated by Lakoff (1975) views women's language as evidence of power relations between the sexes. Proponents of this approach explain that socialization confers on women a subordinate position in society. Women learn linguistic features that perpetuate their subordinate status, thus limiting their access to powerful linguistic features which characterise men's speech. The difference approach (Thorne & Henley, 1975) views women's language as evidence of the existence of a distinct women's subculture. Its proponents assert that the segregation of children into single-sex groups during the socialization process favours the devel-

opment of gender-differenciated linguistic styles.

While admitting differences between men's and women's language, Cameron (1992) adopted another approach. She underlined the importance of asking questions about "how language is being used, by real people in real situations, to construct gender and gender relations" (Cameron, 1992: 24). The author argued that gender was continually reproduced in concrete social practices, and not a fixed and monolithic entity.

The press, like other types of mass media, is a powerful tool of socialization. It plays a crucial role in the dissemination of information and thus can influence people's perceptions, beliefs and attitudes. In Tanzania, newspapers are second only to the radio in the provision of information and entertainment. They are widely read by all age groups, mainly in urban areas and along major transport routes. Furthermore, Dar es Salaam and major towns which produce newspapers act as "models" of national culture. An analysis of the content and language of the press enables us to assess the its contribution to gender issues.

THE STUDY

I analysed the content and language used to depict women in stories in Majira and Uhuru, two of the several daily newspapers published in Kiswahili. Two hypotheses were tested: (1) in dealing with women, authors make reference to women's sexuality and (2) descriptions of women's behaviour contain negative terms linked to sexuality.

The first phase of data collection from November 1996 to April 1997 involved the identification and retrieval of short stories published in Majira, a privately owned newspaper, and Uhuru owned by the ruling political party. The two newspapers are mainstream and serious newspapers, in contrast to other more lurid tabloid Kiswahili newspapers. A method modified from Pierce (1990) was used to identify the themes of the stories. The content analysis generated two major groups of themes: (a) stories dealing with male-female relations and (b) those dealing with other themes. The linguistic analysis focused on the language used to refer to women and their activities. The second phase of data collection consisted of interviews in Dar es Salaam city and Iringa town. Views of respondents on the content and language used in newspaper stories were collected and compared with data collected during the first phase.

Several factors dictated the selection of newspaper stories in Kiswahili. Kiswahili is the national language, the medium of instruction in primary education, the language of parliamentary debates and one of the two official languages. The literacy rate in Tanzania is more than 80%, a consequence of increased enrolment and access to primary education, reinforced by literacy campaigns. More Tanzanians can read and write Kiswahili than English, the second official language and the medium of instruction for secondary and post-secondary education. About only 15% of Tanzanians who complete primary education join secondary schools. Although Tanzania has more than 120 languages, local newspapers are only published in Kiswahili and English. Kiswahili newspapers have a wider circulation and are gen-

erally cheaper than the English ones. Majira and Uhuru publish serialized stories a daily. Such stories are popular and read by urbanites, for entertainment. Mbilinyi and Omari (1996) have observed the quasi-absence of women in the news items. Thus I focused on fictional stories in which women feature more often.

I. Results of Content Analysis

One hundred and twenty-one stories were collected from Majira and Uhuru newspapers. A quarter of these were written by women (27.3%), and nearly three-quarters (72.7%) by men. Three-quarters (76%) of the stories depicted women negatively in language and content, representing more than two thirds of stories written by women (69.7%) and by men (78.4%). The majority of stories (98%) took place in an urban setting. More than three-quarters of the stories (79%) dealt with romantic male-female relations, between married or unmarried partners. Fewer than a quarter (21%) dealt with other themes.

All stories featured heroines who were less educated or earned less than their male partners. Heroines often neglected jobs, and school girls neglected studies when they dated rich men. Retribution and regrets often characterized the end of immoral women kept by rich men. Women who had abortions became sterile, and promiscuous women contracted AIDS. Husbands and lovers abandoned unfaithful wives and girlfriends, who became destitute after losing the financial security provided by male partners. Some authors depicted women as perpetrators of evil, for example, women suffering from AIDS deliberately infected multiple partners. Sometimes women seduced their brothers-in-law or friends of their husbands.

Other authors described conflicts among women provoked by jealousy and competition for men. Beautiful women and/or those having successful careers, marriages or other romantic relationships with men were targets of female jealousy. Envious single urban women schemed to destroy marriages and other romantic relationships. Detailed graphic descriptions of women's physiques appeared in nearly half (47.9%) of the stories. Similar proportions of stories written by men and women carried such descriptions.

II. Results of the Linguistic Analysis

Two thirds of stories (67.8%) employed derogatory language with sexual connotations in referring to women. Similar proportions of stories written by women (69.7%) and men (67%) employed such language. All derogatory terms with sexual connotations referred to women alone. Authors used several attributes and names for women, the majority of which referred to adultery, immorality and promiscuity. I categorized the derogatory terms into four groups.

1. *Sub-Categories of Derogatory Terms*

(i) The following terms that are synonyms of "prostitute" referred to women who engaged in sexual activities for financial gains:
(a) *malaya*, (b) *kahaba*, (c) *changudoa*, (d) *shangingi*, (e) *mchunaji*, (f) *shankupe*, (g) *kipanga*.

(ii) Terms in this group referred to immoral women who engaged in sexual activities without a financial motive:
(a) *mfuska*; (b) *muasherati* (adulterer), (c) *hawara*; (d) *kimada* (mistress), (e) *mhuni* (hooligan).

(iii) Derogatory terms in this group were not associated with adultery:
(a) *muuaji* (a killer), (b) *kima* (a monkey), (c) *kijike* (diminutive form for female), (d) *chachu* (sour), (e) *laghai* (a dishonest person), (f) *matapishi* (vomit), (g) *jalala* (garbage pit), (h) *dimbwi la uchafu* (pool of dirt), (i) *msaliti* (traitor).

(iv) "Compliments"—terms listed below can be used as compliments but were derogatory in the fictional stories I studied:
(a) *kisura* (beautiful girl), (b) *kipusa* (rhinoceros tusk, referring to a beautiful girl), (c) *kigoli* (pubescent girl), (d) *Nido* (a brand of imported powdered milk; the term was used to refer to a "woman's breasts").

Other Metaphors

(i) *maziwa yaliyosimama mithili ya embe changa*,
...breasts as firm as young mangoes

(ii) *kifua kinachootesha vijitunda mithili ya viyoga vichanga katika bustani yenye matumaini...*,
...a chest on which small fruits grow, resembling young mushrooms in a garden which inspires hope...

(iii) *...chuchu kifuani zilisimama kivita-vita kama ngumi za mtoto mchanga...*,
...the nipples on her chest were pointed in a war-like manner, like the fists of an infant...,

(iv) *...uzuri wake unaweza kuufananisha na ndege mzuri mwenye rangi kali za kuumiza macho...vijititi vyake vimejitokeza japo umbo lake ni la unene kiasi chake kuanzia mipaka ya kiuno chembamba akifurisha barabara mapaja yote huku yakibebwa na miguu minene kiasi kuanzia magotini na ikibonyea sawa sehemu za visigino vya nyayo zake...muda wote Helena huonekana kigoli*,
...She was as beautiful as a brightly multi-colored bird...her small breasts were pointed and she was moderately fat from the small waistline down to the thighs which rested on moderately fat legs; from the knees, the legs were equally proportioned down to the ankles and the sole...Helena always looked like a girl in her puberty.

(v) *...wanawake mna akili fupi sana, umri unavyozidi, ndivyo na akili nayo inazidi kudumaa...*,
...you women have very small brains; as you grow older, your brains become smaller...

(vi) *...ni toto hasa la kutoa nyoka pangoni. Ninavyoona Mungu kaniumba kama sumaku, ukitaka, usitake...*,
...I am a very beautiful girl, capable of drawing a snake out of a cave. I am like a magnet, whether you want or not, I will trap you...

2. *Views of Respondents on Terms*

Respondents explained the meanings and nuances of derogatory terms and provided the etymology of some. They reported that the following terms referred only

to women:

Kahaba i(b), *changudoa* i(c), *shangingi* i(d), *mchunaji* i(e), *shankupe* i(f), *kipanga* i(g), *kimada* i(d), *kijike* iii(c), *kisura* iv(a) and *Nido* iv(c).

Furthermore, respondents revealed that while *malaya* i(a) refers to both sexes, it most frequently refers to women in actual usage. Only excessively promiscuous men are labeled *malaya. Kahaba* i(b) is a woman who engages in sexual intercourse for a living, a prostitute. Although *hawara* ii(c) refers to both sexes, respondents reported that in actual usage it often refers to the mistress of a married man and is synonymous with "whore." *Kimada* ii(d) means "mistress" or "paramour" and refers to women only. The term designates a woman cohabiting with a man out of wedlock or the mistress of a married man.

Changudoa i(c) means "prostitute." Etymologically, the term refers to a small type of fish consumed when there is no better alternative, something that has low value. The word acquired another meaning, referring to very young girls, minors of no fixed abode and who frequented the fish market on the sea front in Dar es Salaam, in an area popularly known as "Feri" (ferry). The fishermen offered food and shelter to the minors and sexually molested them. Thieves also sometimes used the young women as "bait."

Shangingi i(d) refers to women of bad repute. Such women are normally promiscuous, drunkards, quarrelsome, loud and adopt behaviour associated with younger people. The term was originally coined to refer to the big and expensive four-wheel drive vehicles, usually of Japanese origin such as Toyota Land Cruiser, Nissan Patrol, Pajero, Isuzu or Trooper. These cars are prestigious status symbols and it appears some women love the cars so much that they will date any man who drives them.

Shankupe i(f) refers to a woman who engages in a sexual relationship in order to siphon off a man's wealth. The term is composed of the first two syllables of *shangingi* and *kupe*, the Kiswahili equivalent for "tick." A *shankupe* figuratively "drains" a man's property as does a tick sucking blood. After achieving her goal, she abandons the man and seeks another. She is a seasoned prostitute cum mistress.

Mhuni ii(e) is an untrustworthy person, a "hooligan," a bachelor or "vagabond." Although the term refers to both sexes, it always has sexual connotations in its reference to a woman, except when used jokingly among people who are close. *Mchunaji* i(e) and *kipanga* i(g) refer to a woman who dates a man for financial gains but these terms are less negative than *shankupe*. The relationship can be long or short but normally excludes marriage.

Kipusa iv(b) refers to a highly valued woman. The term originally refers to the horn of a rhinoceros that has a high commercial value and is rare. *Kipusa* is often the mistress of a married man. Because the relationship is socially disapproved and maintained in secrecy, the man values his mistress more than his wife. *Kisura* iv(a) designates "a beautiful object" and is a term of endearment which a man uses to address his mistress. Respondents stated that it was the diminutive form of *sura*, the Kiswahili equivalent of "a face" and that *kisura* originally meant a beautiful face.

3. *Respondents' Views on Negative Attitudes Towards Women in the Press*

The majority of respondents claimed that lack of or the small number of women

at top decision-making levels of the press contributed to the negative portrayal of women in stories. Because women occupy junior positions in the management, production and editorial departments of newspapers, they are excluded from the decision-making process. Respondents argued that men are the decision makers and gatekeepers (Hess, Markson & Stein, 1993) who select features for publication, including those that denigrate women. Interviewees further argued that newspapers are driven by market demands, that negative portrayals of women are sensational and attract clients. Respondents blamed the government for adopting a laissez-faire attitude vis à vis negative portrayals in the press. They cited the increasing use of obscene language and cartoons, particularly about women. Some respondents claimed they avoided buying newspapers because they did not want to expose their children to the offensive content and language. Interviewees above 60 years of age declared that vivid descriptions of a woman's body and of sexual matters were alien to traditional African culture in which sexual matters were only discussed among adults in specific and confidential circles, which excluded children and members of the opposite sex. Many respondents declared that authors of stories were copying styles and features they encountered in the foreign press and on television.

DISCUSSION

The perspective Cameron (1992) offers is useful in interpreting the Kiswahili newspaper fiction presented above. It is important to ask why authors use derogatory language and select negative content about women. What does such portrayal convey about the beliefs and attitudes of authors and society towards women? What are the potential impacts of continued negative portrayal in the press?

Authors of many fictional stories depict a woman as a person whose success depends on her sexuality: she continually strives to attract men who can best cater to her needs, through marriage or love affairs. This explains the emphasis placed on a woman's beauty and the absence of heroines whose success depends on their efforts education, intelligence or competence. These are important strategies employed in, reproducing and perpetuating stereotyped views of women as the subordinate sex, which Lorber & Farrell (1991) termed, "doing" gender.

Lorber & Farrell (1991) observed that "doing" gender was present in all facets of life and took different forms. The high percentage of stories that portrayed women negatively is one way of "doing" gender. Authors of fiction in Kiswahili newspapers are "doing" gender in a subtle and continuous manner through the choice of content and language. Lingustic devices used in the stories include: derogatory names, metaphors, diminutive forms, compliments, self-incrimination and assignment of talk turns to heroines. This is consistent with findings from other studies which have demonstrated that the press and mass media in general play an important role in the construction of gender and perpetuation of traditional stereotyped images of women (Culley & Bennett, 1977; Ceulemans & Fauconnier, 1979; UNESCO, 1980; Jolliffe, 1986; 1989; Bhardwaj & Kumar, 1987; Fernandez, 1987; Greenwald, 1989; Coffey, 1991; Mabala, 1995; Pandian 1997).

I. Derogatory Names

The use of all 26 derogatory terms to refer to women and the preponderance of sexually-connotative names is a powerful manner of "doing" gender. There is a need to explain why all sexual derogatory terms including six which normally refer to both sexes referred to women only, although all illicit sexual relations were heterosexual. Why did authors condone men but condemn women for engaging in the same acts? The explanation may be found in social practice and customs which tend to sanction women more than men for proscribed behavior. Authors also "do" gender by loading derogatory terms with sexual connotations in reference to women. *Mhuni* 2(e) refers to both sexes and does not always have sexual connotations. However, all appearances of the term in my sample carried sexual connotations whenever authors used it to refer to women. The fact that the same term acquires sexual connotations only in reference to women is evidence of gender bias. Studies of English and German by Baltzer (1978), those by Schulz (1990) and other researchers have demonstrated the widespread use of sexual derogatory terms for women in language. Schulz (1990) discussed similar phenomena in English, observing that "dog" and "pig" were derogatory terms used for both sexes but acquired sexual connotations in reference to women. She further observed that the largest category of words designating humans in sexual terms referred to women, especially loose women, although women were also generally acknowledged to be the more chaste of the two sexes, the less promiscuous, and the more monogamous. "I have located roughly a thousand words and phrases describing women in sexually derogatory ways. There is nothing approaching this multitude for describing men" (Schulz, 1990: 143).

II. Metaphors

An analysis of some metaphors used in the fictional newspaper stories shows unusual collocations which invoke negative associations. A woman was referred to as *dimbwi la uchafu* 3(h), which is literally translated as a "pool of dirt", yet *dimbwi* in Kiswahili refers to a pool of water. This unusual collocation creates the image of a pit containing water and garbage. In a tropical climate, the metaphor evokes associations of decomposing and fetid garbage mixed with water, offensive to the senses of sight, smell and touch. The pool is fertile ground for the reproduction of harmful bacteria and the spread of diseases. The author conveys the following message: "That woman is dangerous, suffers from infectious diseases, don't touch her!" *Matapishi* 3(f) has similar connotations, since *matapishi*, vomit, rapidly rots, emitting a foul and repulsive smell. Women are portrayed as "unclean," literally and figuratively.

The comparison of a woman's breasts with young mangoes and mushrooms in metaphors 5 and 6 respectively creates images of an irresistible, tantalizing titbit which must be devoured. Nipples pointed in a war-like manner in metaphor 7 suggest provocation and justification for an attack; beautiful women are to blame for illicit sexual relations and men must be forgiven for succumbing to such women. Authors imply that beauty is crucial in evaluating a woman's worth; beauty means

having a youthful appearance, firm breasts, well-shaped legs and a small waistline (metaphor 8) among other qualities. Judging from the stories analysed, beauty in a woman is both a vice and a virtue. In representing women as either irresistible demons or fatal attractions (Ndulute, 1996), authors of Kiswahili newspaper novels lend support to the assertion Jaworski (1992: 35) makde, that descriptions of women mainly portrayed them as having a double status or being in a double bind. Such portrayal is an effective device in "doing" gender.

1. *Diminutives*

The use of diminutive terms also invokes unpleasant associations. *Kipanga* in example 1(g) is a diminutive for "machete," an implement used in felling trees. Recently, the machete has been used as a murder weapon during genocides and mutilations in some African states. The diminutive form *kipanga* creates an image of a very sharp and deadly small machete. Thus the woman referred to as *kipanga* must be avoided because she may kill, literally, or figuratively by siphoning off the property of her lover. *Kijike*, 3(c) is a diminutive form for "woman" and is derogatory. It evokes images of a woman in poor physical condition resulting from her immoral conduct. She is a dangerous and despised woman.

2. *Intelligence*

Reference to low intelligence in women is another powerful device of "doing" gender. In metaphor 9, the author uses growth to show how a woman but not a man ages and her brain becomes progressively smaller! Lack of scientific basis for such claims seems of little importance to the author. Frequent portrayals of women having little intelligence perpetrate beliefs that women are intellectually inferior and incompetent. Such portrayals contribute to the destruction of women's self-esteem.

3. *Compliments*

Even what appear to be compliments only serve to emphasize the role of women as sex objects. *Kigoli* in metaphor 8 refers to an adolescent girl who has not yet menstruated. Here, a *kigoli* was intended as a compliment. However, this could be interpreted as a sign of man's fantasy to possess and prey on minors. It also subtly gives prescriptions to women to continually strive to appear younger in order to please men. Authors do not make comparable demands on men.

4. *Self-incrimination*

One of the most effective ways of "doing" gender encountered in the fictional stories is self-incrimination. In order to convince readers that heroines were evil, some authors allowed them to address the readers directly, admit their immorality, express regret, advise other women against immorality but also rejoice in their vengeful acts. The portrayal of women suffering from AIDS who admit that they deliberately infected men reinforces negative attitudes towards women. It is necessary to ask how many readers are capable of distinguishing between fiction and non-fiction, particularly in a society with a small percentage of well-educated people. The assignment of talk-turns to heroines does not concur with findings from studies of language and gender which mainly show that women rarely take turns in inter-sex

conversations; when they do, they are subjected to interruptions by men and rarely complete their utterances (Graddol & Swann, 1989; Zimmerman & West, 1975). Thus in giving talk turns to heroines, authors presented unreal situations but which are effective in perpetuating prejudices against women.

Finally, the "doing" of gender is evident in the stereotyped attitudes of interviewees vis à vis the use of the Kiswahili passive form of the verb "to marry."

Mwanaume anakuwa ameolewa na mwanamke,

The man is married to the woman.

The passive form here is unacceptable, because it implies that the wife has the upper hand in the family, a serious insult to the husband. In Kiswahili, as in many Tanzanian languages, the passive form of the verb "to marry" only takes a woman as subject. There is always derogation when a man is the subject, because it implies the man is economically dependent on his wife, unacceptable in traditional African culture, and the husband is despised by both sexes.

III. Implications

The use of derogatory language in reference to women is a reflection of stereotyped beliefs and prejudices held by authors of both sexes. The socialization process brainwashes both sexes with negative beliefs and attitudes towards women. Female authors are reproducing what society has accustomed them to believe about women, and their attitudes are as negative as those of male authors. Authors of both sexes mainly view women in their sexual and reproductive roles and condemn them for immoral heterosexual relations. Such attitudes have been documented in other types of mass media in Tanzania, for example, in newspaper reporting (Mtambalike, 1996), advertisement (Rutashobya, 1996), radio-broadcasting (Sanga, 1996) and fiction (Mabala, 1995; Ndulute, 1996).

Derogatory language is linked to stereotyped attitudes and beliefs present in the content of fictional stories. Authors who hold negative attitudes and beliefs about women cannot be expected to use favourable language in talking about them. The representation of women as economically dependent on men and as sexual objects shows lack of recognition of women's contribution in society. It trivializes the progress women have made and continue to make in modern Tanzania. Women provide household care and most of the labour in agriculture. Although their percentage is smaller than that of men, some Tanzanian women are chief executive officers in public and private sectors, cabinet ministers, doctors, judges, professors and directors, to name only a few. The absence of such heroines or of women holding post-secondary qualifications in the fictional stories is therefore a misrepresentation of reality. Such omissions serve to reinforce stereotyped images of women.

Authors owe it to the readers to present such models and show that opportunities exist for girls. The majority of rural and urban women, educated and uneducated, provide for their families without prostituting themselves. Yet, the content and language of newspaper stories mainly depict women who use their sexuality to entice men for financial and material gains.

Although it may be difficult to measure the impact of such representation, one

cannot rule out negative effects on readers, resulting from constant exposure to derogatory language and content about women. Negative stereotyping of women is deeply rooted in society and the way women are talked about, even by women themselves, is a good case of persistent stereotyping (Sadiqi, 1995). Society applies double standards: it sanctions women but tolerates men when both engage in the same socially proscribed acts. The inculcation of stereotyped images of women begins with childhood and is enhanced by socializing agents such as the press. Newspaper stories combines with other biased socialization practices to create a stereotyped image of women. Jaworski (1992) observed that negative stereotyping is an effective way of silencing women and leads to the creation of an image of a powerless, submissive and inferior group. Schulz (1990) also observed that a language reflected the thoughts, attitudes and culture of the people who made and used it. Words which are highly charged with emotion, taboo or distaste not only reflect the culture which uses them but also teach and perpetuate the attitudes which created them. Does the negative representation of women in Kiswahili newspaper stories only reflect the attitudes of the authors, or of Tanzanian society in general?

In Dar es Salaam, several Kiswahili daily newspapers appear in the afternoon and sell for the equivalent of 15 US cents. Considering that at least 50% of the Tanzanian population is under 15 years of age and that more than 80% of the population is literate, constant exposure to fiction depicting women negatively can have substantial influence on how readers view women. The frequency of such stories indicates underlying negative attitudes of the authors and society at large, a point that Cameron (1990: 16) made: "...our ways of talking about things reveal attitudes and assumptions we might well consciously disown, thus testifying to the deep-rootedness of sexism." The mass media inform, interpret, entertain and educate people on what is "out there" and for some, mass media are mirrors of "reality" (Leitner, 1997). Schlenker, Caron & Halteman (1998) observed that the media and society exerted pressure on young women to conform to stereotypical images of women striving to be attractive at the cost of personal development and academic interests. They recommended that society and the mass media should respond more positively to progress made by women, as reflected in the increased opportunities and careers open to them.

Bhardwaj & Kumar (1987) underlined the need for the press to fulfill its potential as an agent of social change and to pay more attention to women's social issues and their role in development. Likewise, newspapers in Tanzania have a responsibility to educate readers and reflect the changing environment in government and civil society that favors gender equity. For example, newspapers should feature women in non-traditional roles and thereby disseminate the message that women are no longer confined to the home. Newspapers should use a gender-sensitive language and content to inform society, particularly young women, that opportunities for self-advancement exist and that women are accessing occupations and disciplines traditionally reserved for men.

Serious Kiswahili newspapers such as Majira and Uhuru should lead the way towards an improved representation of women. If they do not, there is reason to fear that cheaper, profit-driven and less serious newspapers that cater to entertainment may portray women even more negatively. The impact of such negative representa-

tion on young women can be damaging. It also reinforces the negative stereotypes about women in young and older men!

CONCLUSION

The analysis of language and content of stories in Majira and Uhuru has revealed that authors portray women negatively as dependent, as sexual temptresses preoccupied with pleasing men sexually for financial and material gains and that beautiful women have little intelligence. The two hypotheses of the study were not rejected.

The constant negative portrayal of women in these stories is a reflection of the general unfavorable position of women in society. Such depiction inhibits women from realizing their full potential in the economic, social and political domains, and reproduces and perpetuates low self-esteem in them.

Newspaper owners, executives, and the staff, and the readers and society at large need to be sensitized about how newspaper stories perpetuate and create unequal gender relations. There is a need for gender-sensitive language and content.

As we witness the beginning of the 21st century and as demands for gender parity grow stronger, the press must unite with other stakeholders in efforts to promote a gender-sensitive representation of women. Negative language and content are counter-productive and hinder progress towards gender equity.

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