

**VISUAL FRAMING OF THE NAIROBI WESTGATE MALL TERRORIST  
ATTACK BY THE *DAILY NATION*, *THE STANDARD*, AND *THE NEW YORK  
TIMES***

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Requirements for the Conferment of the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in  
Communication and Media Studies**

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## **DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **Declaration**

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for the award of any degree in any other university.

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### **Recommendation**

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## **DEDICATION**

To my dear children, Ethan Mbatia, Bethan Mbatia, and Nathan Mbatia, with heartfelt gratitude and love. Your unwavering love, support, and encouragement inspire me to work hard.

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## ABSTRACT

Terrorism is among the major threats to the global world today. There is extensive scholarly research pertaining to terrorism since the issue affects many countries. The mass media has the responsibility to provide fair, accurate, and unbiased coverage. However, the visual reporting of conflicts has been controversial, exemplified by coverage of events like the 9/11 attacks. This study investigated the visual framing of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack in Nairobi, Kenya, on September 21, 2013. It assessed how photojournalists framed this incident in the *Daily Nation*, *Standard*, and *New York Times* by examining the types of frames used, compositional elements, and the framing's effect on public perception of the attack. The study employed a qualitative descriptive research method, using descriptive content analysis with MaxQDA software to assess photographs for patterns, themes, and visual framing. In-depth interviews were conducted on media professionals. A sample of fifty (50) photographs from the first three pages of the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* published on September 21-24, 2013, was analysed. Purposive sampling was used to select nine (9) media professionals for interviews. Semiology was utilised to derive meanings from the images using Rodriguez and Dimitrova's four-tiered model, and the focus was on denotative, stylistic-semiotic, connotative, and ideological representations. The findings revealed that media frequently prioritises sensational images to boost viewership, and this influences audience perceptions through fear and inspiration. The key visual frames used in reporting the Westgate Mall terrorist attack included pain, misery, humanitarianism, vulnerability, despair, heroism, and grief. Compositional analysis showed strategic use of camera angles, shot proximity, and image sizes to convey emotions, with large images on front pages for visual appeal, while medium and numerous small images provided additional content. While close-ups were limited due to their potential to evoke sombre emotions, the visual framing created denotative meanings and ideological representations, though audience interpretations may have been swayed by cognitive biases and cultural norms, diverging from journalists' intentions. This study highlights the critical role of visual framing in shaping public perception of terrorism in a visually dominated media landscape. By employing a qualitative approach, it uncovers biases and themes that influence how events are reported and interpreted. The study contributes to the communication field by promoting visual literacy and empowering audiences to critically analyse media content and become discerning consumers of news. Ethical considerations are crucial in determining the frames to be used. It is essential that journalists balance the need for information with respect for victims' dignity. Thoughtful image selection and composition are also vital in responsible photojournalism. Therefore, it is suggested that photojournalists consider balancing faithful reporting with mitigating potential harm to the public.

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AK-47</b>	Avtomat Kalashnikova 1947
<b>CNN</b>	Cable News Network
<b>DN</b>	The <i>Daily Nation</i>
<b>G20</b>	Group of Twenty
<b>KDF</b>	Kenya Defence Forces
<b>MaxQDA</b>	Max Qualitative Data Analysis
<b>MSNBC</b>	Microsoft Network Broadcasting Company
<b>NACOSTI</b>	The National Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation
<b>NVivo</b>	Qualitative data analysis software developed by QSR International
<b>NYT</b>	<i>The New York Times</i>
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
<b>STD</b>	<i>The Standard</i>
<b>USA</b>	The United States of America
<b>VF</b>	Visual Framing

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Al –Shabaab** – The term refers to a jihadist terrorist group allied to Al Qaeda and has its origin in Somalia.

**Aperture** – An aperture is defined as an opening on a lens diaphragm through which light enters inside the camera.

**Audience**- Audience refers to viewers of published photographs in a newspaper.

**Camera Angle** – Refers to the position taken by a photojournalist in the process of capturing a photograph for publication. The angle is either high, mid, or low.

**Caption**- Caption refers to the text that is normally written below each published photograph for the purpose of describing the photo content and purpose.

**Composition** – Composition refers to the process of arranging the elements of a photograph in the frame so that they make sense to the audience.

**Depth of Field** – The area of acceptable sharpness in the foreground and the background, the middle ground, and the background, or the foreground and the background, depending on where the subject is positioned.

**Focal Length** – Refers to the distance that begins from the convergence of light rays to the focal plane in the camera where an image is recorded on either a light-sensitive material (film) or an image sensor (CIMOS) resulting in a sharp image.

**Framing** – It refers to the process of selecting some aspects of a perceived news reality in a newspaper and making them more salient to an extent of influencing the audience's perception.

**Gatekeeping** – Refers to the practice of limiting and controlling access to information in mass communication.

**Hard News** - Hard news refers to serious news of widespread importance, concerning politics, foreign affairs, or the like, as distinguished from routine news items, feature stories, or human-interest stories.

**High Camera Angle** – It refers to the angle of depression in relation to the camera position and the subject being photographed.

**Low Camera Angle** – The angle of elevation in relation to the camera position and the subject being photographed.

**Photojournalism** – The process of capturing, selecting, editing, captioning, and publishing photographs for the purpose of telling a news story.

**Placement** – Placement refers to the process of selecting the most suitable space in newspaper pages to publish a photograph.

**Proximity**- Proximity herein refers to the distance between the photographer and the subject of photography.

**Salience** – In this study, the term "salience" in photography refers to the process of making an image or visual element more noticeable, meaningful, and memorable to a specific audience.

**Selective Focus** – Refers to a photographic technique of deciding the elements in a photograph that are in focus while blurring the rest.

**Shot Proximity** – Refers to the camera distance with relation to the subject being framed.

**Size**- It is the amount of space in inches allocated to a specific published photo in a newspaper page.

**Terrorism**- Refers to the use of indiscriminate violence against civilians for the purpose of creating fear in order to achieve political, religious, and ideological goals.

**The Angle of View** – The angle of view refers to how much of the scene a photographer intends to capture.

**Visual Framing**- Visual framing refers to the process of influencing the photo-taking process in order to make some aspects of the new more salient.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

The role of the media, both print and electronic, is to inform, educate, and shape public awareness and attitude (Bullock, 2001). The media, sometimes referred to as the fourth estate, is vested with the task of making available, fair, balanced, and timely information to the public to allow them to make informed decisions. It is noted, however, that circumstances such as distance, time, media ownership, and political affiliation have limited the effectiveness of journalists' ability to inform objectively. Such limitations have necessitated that the media frame news content by selecting, excluding, and emphasising specific areas of the story.

Various media outlets frame terrorism news differently, depending on the culture and the political ideologies held by the owners and targeted audience. For instance, most newspapers in the United States tend to make more episodic frames compared to United Kingdom papers, which cover terrorism and terrorist-related events more thematically (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2008). In the case of a lack of authoritative local voices on terrorism, there is a heightened reliance of local media on foreign analysts. Unfortunately, such analysts have a limited understanding of the security situation in the involved country. When the international media sets the news agenda, terrorist events are likely to be framed in terms of Western preoccupations rather than national and local realities (Glazzard & Reed, 2021). Consequently, news coverage may be biased toward ideologies that do not accurately reflect the perspectives of terrorism victims.

An example is *The New York Times*, which frames terrorist events by Western values. In such cases, the local perspectives are ignored (DNS Africa Resource Center, 2024). The implication is that there are differences in framing in terms of accuracy, objectivity, and depth of reporting. Generally, the news reporting may even skew the understanding of violent attacks since different media outlets may over-emphasise their ideological and transnational aspects while excluding the local realities and perspectives. However, print media outlets such as *The New York Times* offer a broader narrative when framing terror by incorporating images of both the immediate violence and its long-term effects. On the other hand, framing by local newspapers such as the *Daily Nation* focuses on the human

impact and emotional aftermath, highlighting victims and communities affected by terrorism to elicit empathy. *The Standard* tends to capture scenes that emphasise the chaos and disruption caused, using stark, dramatic imagery that highlights the severity of the attacks.

Media outlets play a critical role in informing and shaping public perception. However, their effectiveness may be compromised by biases stemming from ownership, political affiliations, and cultural contexts. It is noted that international media, such as *The New York Times*, often frames terrorism through Western perspectives, overshadowing local realities and potentially skewing public understanding of such events. Conversely, local outlets like the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* may focus on human impact and community responses, providing a different, more localised perspective. These differing approaches highlight the complex dynamics of news framing. Therefore, there is a need to critically evaluate the media's portrayal of terrorism to ensure a more balanced understanding. This way, the limitations and biases inherent in media reporting can be identified, and a more inclusive approach to global and local narratives adopted.

### **1.1.1 Terrorism and Global Reporting**

The mass media plays an integral role in the coverage of terrorism. It is the means through which the public gets information with regard to various terrorist attacks. Eid (2013) argues that despite the rapid change in communication that has significantly transformed society in the last three decades, reporting of terrorism and violence has remained sensational. Miller (1982) asserts that “terrorism and the media are entwined in an almost inexorable, symbiotic relationship” (p. 1). ‘Terrorism is capable of writing any drama, no matter how horrible, to compel the media's attention.’ Consequently, scholars in mass communication research have raised concerns over the symbiotic relationship between mass media and terrorism (Schlesinger, 1981; Gibbs, 1989; Nacos 2007). While the mass media increase the circulation of newspapers in print and viewership in broadcast media during such catastrophic ordeals, the terrorists increase their popularity through the mass media publicity (Kampf, 2014). This symbiotic relationship does not insinuate that the mass media actively seek out acts of terrorism to boost their viewership and circulation, but rather that the two mutually benefit from each other, knowingly or unknowingly. Due to

the fact that a majority of news media, both national and international, are private entities that thrive through competition and profit-making, they are often compelled to sensationalise news stories in order to increase their circulation of print and viewership for broadcast (Eid, 2013). Thus, a terrorist attack provides a timely opportunity for the media to thrive in circulation and distribution through sensationalising the stories.

### **1.1.2 Terrorism in Kenya**

The subject of terrorist attacks is not new in Kenya. The first terrorist incident on record dates back to the 1980s, when the Norfolk Hotel, owned by a Jew, was bombed in Nairobi. This terrorist attack took place on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, 1980. The attack targeted guests who had assembled at the hotel for the New Year's Eve dinner. International security agencies, in collaboration with the Kenyan police, were quickly able to apprehend and identify the terrorist as Qaddura Mohammed Abdel al-Hamid, aged 34, from Morocco (Momanyi, 2015). On August 7, 1998, another massive terrorist attack was witnessed in Nairobi. Over 200 people were killed as a result of a bomb blast attack at the American Embassy in Nairobi (Aronson, 2013). More than four hundred people were severely wounded in the attack. The Paradise Hotel attack of 2002 by the Al-Qaeda group targeted an Israeli-owned hotel in Mombasa. In total, 13 people were killed. In 2013, the Westgate Mall attack was orchestrated by Al-Shabaab in Nairobi's Westlands area, killing 67 people. On June 15, 16, and 17, 2014, over 60 people were killed in Mpeketoni, Lamu County, Kenya. The Al-Shabaab terrorist group claimed responsibility for the attack (Anderson, 2014). A year later, in April 2015, an assault targeting Garissa University students in Garissa County ended up claiming the lives of more than 148 students and staff (Mutisya & Owuor, 2018). The most recent and massive terrorist attack was witnessed on January 15, 2019. On this occasion, four terrorists raided the DusitD2 complex in Nairobi, 14 Riverside Drive, killing 21 people and injuring approximately 200 others (Bryden & Bahra 2019). In the wake of these attacks, the mass media played an effective role in informing the public. Newspapers particularly made the occurrences of these extremist acts vivid through the publication of photographs in local and international dailies.

### **1.1.3 The Westgate Mall Terrorist Attack**

On Saturday, September 21, 2013, at about 1230 hours (East African Time), an Al-

Shabaab-affiliated terrorist group stormed the Westgate Shopping Mall in Westlands, Nairobi. Four terrorists, armed with Avtomat Kalashnikova 1947 rifles (AK-47) and hand grenades, launched an assault on innocent shoppers inside the mall premises. The attack lasted approximately 80 hours, ending on the fourth day after its launch (Ong'onda, 2016). The attack claimed 67 lives, leaving 240 seriously wounded. Among the victims were 18 foreigners from Australia, Canada, China, England, France, Ghana, India, the Netherlands, and North America (Omayio, 2015). The Al-Shabaab considered the shopping mall the best target because the mall was popular with wealthy Kenyans, politicians, expatriates, diplomats, and tourists. Such a target would therefore give them world-wide media coverage because they were likely to get nationals from numerous countries at any given time (Ong'onda, 2016). This terrorist attack was the second largest since the August 7, 1998, bombing of the United States (U.S.) Embassy in Nairobi, which killed over 200 people. The victims of the attack were children and adults, both male and female, ranging in age from eight to 78 years old. It was reported that the majority of the assault took place within the first hour of the attack and mainly targeted non-Muslim civilians (Ong'onda, 2016). The attack at the Westgate Mall successfully raised Al-Shabaab's global profile as a terrorist group (Ong'onda, 2016). Tunman (2003) asserts that terrorists desire to attract global media coverage, and therefore, by targeting victims from many parts of the world, the Westgate Mall terrorist attack attracted maximum publicity from multiple media houses across the globe.

#### **1.1.4 The Kenyan Media and the Reportage of Terrorism**

The Kenyan media in general has played a vital role in reporting acts of terrorism in Kenya. However, there have been complaints from various organisations with reference to how the print media has covered and presented the heinous acts of terrorism. For example, in 2014, the Media Council of Kenya raised serious concern with regard to how the Kenyan media covered and reported the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. The report by the Media Council of Kenya stated that the Kenyan media did not adhere to some of the codes of conduct for the practice of journalism in Kenya. In part, this report stated that the Kenyan media “emphasised the dramatic, most violent, and conflicting accounts of the war against terror and ignored historical, cultural, and social explanations for terrorism acts and the war against terrorism” (Kadhi, 2014, p. iv).

A number of studies in Kenya have also questioned the manner in which the mainstream print media in Kenya have reported terrorism. The *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* are the major mainstream print media in Kenya. The *Daily Nation* has an average circulation of approximately 170,000 copies per day and an average readership of approximately 4,379,400 per day, while *The Standard* has a circulation of over 100,000 copies per day and an average readership of 2,223,500 per day (Kiptinness & Kiwanuka-Tondo, 2019). A study by Kiarie and Mogambi (2017), which aimed to examine how the print media in Kenya report issues of terrorism, concluded that news stories on terrorism were given unusual prominence by both the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspaper. Both the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers have the tendency to place some exaggerated stories of terrorism on the front page of their issues to lure audiences (Maina, 2014). Kiarie and Mogambi (2017) indicate that stories of terrorism are often accorded prominence by putting them on the page leads of both the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers rendering the articles to the sole role of informing the public and hence negating the vital role of providing detailed information that would enhance an informed Kenyan society.

### **1.1.5 Study Niche**

Terrorism is among the major threats to the global world today. Many countries in the world have been victims of terrorism, and therefore the subject requires empirical studies that focus on how to mitigate the vice (Hoffman, 2006). Wilkinson (2001) asserts that terrorism, in its nature, uses the media as a psychological weapon for communicating its threats to the masses. For example, in the likely event of national distress, such as a terrorist attack, the mass media outlets receive overwhelming numbers of readers and viewers. This can be attributed to the notion that ‘bad’ news receives and attracts a larger audience compared to ‘good’ news. A number of studies have indicated that photographs accompanying news stories of calamities have influenced audiences to the extent of changing their perception of the particular incident, either positively or negatively (Huang & Fahmy, 2013; Dahmen, 2012; Neumann & Fahmy, 2012; Parry, 2011). This study examined how the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* visually framed the Westgate Mall terrorist attack.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The visual reporting of past terrorism incidents by mass media, especially through photojournalism, has long raised concerns due to its power to shape public opinion. Terrorists often seek to spread fear. By publishing visually framed images of attacks, media outlets may inadvertently amplify their impact. While previous studies have not fully examined how visual framing influences public perceptions of terrorism, Kenya has remained a frequent target, and despite the rapid change in communication that has significantly transformed society in the last three decades, the reporting of terrorism-related violence has remained sensational. Therefore, this study examined how the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* visually framed the Westgate Mall terrorist attack.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

The general aim of the study was to assess how photojournalists framed the Westgate Mall terrorist attack through photographs that were published in the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* newspapers.

This study was guided by the following specific research objectives:

- (i) To examine the types of frames that were used in the photographs published to portray the terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall.
- (ii) To explore the compositional elements of the photographic coverage of the terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall.
- (iii) To analyse how visual framing influenced the presentation and interpretation of photographs published after the terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

A number of questions were derived from the research objectives:

- i) What types of frames were used in the photographs published to portray the terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall?
- ii) What were the compositional elements present in the photographic coverage of the terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall?
- iii) How did visual framing influence the presentation and interpretation of photographs published after the terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has experienced a transformation in media presentation from solely typographic media to visually dominated media. This significant increase in visual presentation in media necessitates proper scrutiny of the visual genre in mass communication. This study fills a crucial gap by addressing the need for a deeper understanding of visual framing in media coverage of terrorism, particularly in the context of the shift from text-based to visually dominated media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While most existing research on terrorism and visual framing has relied on quantitative methods, this study employs a qualitative approach to uncover the biases, themes, and underlying messages that shape public perception and memory of events like the Westgate Mall attack. It provides insights into how visual elements such as angle, focus, and lighting influence audience perception and suggests ethical practices for media professionals. By focusing on these aspects, the study contributes to the development of balanced and responsible visual reporting in terrorism coverage.

The findings also expand terrorism and mass media scholarship by focusing on the role of photojournalism in reporting terror attacks. The findings of this study provide insight to the media audience on how visual frames are created by photojournalists and, hence, enable the audience to make informed judgments when presented with visual images by the mass media. The study aimed to empower the public to become critical consumers of media content by educating them on visual literacy, including techniques like angle, focus, and lighting, which influence perception and reveal potential biases. It provides tools and frameworks for analysing media content, helping the audience assess the validity and reliability of images, particularly in the context of terrorism reporting. By promoting awareness of biases and underlying messages, the study encouraged the public to scrutinise and question media coverages, thereby fostering a more informed and discerning approach to consuming news.

### **1.6 Scope and Limitations**

This study investigated two mainstream print media in Kenya and one mainstream international print media in the USA. Therefore, the location of the study was mainly Kenya, although it focused on one international newspaper from the USA, *The New York*

*Times*, in addition to the two mainstream Kenyan newspapers, the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. The study examined how the three mainstream newspapers visually framed the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. The three newspapers that were studied were the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *New York Times*. The investigation into the views on the role that framing played in the photographs that were published after the Westgate Mall terrorist attack involved media professionals. The reason was that, like any other news consumers, professionals offer a dual perspective by combining both consumer and professional insights. By including their views, the study captured a comprehensive understanding of how media content is perceived and interpreted, allowing for a richer analysis of the impact of visual framing on public perception. The approach provided the "double benefit" of reflecting both the objective assessments of media practitioners and the subjective experiences of typical consumers, offering an in-depth analysis of the effects of media representation on public attitudes toward terrorism.

### **1.6.1 Scope**

This study examined newspaper photographs and captions, leaving out other text articles. The research selected the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers because they are the oldest, most circulated, most read, and most trusted newspapers in Kenya (Obiero, 2016). The research analysed issues published on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2013 in the selected newspapers. The current daily newspaper readership in Kenya is 5,600,000 (Nzioka, 2024). Out of this, the readership of the *Daily Nation* is about 2,072,000 per day, compared to *The Standard's* 1,176,000. The implication is that nationwide, the *Daily Nation* has a 37% share while *The Standard* has 21% (Nzioka, 2024). *The New York Times* was selected considering that it is one of the most prestigious newspapers known for its international news coverage. In 2023, the average weekday print circulation of *The New York Times* was approximately 279,000 copies (Watson, 2024). Other forms of electronic media, such as broadcast media, were excluded from the study owing to the fact that broadcast media often gives a summary of what is comprehensively featured in print media.

### **1.6.2 Limitations**

The study was subject to a number of limitations. Firstly, newspaper publications may not fully represent the entire sphere surrounding the framing of terrorism, and therefore, the

findings of this study may not be generalisable to the entire scope of the visual framing of terrorism. Generalisations were strictly restricted to the photographs analysed. Rose (2016) argues that the analysis of visuals is understood from diverging angles, leading to a subjective perception that can generate multiple meanings. Secondly, visual perception is an intuitive process, and henceforth, comprehension of visual images varies from one observer to another. Image interpretations are not necessarily made homogeneously. Factors such as cultural background, educational background, and ideological view come into play when interpreting visual images. Despite these minor limitations, the findings of this study add much-needed data to the literature on the visual framing of terrorism in Kenya and the world at large within the scope of communication and media. The research took the necessary precautions to mitigate the arising biases.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by exploring the literature related to the study as per each objective. Literature on frame types, compositional elements, and the role of frames is comprehensively reviewed with the aim of showing the gaps in knowledge as well as depicting the differences in point of view between the reviewed scholars. The chapter ends with a discussion of the theories on which the study was based. The theories are Framing Theory and Multimodality Theory.

### 2.2 Types of Visual Frames

The first objective of this study was to examine the types of frames that were used by the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* newspapers to portray the terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya. A number of studies have been conducted on the scope of electronic media to seek an understanding of the different frame types and how the media uses them to set various agendas. Additionally, some scholars have evaluated the types of frames used by print media to report events. Photojournalists can present various frames through the images they publish when reporting an incident. The themes include negative and positive frames, and this is dependent on the content of the published photographs. For instance, a study by Hutchison (2014) revealed that when media visually depict the faces of horrified victims in pain and misery, viewers are emotionally influenced to sympathise with the victims. Similarly, Greenwood and Jenkins (2015) indicated that pain and misery do not only entail injury or brutal experiences. Even those watching the atrocities are traumatised. Publishing such sensationalistic photographs on the foremost pages of national and international newspapers inadvertently serves the interests of terrorism because it achieves their basic agenda, which is to put the public in fear and grief. Any news that signals danger to survival, such as terror attack-related reports, is eagerly absorbed because the public's strongest human interest is survival (Schmid, 2021). Therefore, modern mass media publishes images of suffering victims to gain attention and sympathy from the public. Usually, in such cases, the victims are portrayed as innocent individuals struggling with the disaster or unfavourable conditions caused by the terrorist (Laat, 2022). Therefore, images showing pain and misery are

published with the aim of communicating the truth, attracting sympathy from the newspapers' viewers, and probably increasing the audience.

On the other hand, the publication of images by the media showing heroic rescuers in action during terror attacks influences the narrative surrounding an incident. The reason is that such photographs highlight acts of bravery and resilience among civilians, armed forces personnel, volunteers, and other people (Van Tongeren et al., 2018). The depiction of combat prowess in published images has been shown to indicate the affected country's armed forces' response capabilities (Boukhars, 2021). These assertions are supported by Jones et al. (2021), who indicate that the images showcase the armed forces' effective response and future attack prevention strategies. Therefore, heroic rescuers include security personnel and other volunteers who respond to a violent incident by trying to save or help the victims.

Moreover, photographs showing victims' and survivors' despair may have various implications. There is an implication when photographs showing victims' deaths are published. Although the role is to inform and evoke sympathy, the images can raise awareness among the public about the human impact of terrorism (Iyer et al., 2014; Anis, 2022). Such images are published to appeal to viewers' emotions and increase revenue collected from the sale of newspaper copies. Anis (2022) argues that mass media often prioritises depicting the suffering of disaster victims, as this portrayal intensifies the scale and impact of the disaster. Jařab (2020) complements this view by suggesting that the media's role extends to shaping public perceptions of terrorist attacks, achieved through the publication of sensational images in what is commonly referred to as media terrorism. This practice aims to draw widespread attention to the dramatic aspects of terror attacks. These assertions are affirmed by Joyce (2013), who argues that human emotions are often stirred by the portrayal of suffering, leading to feelings of care and empathy. However, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2022) indicates that photojournalists should be keen to preserve the victims' and their families' dignity. This aligns with the ethical imperative of reporting on issues that impact humanity.

Bruce (2014) conducted a study that focused on the framing of terrorism on the Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya television channels. Among the objectives of his study was to identify the

factors that led to and influenced the framing of terrorism on the two broadcast networks. The study deployed a content analysis approach to identify the various types of frames that were explicit. The findings of the study established that frames influenced by stereotypes, such as ‘terrorism is Muslim’, were dominant in the coverage of the two television networks. Further, the study established that the media focused more on airing information that supported government policies on terrorism and little on the human aspects that were brought about by the terrorism acts. Bruce's (2014) study concentrated on the types of frames used by Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya television channels, making a significant contribution to understanding how terrorism is visually framed in television news coverage. However, Bruce's work was narrowly focused on television broadcasting, leaving other forms of mass media unexplored. It did not include print media or delve into the unique visual storytelling techniques of photojournalism. In contrast, the present study expanded the scope by examining how print media and photojournalism framed terrorism, addressing the gap in the literature and providing a broader perspective on the visual framing across multiple media platforms. This broader focus allowed for a comparative analysis of how different forms of mass media construct and convey visual narratives related to terrorism, offering insights beyond the television-centric framework.

Schwalbe (2015) conducted a quantitative analysis to explore how three print media—*the Times*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*—visually reported the 2006 Lebanon War. Schwalbe was interested in examining the frames that were used in the two newspapers. Her study established that human interest frames and military conflict dominated the frame types. The study further revealed that all the print media in question emphasised the negative impact of the war on Lebanon and its citizens. Schwalbe's (2015) study demonstrated the role of proportionality in journalism by studying the visual coverage of the 2006 Lebanon Conflict in *The Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. Further, Schwalbe's (2015) study revealed that, indeed, different media may differ in the tone of coverage of a specific event.

While Schwalbe (2015) demonstrated the role of proportionality in journalistic reporting and uncovered variations in media tone across different publications, her reliance on quantitative methods limited the depth of understanding of how visual framing shaped

audience perceptions on a more nuanced level. To fill this gap, this present study adopted a qualitative approach, which allowed for a more detailed exploration of the visual framing of terrorism. This methodological shift was significant, as it moved beyond simply identifying the presence of specific frames and instead delved into the meanings these frames conveyed and their psychological impact on the audience. Through qualitative aspects of visual representation, this research revealed that media outlets frequently prioritized sensational images, aiming to boost viewership by capitalizing on emotions such as fear. These visual choices, in turn, profoundly influenced audience perceptions, shaping not only how events were understood but also how individuals emotionally reacted to terrorism. Additionally, whereas Schwalbe's (2015) findings emphasized the role of proportionality in visual coverage, this study revealed a more complex dynamic: the media's strategic use of sensationalism to manipulate audience engagement. Whereas Schwalbe's research was instrumental in highlighting the dominant frames used by print media, this study provided a richer, more interpretive analysis that uncovered how these visual frames were intentionally constructed to elicit emotional responses.

Reed (2017) investigated how two United States television networks framed images in their coverage of Syrian refugees. Reed adopted a quantitative content analysis method to study *Fox News* and *MSNBC* (Microsoft Network Broadcasting Company) television broadcast channels to analyse how reporting varied before and after a particular photograph or video was broadcast. The study established that the television news sources reported the incidents using an episodic frame. Reports from *MSNBC* revealed a positive bias toward Syrian immigrants. Dijk (2016) suggests that to distinguish between episodic and thematic frames, one must begin by identifying the overall emphasis of the article. If the emphasis is on a specific issue or a personal event more than a broader issue, the article is considered to have an episodic frame. On the other hand, if the article starts with a specific issue to address a larger view, it is considered to have a thematic frame. Reed (2017) effectively demonstrated that television as a mass medium can potentially influence and frame a conflict to sway the viewer's perception regarding a specific conflict.

This study addressed the gap identified in Reed's (2017) investigation by examining how media coverage of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack utilized visual framing to shape

audience perceptions, particularly in terms of emotional engagement. While Reed's (2017) research focused on U.S. television networks' coverage of Syrian refugees, using a quantitative content analysis, the present study expanded on this framework by exploring a different context—terrorism—and a different geographical setting. Reed's study primarily highlighted the episodic framing of refugee issues, with MSNBC showing a positive bias towards Syrian immigrants, suggesting a variance in framing based on the media outlet's political leanings. In contrast, this study revealed that media frequently prioritizes sensational images, such as those depicting pain, misery, and heroism, to increase viewership, which in turn influences audience emotions and perceptions. The key visual frames identified included not only those of suffering, such as pain, misery, and despair, but also those related to humanitarianism and heroism. These visual elements appealed to viewers' emotions, evoking both fear and inspiration. Unlike Reed's focus on refugee representation and network bias, this research explored the broader impact of media framing in crisis reporting, particularly the use of visuals to manipulate audience engagement through emotional appeal.

Zhang and Hellmueller (2017) conducted a quantitative visual analysis that examined how the European refugee crisis was visually framed in the *Der Spiegel* and *CNN International* online newspapers. Among the key objectives of Zhang and Hellmueller's study was to identify the prominent frames that were used by the two online newspapers in their coverage of the refugee crisis. The researchers identified 'human interest' as the most dominant visual frame portrayed in *Der Spiegel* and *CNN International* news outlets. Zhang and Hellmueller (2017) argued that the 'human interest' frame was consistent with the findings of their study because the immigrant crisis has a global humanitarian aspect, and hence such a frame could not be overlooked. Their study further established that *CNN International* extensively portrayed the 'loss/gain' frame in their visual coverage. The focus of this frame was on causalities and survivors of the crisis. Other dominant frame types identified in Zhang and Hellmueller's study were the 'xenophobia' frame and the 'law and order' frame. Zhang and Hellmueller (2017) effectively related the connotative meaning of visual frames through their study that analysed stylistic and denotative levels of visual framing.

The present study, however, focused on the Westgate terrorist attack, a specific act of terrorism, while Zhang and Hellmueller (2017) examined the European refugee crisis, a broader humanitarian issue. Additionally, this study's qualitative approach to understanding the compositional elements and framing in photographic coverage is supposed to lead to different types of insights and findings. For instance, the frames identified in the study of the Westgate attack included themes specific to terrorism, such as 'fear,' 'heroism,' 'violence,' or 'resilience,' and these might differ from the 'human interest' and 'xenophobia' frames found in the refugee crisis study. The reason is that the focus of this qualitative study is on the compositional elements of the images, such as the use of lighting, angles, and subject positioning, which may not be as deeply explored in a quantitative analysis.

A number of studies have demonstrated that the visual framing of calamities, war, and natural disasters has played a significant role in shifting the attention of the audience from real issues affecting the victims to divergent matters. Greenwood and Jenkins (2015) provide a typical example of this. In their study, Greenwood and Jenkins (2015) examined the visual framing of the Syrian crisis in public-issue magazines. The findings of their study established that U.S. news magazines focused on intense fights and the destruction of property when covering the Syrian conflict. These authors posit that international news pays close attention to sporadic news items that are traumatic and disastrous. A relatively similar study by Fahmy (2010) examined the visual coverage of the 9/11 terrorist attack in the USA and, afterwards, the Afghanistan war and demonstrated that the mass media has a tendency to demean complex international crises. From the findings of the Fahmy (2010) study, it was evident that the American media deemphasised civilian atrocities caused by the U.S. army while, on the other hand, emphasised the human suffering of the 9/11 terror attack.

The findings of this study align with those of Greenwood and Jenkins (2015) and Fahmy (2010) by demonstrating how Western media, particularly *The New York Times*, prioritized sensational images to increase viewership and shape audience perceptions. Like the U.S. news magazines in Greenwood and Jenkins' study, which emphasized intense fights and property destruction in their coverage of the Syrian conflict, *The New York Times* employed

visual frames of pain, misery, and vulnerability in the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. Similarly, as Fahmy (2010) found that the American media highlighted the human suffering of the 9/11 terror attack while downplaying civilian casualties caused by the U.S. army, this study also showed that *The New York Times* emphasized sectional stories, particularly sensational and emotionally charged photographs. Though differing in approach, the present study supports the broader conclusion that Western media tends to focus on specific aspects of international crises, shaping public perception through selective visual framing.

Parry (2011) conducted a study that was aimed at developing a model to help in analysing visual frames of photographic representation. Parry was interested in comparing two British mainstream newspapers, the *Times* and the *Guardian*, with respect to the framing of the visual element and the verbal context of the photographs. The findings of Parry's (2011) study established that both the *Times* and the *Guardian* visually framed the photographs published in their newspapers by steering readers to focus on human interest aspects of the conflict and demeaning emphasis on the lives that were lost during the conflict. Parry's (2011) study clearly demonstrated the potential that the Western media possess to frame news for specific goals. Similarly, this study analysed visual frames of photographic representation but specifically focused on the Westgate terrorist attack. The main concern was on the compositional elements used in the photography and the influence of framing on public perception and editorial decisions regarding terrorism.

In a study on the framing of Boko Haram terrorist attacks, Demarest et al. (2020) examined how Nigerian newspapers portrayed terrorist attacks between 2014 and 2018. The findings revealed that the dominant frames used included suffering. The media often published images of victims, showing their suffering and desperation, to evoke public sympathy and awareness about the human impact of terrorism. Simultaneously, Nigerian military personnel were frequently depicted as heroic rescuers, demonstrating combat prowess during counter-terrorism operations aimed at reassuring the public of the government's efforts to tackle Boko Haram (Demarest et al., 2020). The approach acted as a peace journalistic frame that sought to call for action and sensitise the public about the happenings. Unlike the study by Demarest et al. (2020), this research focused on a wide

range of types of frames, compositional elements, and the role of framing in influencing public perception of terrorist attacks.

In Kenya, Osman (2024) studied media coverage of the 2013 Westgate Mall terrorist attack in Nairobi, comparing Kenyan and US newspapers. By analyzing 242 articles from Kenya's *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* and *Washington Post*, the study found both countries predominantly used episodic frames, focusing on individual experiences. Kenyan media emphasized human-interest stories (69.1%), highlighting personal pain and rescue efforts to foster national unity and empathy. In contrast, US media used the conflict frame (49%), framing the attack within broader geopolitical conflicts. The present study aligns with Osman's (2024) analysis of media coverage of the 2013 Westgate Mall terrorist attack by demonstrating how media narratives influence public perception. Both studies emphasize the use of sensational elements in reporting, with a shared focus on visual and emotional framing. While Osman's research found that Kenyan and US media predominantly used episodic frames, highlighting individual experiences, this study similarly reveals that media often prioritizes sensational images to increase viewership. Key visual frames, such as pain, misery, humanitarianism, vulnerability, despair, heroism, and grief, parallel Osman's findings, where Kenyan media focused on human-interest stories and personal pain to foster unity and empathy. Both studies underscore how cultural contexts and media strategies shape audience perceptions, suggesting the need for further exploration of media framing and its effects.

## **2.3 Compositional Elements of Photographs**

The second objective of this study was to explore the compositional elements of the photographic coverage of the terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall. Photographs have different levels of appeal to viewers. Some are interesting and breathtaking, while others are not. What distinguishes the quality of one photograph from the other are its compositional elements.

### **2.3.1 Image Size**

The compositional elements of photographs of an incident in media reporting can entail image sizes. For instance, the use of large images in print media as observed by Cope et al. (2011) indicate that large and vivid imaging increases the chances of the object being

viewed more favourably by the audience. Additionally, Ulloa et al. (2015) affirm that news with large images is attractive to readers. Hoffman and Wallach (2007) noted that news on the front page of a newspaper accompanied by large photographs has more influence on readers compared to news with small photographs in the inner parts of the newspaper. According to Pfefferbaum et al. (2014), the reaction to large images depicting terror can either shape public opinion by framing terrorism as a crime against humanity or cause trauma among the affected. Separately, the use of medium images in reporting terror is appropriate for conveying essential information to the public while still regulating the potential emotional consequences for readers (Valkenburg et al., 1999; Bilgen, 2013; Schmid, 2021). On the other hand, small images cannot evoke as strong emotional responses as medium or large and more graphic visuals could (DiGrazia et al., 2013). Such images minimise the display of graphic content to reduce exposure and protect readers from unnecessary distress while still fulfilling their role as information providers (Abdalla et al., 2021). Similarly, this study analysed the compositional elements of photographs in media reporting, including the impact of image size on public perception and emotional responses.

Kunii (2012) established that *The New York Times* increased the size of pictures they published in 2001 compared to those that were published in 1941. The *Asahi Shimbun* did not see any significant increase in the size of the pictures that were published in the two different years. Kunii's (2012) study revealed that when newspapers publish relatively large pictures on their pages, the likelihood of increasing viewers' awareness is significant. Kunii's study was instrumental in providing an international perspective on the visual framing of two terrorist attack incidents. The scope was, however, very broad geographically because it focused on two different attacks that took place in different countries as well as assessing two newspapers published in different countries.

The present study agrees with Kunii's (2012) findings regarding the strategic use of large photographs in newspapers to increase viewer awareness. Similar to Kunii's observation that *The New York Times* had increased the size of published images to enhance visual impact, this study found that large images on the front pages of the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard* and *The New York Times* were used for their strong visual appeal. Although the

two studies differed in approach, Kunii (2012) had focused on an international comparison of newspapers from different countries reporting on separate terrorist attacks, while the present study focused on a single terror incident as reported by two local dailies and one international daily. The core agreement was in the role of large images in effectively capturing reader attention. Both studies acknowledged the importance of image size in shaping visual framing.

Newton (2013) conducted a quantitative study to determine how the size of photographs in a newspaper influences readership. The findings of Newton's (2013) study indicated that newspaper subscribers read 12% of stories that did not have photographs. The study further indicated that there was 42% readership of stories with one-column photos and 55% readership of news stories with a two-column photograph. The readership figure rose to 70% for news stories with pictures that were four columns wide. Based on Newton's (2013) findings, it is evident that compositional elements, including the size and placement of a photograph, influence the readership of the newspaper. Newspaper audiences are likely to read stories with large photographs, and these photographs must be strategically placed to attract the audience. Stories without photographs are often ignored for not being attractive to the eye (Newton, 2013). Newton (2013) deployed a quantitative method to arrive at the findings discussed. In agreement with Newton's study, the present study deployed a qualitative analysis and found similar results. Through in-depth interviews, participants consistently expressed a preference for news stories accompanied by large, strategically placed photographs. Informants reported that such visual elements made the stories more appealing and engaging, thereby increasing their likelihood of reading the articles. Additionally, it was noted that stories without photographs were frequently overlooked, as they failed to capture the readers' attention. These qualitative findings align with Newton's (2013) quantitative data, further reinforcing the importance of photographic content in driving newspaper readership.

Hoffman and Wallach (2007) assert that the importance of an event can change dramatically on the basis of the section in which the story has been placed as well as "where" it is in a particular section. Hoffman and Wallach (2007) established that news on the front page of the newspaper accompanied by large photographs often has more

influence on readers compared to news with small photographs in the inner parts of the newspaper. Carroll and McCombs (2003) posit that story placement influences the prominence of a specific element of a news item and therefore has the ability to influence media consumers. Both Wallach and McCombs (2007; 2003) studies showed that the placement of stories accompanied by photographs affects readership. Stories with pictures on the front page of a newspaper are more likely to be read compared to stories without pictures on the front page. What attracts newspaper readers is what they see before they start reading. Unlike the cited studies, this research sought to establish how the placement of pictures of different sizes on the front page of *The Standard*, the *Daily Nation*, and *The New York Times* influenced the readership of the papers in the aftermath of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack.

Reese (2016) asserts that ‘caption’ is one of the means through which media frames are manifested on newspaper images. Photojournalists and editors can caption a photograph in a certain way for the sole purpose of employing certain media frames. Even though photographs are considered more authentic than texts, when left alone, they partially deliver the required information. In other words, without a proper explanation of what is happening in the scene, viewers cannot fully understand the picture. In such an instance, therefore, a photo caption can easily change and influence the viewers’ interpretation immensely. This study’s focus was on the images, and it examined how images influenced the framing and interpretation of the Westgate terrorist attack by analysing how the photographs enhanced emotions and contributed to the understanding of the incident.

In Nigeria, a study by Oparaugo (2021) established that the use of large image sizes in newspapers is critical in attracting readers' attention. The research, which involved 857 daily newspapers with circulations of 10,000 or more, found that nearly half the number of newspapers feature two photographs on their front pages, while others include three or more (Oparaugo, 2021). Notably, all of these newspapers prioritise using a large or dominant photograph on the front page. Editors carefully select these images to draw readers in, with larger images being particularly effective in enhancing the visual appeal of the stories. The strategic design change aimed to modernise its traditionally sober appearance and increase reader engagement. Unlike Oparaugo’s (2021) research, this study

focused on the impact of framing by newspaper photojournalists on readers' perceptions and interpretations of the Westgate Mall terror attack.

In Kenya, a study by Mwangi (2018) focused on how the media influences the citizen's focus of attention through reporting. The research assessed the framing used in publishing incidents related to illicit alcohol consumption and sale. A review of the factors that led to government action was carried out. In this case, it was established that the use of large images to cover the episodes intensively triggered government action against the brewing, sale, and consumption of illicit alcohol (Mwangi, 2018). Additionally, the public's perception of the issue was influenced by the size and position of the images in print media. For instance, photographs of intoxicated men lying by the roadside triggered emotions among parents and women, who took action to help their family members. Unlike Mwangi's (2018) study, which involved the reporting of occurrences in different places by local newspapers, this research focused on a single terror incident covered by two national dailies and one international newspaper. By concentrating on a single, high-profile terror incident, this study underscored the effectiveness of visual framing in news media, reinforcing Kunii's assertion about the power of large images in capturing audience attention and enhancing awareness.

### **2.3.2 Camera Angle/Angle of View**

Angle of view is another critical compositional element of the photographs published by print media. Camera angle is defined as the measurement in degrees of the width of the frame from the point of the lens (MasterClass, 2021). According to Sakota (2023), the particular location where the lens is placed when taking a photograph is the camera angle. Usually, the camera's location in relation to the object to be captured and the subject the project entails has a significant impact on how viewers perceive the subject. Typically, fewer degrees imply a small angle, and this means a tighter frame on the subject. This study similarly examined how camera angles, as a critical compositional element, influence the perception of photographs in the context of the Westgate terrorist attack.

Literature shows that a high angle is characterised by more degree and a wider frame, making the object appear smaller in size and vulnerable (Kindem, 2015). James (2021) and Brick Central (2022) show that high-angle images demean the subjects. Images taken from

above or from a high angle may be judged negatively because the reader views them from above (Maathuis, 2010). In terrorism reporting, high-angle shots may connote weakness, passivity, and insignificance (Valkenburg et al., 1999). Separately, Sutherland (2004) indicates that eye-level shots are used in factual situations to make readers believe the scene is real. The publication of such images conveys the human impact of terrorism and compels the audience to engage with the narratives on a deeper emotional level. Such images offer a natural and relatable point of view because they present scenes from a perspective that mimics how a person would see events in real life (Spence & Navarro, 2011). On the other hand, Dyksterhouse (2023) indicated that the use of the low camera angle makes the subjects appear superior. This study similarly investigated the impact of various angles of view shots on public perception in the context of the Westgate terrorist attack, exploring how these angles influence the portrayal of vulnerability and realism in terrorism reporting.

Photojournalists can also use long-angle shots to cover the entire background. According to Chao and Jiarui (2023), the long shot records an original ecology that is close to real life. Long-angle shots magnify the dimensional scale of the damage across space (Liu, 2018). Separately, the use of medium-angle shots offers a balanced and comprehensive view of the scene by avoiding extreme distortion. As noted by Adams (2023), this compositional strategy helps in the origination of an accurate narrative of the event by capturing a visual perspective that creates a balance between proximity and context. Finally, shots taken from a low angle make the object more superior and positively judged because the audience looks at it from below (Hewitt, 2010; Lannom, 2019). A low-angle shot may depict an object or person as powerful and important (Merkt et al., 2022). The reason is that it fosters a perceptual hierarchy that positions the subject as superior, thereby influencing public perception and reinforcing the narrative of authority within the context of the depicted terror issues (Wetzstein, 2017). The compositional strategy empowers the survivors. This study similarly analysed the use of long-angle, medium-angle, and low-angle shots in the photographic coverage of the Westgate terrorist attack, focusing on how these angles influence the depiction of damage, narrative accuracy, and perceptions of power and authority.

Kunii (2012) conducted a comparative study to assess the framing of Pearl Harbour and the 9/11 terrorist attack in the *Asahi Shimbun* and *The New York Times*. The study compared the two newspapers to examine the compositional elements that were used to frame news photographs that were published in the aftermath of the two incidents. The compositional elements studied were camera angle, size of the picture, proximity, and picture placement. The study established that most pictures were taken from eye-level camera angles and therefore provided readers with news photographs that were objective in presentation.

The angle at which images are captured has for long been considered a potential compositional element that influences audience perception. Tiemens (1970) conducted a study to assess the perceptions of audiences with regard to three different communicators. The three speakers sampled in Tiemens' study were captured from three different camera angles: high angle, mid angle, and low angle. The study revealed that participants who saw the speaker from a high camera angle considered him or her less knowledgeable and less authoritative compared to participants who saw the same presenter from a low perspective. The results of Tiemens' study revealed that the camera angle has a significant effect on the perception of the audience who views the three communicators. A similar study conducted by Mandell and Shaw (1973) revealed that television viewers rated a newscaster significantly superior on dimensions of activity and potency when they were framed from a low camera angle than when they were framed from a high camera angle.

Tiemens (1970) and Mandell and Shaw (1973) specifically examined how camera angles influence the perception of individuals, particularly in terms of authority, activity, and potency. The studies' concern was on how the positioning of the camera alters viewers' perceptions of speakers or communicators in televised or visual media. However, this research expanded its focus to examine the broader impact of framing. Therefore, the issue under analysis was not only on camera angles but also on public perception of an event, particularly terrorism. Therefore, while the earlier studies are limited to the effect of angles on the perception of individuals, the focus of this study was to explore how framing choices, including image composition, image size, and angle, influence public opinion on sensitive topics like terrorism. A broader investigation of how visual framing affects the

public's understanding and emotional reaction to high-impact events in society was necessary.

### **2.3.3 Shot Proximity**

Another compositional strategy employed by photojournalists is shot proximity. It refers to the camera's distance in relation to the subject being framed. Photojournalists use various shot proximity compositions to frame different photographs. For instance, an extreme wide shot is used to establish the setting of the scene, and this is the reason it is usually long (Cadrage GmbH, 2022). It makes the subject appear small against the surroundings. The subject is framed to appear distant and unfamiliar to the surroundings (Psaroloco Media Literacy, 2020). With this shot's proximity, the subject is usually framed as overwhelmed by the surroundings. On the other hand, a medium-wide shot is usually long enough to show the surrounding area and, at the same time, close enough to show some aspects of the subject's facial expression depicting emotions. Such photographs show a balance between context and subject while capturing different perspectives on the incident (Kolodzy, 2013). Therefore, the view provided by the images is close enough for the reader to view the scenes and process the events as they occurred. On a separate account, medium-close-up images create a balance between showing the individuals' facial expressions and emotions, as noted by Lannom (2020).

A study by Kunii (2012) on the use of shot proximity as a compositional element for framing found that there was a greater distance between subjects in the 1941 incident compared to the 2001 incident. Finally, as noted by Adobe (2023a), close-up shots are types of images that focus on the subject's face to reveal emotions. Freeman (2021) asserts that such images are intimate because they may cause strong emotions. An exploration of how shot proximity, including extreme wide shots, medium-wide shots, medium-close-up shots, and close-up shots, was used in the photographic coverage of the Westgate terrorist attack to convey context, emotion, and the subject's relationship to their surroundings would be interesting.

Studies across Africa have shown that shot proximity influences how the public interprets both the emotional and contextual weight of an event. For example, a study by Tshuma (2021) focused on photojournalistic practices in Zimbabwe during times of the “Second

Republic” crises in the country. It was argued that close-up shots of protestors were more likely to evoke emotional responses from the audience, creating empathy for the individuals in the images. On the other hand, the use of wide shots distanced the audience emotionally by focusing on the larger, more abstract context of the protests rather than individual stories. Therefore, photographs are a construct that bear a specific vision or reality. While Tshuma's (2021) study focused primarily on shot proximity as the dominant compositional tool, this research incorporated additional compositional elements such as camera angles and framing techniques.

In South Africa, Baker (2016) observed that Nzima's iconic photograph of the 1976 Soweto Uprising changed the political discourse in the country. The image, which shows Hector Pieterse being carried after being shot, is generally considered a medium shot. The reason is that the photograph was taken from a close enough distance to capture the intense emotion on the faces of the subjects, Hector's lifeless body and the anguish of Mbuyisa Makhubu, the boy carrying him (Baker, 2016). The horror of Antoinette Sithole, Hector's sister, is also captured. The photograph includes enough of the background to provide some context of the surrounding environment, showing the chaos and panic of the uprising. Therefore, through shot proximity, the medium shot effectively balanced the individual emotional impact with the broader context of the political unrest. Consequently, the image is considered one of the most powerful in the history of South African photojournalism. Unlike Baker's (2016) study, which focused on one photograph, this research explored how different shot proximities in different photographs, along with other compositional elements, such as framing, influenced public perceptions.

In Kenya, shot proximity has also been an essential tool for photojournalists covering terrorism, especially during the Westgate Mall and DusitD2 attacks. A study by Muindi (2020) observed that Kenyan newspapers used a mix of extreme wide shots and close-ups to influence public sentiment. Wide shots of the mall exterior created a sense of scale and the overwhelming nature of the attack, while close-up images of victims and security personnel elicited emotional reactions, humanising the tragedy for the public. Although the use of such imagery in Kenyan newspapers helped shape the narrative of heroism and victimhood through different framing based on the shot's proximity, the newspaper's board

of directors felt that photojournalists were glorifying terrorists inadvertently. Particularly, the board questioned the editorial decisions made in covering the attack and sought a retraction of the images and softening of the stories (Muindi, 2020). However, most of the editors rejected the demand. Muindi's (2020) study focused only on shot proximity and its emotional and contextual effects. However, this research expanded the analysis by incorporating various framing techniques and compositional strategies, in addition to proximity. Additionally, an evaluation of how professionals in the industry, such as editors and journalists, responded to these visual elements. The approach offered a unique dual perspective on both public and professional perceptions of terrorism-related imagery.

#### **2.4 The Role of Visual Frames**

The third objective of this study was to assess the role that framing played in the photographs that were published after the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) define visual framing as the process through which visual elements are used to determine, evaluate, and assess problems from a moral standpoint in order to offer solutions. Scholars of visual frames have different views in regard to the definition of visual framing. Similarly, a number of scholars have defined visual framing as thematic messages (Patridge, 2005; Borah & Bulla, 2006), while others have explained visual frames as ideological representations of visual images (Rodriquez & Dimitrova, 2011; Griffin, 2004a).

Visual framing serves as a powerful tool to capture readers' attention and present a direct depiction of reality. Images are easily comprehensible and memorable, enhancing the audience's understanding of events (Showkat, 2020). Photojournalists strategically employ vivid visuals to facilitate comprehension and evoke emotional responses, often surpassing the efficacy of textual information (Schifferstein et al., 2021; Kujur & Singh, 2020). Beyond their literal content, images carry symbolic meanings influenced by readers' cultural backgrounds, shaping their interpretation and potentially eliciting secondary connotations (Bornberg, 2022; D'Angelo et al., 2019). However, socio-political biases can distort the visual framing of crime, undermining the accurate portrayal of violence (Shahin, 2016). Nonetheless, visual framing remains a potent tool for promoting specific viewpoints and embedding thematic elements that aid in understanding events within political,

religious, social, or cultural contexts (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). Therefore, in addition to shaping public perception, visual framing simultaneously creates denotative, connotative, and ideological representations within the images published by the media, thereby shaping narratives surrounding the incident. In a similar way, this study explored how visual framing influences the audience's understanding and emotional response to the Westgate terrorist attack. However, the researcher analysed how photojournalists use images to convey not just literal content but also symbolic meanings.

In order to understand how visual frames in newspapers influence readers, Rodriquez and Dimitrova (2011) conducted a study that examined the role of visual framing. In their findings, Rodriquez and Dimitrova (2011) identified and explained four specific types of visual frames: denotative, connotative, stylistic-semiotic, and ideological representation. Rodriquez and Dimitrova (2011) argued that the denotative level is concerned with how visuals are framed to spearhead a particular theme or agenda. Stylistic-semiotic, on the other hand, is framing caused by the influence of photographic techniques such as angle of view, depth of field, distance, focus, colour, and shading to convey various meanings. Connotative frames refer to the use of visual symbols to convey meaning in a specific social and cultural context. For example, the use of the Kenyan flag to symbolise patriotism for one's country. Lastly, ideological frames were considered as those visual frames that emphasise a specific viewpoint for the purpose of propagating an agenda, either political, religious, or ethical (Rodriquez & Dimitrova 2011). The Rodriquez and Dimitrova (2011) study provides a proper framework for analysing the extent to which visuals in newspapers influence the perception of readers. This framework, as proposed by Rodriquez and Dimitrova (2011), can be applied when one intends to analyse any type of visual communication with respect to audience perceptions of a specific genre. This study also examined the role of visual frames in influencing audience perceptions. However, the main focus was on the analysis of specific types of visual frames, such as denotative, connotative, stylistic-semiotic, and ideological representation, and this was done within the context of the Westgate terrorist attack.

Kwon, Chadha, and Pellizzaro (2017) examined how the Boston Marathon bombing of April 15, 2013, and the Brussels Airport terror attack of March 22, 2016, were framed on

X. These scholars examined the role of news proximity in relation to terrorism and audience frames. Their study's findings revealed that both terrorist incidents involved the presence of similar frames. The similarities in frame patterns were attributed to a global tendency for media audiences to stereotype information as they receive it from the mass media. Kwon, Chadha, and Pellizzaro (2017) shed more light on the media framing of terrorism, especially by including the aspect of audience frames. However, this research specifically focused on the visual framing used by the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* newspapers in their photographic coverage of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. Emphasis was on the compositional elements of these images and how they framed themes such as heroism, pain and misery, combat prowess, and survivor grief. Additionally, this study sought to provide a qualitative analysis of the frames used in print media, with a specific focus on how these visual elements influenced public perception of the attack.

Hajo and Boomgaarden (2016) conducted a quantitative content analysis study to determine how news coverage, including both text and photographic images, would influence the success of a political candidate in an election. The findings of the study established that photographs do not play a significant role when assessing a rational, argument-based candidate. The findings revealed that photographic superiority is strongly dependent on the type of information provided to the reader. Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, and Nielsen (2019) highlight the dilemma that the print media faces in balancing their act in the current reality, in which the mainstream media is competing with the uncontrolled social media. The print media is constrained to self-censor while reporting terror incidents. The print media uses all the visual framing techniques, including sizing and placement, camera angle, selective focus, and proximity, to cut out the graphic, the explicit, the macabre, the sensational, and the politically divisive from the pictures they present to the public. In this manner, they fulfill their gatekeeping obligation in the public and national interest. The reviewed studies provide valuable insights into the role of imagery in media coverage. However, this research focused on the visual framing techniques employed by the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* during their coverage of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. Unlike the political context in Hajo and Boomgaarden's (2016) study, this research explored how these newspapers visually

framed the attack through themes like heroism, vulnerability, grief, and combat prowess, balancing the need to inform the public with ethical considerations surrounding graphic content. The study sought to bridge the gap between the technical aspects of visual framing and its emotional and psychological impact on the audience during times of crisis.

During the German Revolution at the end of World War I, most photojournalists seemed to be neutral and independent, but when political actors discovered the immense power that pictures had on public opinion, they took advantage of the photojournalists to enhance political propaganda (Below 2010). Despite the resultant framing practices, the reputation and influence of photography as a picture of reality remain unshaken, because people spontaneously believe what they see and overlook internal as well as external influences that shape and define the photos they see (Below 2010). This tendency of the photographic audience to believe what is presented to them provides latitude for photojournalists to frame images as they please during the composition stage. Below (2010) further asserts that one role of framing among war correspondents is to push the anti-war, pacifist agenda. Photographs depict war as a process that creates victims. Soldiers are depicted as victims by concentrating on images that show negative facial expressions. These include anxiety, exhaustion, anguish, and hopelessness. Photos also show dead bodies and injured soldiers. Many pictures are framed to exclude soldiers. Instead, they show tanks, spent shells, and rifles. Victimhood among civilians is shown by the destruction of their homes depicted in published photographs (Below 2010). The author clearly shows how photojournalists can frame various subjects in a conflict to promote a specific point of view to the audience, and therefore, influence their perception. However, this research focused specifically on the photographic framing of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. Therefore, it examined how various types of frames, such as those depicting heroism, suffering, and resilience, were constructed in the published images. While previous research, like that of Below (2010), has highlighted the general influence of photojournalism on public perception, this study will delve deeper into the compositional elements of these images and their specific roles in shaping narratives surrounding terrorism.

Another motivation behind visual framing is the arousal of patriotic feelings among the readers to enhance their national identities. Pyka (2010) cites a high incidence of cover

pictures that are framed to stimulate nationalistic feelings. Pyka notes the framing aspect of editions that covered national events, like the building of the Berlin Wall, the reunification of Germany, the adoption of the Euro, and the 2006 World Cup. Pyka (2010) claims that framing was preserved by incorporating four symbols: political figures, the German flag, German national figures, and the coat of arms. According to Pyka (2010), symbols of national unity can be used by photojournalists to shape how audiences interpret photographs. This idea is worth exploring further. In contrast, this study focused on the types of frames utilised in the photographic coverage of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack, rather than exploring national events. While Pyka (2010) examined the arousal of patriotic feelings through symbols associated with national identity, this research delved into diverse framing strategies, such as victimization, heroism, and vulnerability, which were employed in the context of the terrorist attack.

Douai (2014) conducted a study that sought to investigate the visual framing of the G20 Toronto summit. Douai studied the visual framing of the policing images of the anti-globalisation protests during the 2010 Toronto summit by analysing 852 images that were published in both print and online media houses in Canada. Douai's findings revealed that pictures from the same incident could be framed to reinforce different themes. Douai isolated two framing themes: the law and order frame, in which the emphasis focused on police officers controlling protesters, and the civil rights frame, which emphasised placards carrying protestors. The Douai (2014) study was based on a deductive and quantitative approach that relies on numerical statistics. Unlike Douai's (2014) study, this research entailed a qualitative approach to give a deeper understanding of the types of frames utilised in the photographic coverage of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack.

In Africa, Khalel (2017) analysed visual frames that were used by three online newspapers to portray the June 30, 2013, Egyptian Revolution against President Mohamed Morsi. The research analysed photographic and video images from three online news sources, namely *Alyawm Alssabie* (an Egyptian newspaper), the *Guardian*, and *The New York Times*. The study established that numerous visual frames emerged from both the Western and Egyptian online newspapers analysed. Khalel grouped the five major frames discovered as sympathetic, support of the status quo, diagnostic, social change, and mixed frames.

Khalel's (2017) study employed a mixed method of inquiry comprising quantitative and qualitative approaches. Similar to Khalel's (2017) research, this study used a qualitative approach for data analysis. Additionally, while Khalel (2017) analysed online newspapers, this study investigated mainstream print newspapers.

In Kenya, Omanga (2016) conducted a study to investigate the manner in which *The Standard* and the *Daily Nation* framed the 9/11 terrorist attack. Omanga was concerned with the ideological leaning of the dominant frame and whether the frame oscillated towards or away from legitimising or delegitimising terrorism. The study adopted a theoretical approach based on semiotics to examine the dominant frame in nine cartoons published by the two newspapers. The study established that frames in the published images reveal tensions and ambiguities in the way the event was interpreted by Kenyans. The Omanga (2016) study demonstrated that the cartoons published immediately after the attack portrayed Osama bin Laden as a villain and demonised the attackers, thus denying them the legitimacy and recognition worthy of combatants. Cartoons published in later days depicted frames that questioned U.S. foreign policy and cast the terrorists as possible heroes. While most studies of visual framing concentrate on photographs, the use of cartoons for the study of framing makes Omanga's (2016) contribution of particular significance to this study because, whereas framing in photos is subtle and indirect, it can also be obvious and direct in cartoons.

In this study, visual framing refers to how images are used to convey meaning and influence audience perceptions of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. Visual framing is not just about the literal depiction of events but also the symbolic and ideological messages embedded in the images. In this case, visual framing served to highlight particular themes, such as heroism, grief, suffering, humanitarianism, and combat prowess, among others, through compositional techniques such as camera angles, shot proximity, or symbolic imagery. The images used in media outlets, like those from the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times*, not only presented factual coverage but also conveyed deeper cultural and ideological messages, shaping how the readers interpreted the Westgate attack. This study assessed how these visual frames influenced readers' perceptions, emotional responses, and

overall understanding of terrorism through the analysis of denotative, connotative, semiotic-stylistic, and ideological frames.

### **2.5 Code of Conduct and Guidelines for News Coverage**

Visual framing in media coverage, particularly during crises, is significantly shaped by codes of conduct and guidelines established by regulatory authorities, such as the Kenya Film Classification Board (KFCB) and the Media Council of Kenya (Oranga & Situma, 2023). These frameworks are designed to ensure that media outlets adhere to ethical standards, prioritising accuracy, sensitivity, and responsibility in their reporting. For instance, during a crisis, such as a natural disaster or a terrorist attack, regulatory guidelines may dictate how graphic images should be presented or which aspects of the event should be highlighted to avoid sensationalism. This ensures that the portrayal of such events does not contribute to public panic or misinterpretation and maintains a level of respect for the victims and affected communities.

The influence of these set codes of conduct and guidelines requires strict compliance. The reason is that such requirements shape the visual narratives constructed by media outlets (Media Council of Kenya, 2020). The regulatory frameworks help define what is considered appropriate or otherwise in visual storytelling. Therefore, the authorities influence decisions about which images to use, how to frame them, and the accompanying narratives. Consequently, visual framing is a collaborative effort between media professionals and regulatory bodies. It is expected that the images broadcasted resonate with ethical considerations and public interest.

### **2.6 Terrorism Photography in *the Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times***

*The Daily Nation*, is among Kenya's leading newspapers. The newspaper usually uses photography to highlight the human side of terrorism. Therefore, the daily's photojournalists and editors focus on victims and rescue efforts when publishing images covering incidents. In the *Daily Nation's* coverage of events such as terror attacks like the Westgate Mall attack and the DusitD2 siege, the editors tended to prioritise clearly visible shots of victims and emergency responders. Usually, the editors ensure the front pages of the newspaper editions focus on the critical event of the day (Mwaura, 2022). In addition

to informing, the images aim to evoke empathy and a personal connection to the tragedies. The journalists seek to humanise the victims and show the heroism of responders in such incidents. However, the paper's heavy use of emotionally charged images is criticised for risking sensationalising the event rather than informing readers in a balanced way. The *Daily Nation's* editorial decisions are designed to evoke public outrage and unity. The goal is attained by using imagery that places the viewer emotionally in the scene of the tragedy.

On the other hand, *The Standard* newspaper, another major Kenyan publication, approaches terrorism photography with a slightly more restrained and contextual approach. In its reporting of the Westgate and DusitD2 attacks, the newspaper often used wider-angle shots, capturing the broader context of the locations and the security operations. The approach aligns with the newspaper's strategy of ensuring the published photographs are iconic in nature, though it is criticised as a tactic that benefits terrorists (Ndavula & Mwangi, 2022). However, *The Standard's* preference for iconic images provides readers with a more detached view. The strategy allows the public to comprehend the scale and logistical aspects of the events without being overwhelmed by the immediate emotional impact. The newspaper's strategy is often perceived as focusing more on the overall narrative of terrorism and its socio-political implications rather than individual stories.

Finally, *The New York Times* usually covers incidents in Kenya, particularly terror attacks. The newspaper's approach usually sparks controversy for publishing graphic images of victims. The paper faced criticism in Kenya for its use of explicit, close-up images of bodies, which many saw as disrespectful and insensitive to the victims and their families (Takenaga, 2019). While the *Times* defended its editorial choices by arguing the images served a journalistic purpose of showing the brutal reality of terrorism, critics argued that these images crossed ethical boundaries, prioritising shock value over respectful reporting. *The New York Times* tends to use a more globalised perspective. The imagery used captures immediate emotional impact through close-ups and the broader geopolitical implications with wider shots.

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided through the lenses of framing theory and multimodality theory. Framing theory guided the research to determine how salience was applied in photographs that were published by the three newspapers, while multimodality theory helped the research to determine the manner in which photojournalists utilised various compositional techniques to frame published photographs.

### **2.7.1 Framing Theory**

The study aimed to examine the types of frames used in photographs depicting the Westgate Mall terrorist attack, explore the compositional elements of this photographic coverage, and assess the role that framing played in shaping audience perceptions. This focus aligns with Goffman's (1974) framing theory, which emphasizes how the context and organization of a message affect audience interpretation. Later, Entman (1991) proposed two levels of the framing theory: information stored in the brain by the audience of a specific news genre, which he termed the 'audience frame,' and the visible characteristics of the particular news itself, which he termed the 'news frame.' The audience frame encompasses the mental frameworks and cultural contexts that influence how people perceive and make sense of a particular news genre. Entman (1991) indicated that the news frame will always be present to influence audience perceptions of the meaning of a particular communication genre. Therefore, building on Entman's (1991) distinction between 'audience frames' and 'news frames,' the research intended to contribute to a deeper understanding of how visual frames specifically influence perceptions of such a traumatic event.

Previous studies have predominantly concentrated on textual analysis (Rodriguez, 2011). However, this investigation sought to fill a critical gap by analysing the visual components of news photography, as highlighted by Messaris and Abraham (2001). The scholars emphasize that visuals can significantly impact audience perception, yet studies on visual framing remain limited. Scholars in visual communication differ on the method of analysis. While some focus on themes as the basis for analysis (Borah & Bulla, 2005), others pay attention to ideological strands that emerge as a result of visual presentation (Griffin, 2004a; Griffin & Lee, 2002). Griffin (2004a) argues that studies on visual framing lack a

proper methodological and conceptual framework. On the contrary, recent studies have proved that visuals, similar to text, are capable of creating frames, especially when they make use of specific visual compositional elements such as angle of view, shot proximity, and depth of field, while the textual frame relies on aspects such as symbols and rhetorical devices such as metaphors (Rodriguez, 2011). Welch (2014) argues that visuals are key objects of propaganda research, and in the recent past, media framing studies have focused on the significance of visual analysis (Coleman, 2010; Dimitrova, 2011).

The research applied Messaris and Abraham's (2001) principles that guide visual framing. These principles were crucial in analysing the photographs published in the aftermath of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. The research first considered the analogical framing principle to determine whether the relationship between the photographs and the meanings derived from them was based on analogy. This principle helped to explore how the images conveyed broader ideas and themes through visual metaphors and comparisons. Next, the indexicality principle of framing was utilised to assess the level of terror depicted in the published photographs. The theory's assumptions aligned with the first objective, which was to examine the types of frames employed in these images. This could shed light on how the images portrayed the event. The approach also aligned with the third objective of the study that assessed the role of framing in the photographs that were published after the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. This principle focuses on the photographs' ability to present reality by capturing actual events and their inherent emotional impact. Through this lens, the research aimed to understand how the images conveyed the severity and reality of the terror attack to the viewers.

### **2.7.2 Multimodality Theory**

Multimodality theory is a contemporary framework in mass communication, prominently developed by Gunther Kress and others. It emphasises the diverse modes humans utilise for communication in various contexts, highlighting the interplay between these modes. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) and Barthes (1977), communication is not limited to written or spoken language; instead, it encompasses a range of modalities. These modalities, which include visual elements, colours, and layouts, interact to create meaning. The theory suggests that meanings are socially constructed, reflecting the values and beliefs

of different groups. Multimodality theory has offered a novel approach for visual analysis and digital data management (Bezemer & `Mavers 2011). The reason is that this approach provides a critical approach to understanding how communication functions within society.

The roots of multimodality theory trace back to Halliday's (1978) meta-function approach, which expanded the understanding of communication beyond traditional text. Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) seminal work, *"Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design,"* further developed this framework by focusing on visual texts. They argued that visual elements convey significant meaning and should be considered alongside linguistic modes. Over time, the theory has adapted to include digital texts, expanding the definition of "text" to encompass various forms such as videos, social media posts, and newspaper layouts (Ruefman, 2011). This historical evolution highlights the increasing complexity of communication in a media-saturated environment. As a result, multimodality theory has become essential for analysing contemporary forms of communication.

Multimodality theory has four foundational assumptions that guide its application. First, all forms of communication are inherently multimodal, drawing from various resources shaped by cultural contexts (Jewitt, 2001; Adami, 2016). Second, relying solely on language for meaning is insufficient, as deeper interpretations require considering non-verbal cues and contextual factors (Jewitt, 2001). The third assumption posits that resources for meaning evolve from specific social formations over time, becoming finely articulated through repeated use. Lastly, the interactions between different modes contribute to a comprehensive understanding of communication, allowing for meanings that may be complementary or contradictory (Bok, 2008). These assumptions emphasize the complexity and richness of meaning-making processes in communication.

Multimodality theory has two basic weaknesses. The first problem of this theory is associated with the compositional aspects of the modes, while the second dilemma has to do with their reception (Bucher, 2017). With respect to the compositional problem, the pertinent issue questions how each individual mode contributes to the overall meaning of a specific discourse. This question is based on the assumption that the overall meaning generated from a multimodal discourse is more paramount than the sum of its parts (Bucher, 2017). The second problem questions the manner in which the recipients of the

messages incorporate the various modes presented in a genre to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the multimodal discourse. While multimodality theory has certain weaknesses, it remains a valuable framework for analysis.

The study leveraged multimodality theory to investigate the photographs published following the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. The theory aligned with the second objective, which was to explore the compositional elements of the photographic coverage, which included the arrangement and visual techniques used. By assessing the listed aspects, the research sought to understand how different modes, both visual and textual, contributed to readers' interpretations. Multimodality theory provided a holistic framework for this analysis, considering how various elements interact to create meaning. Ultimately, this approach enhanced the understanding of how media representations shape perceptions of significant events.

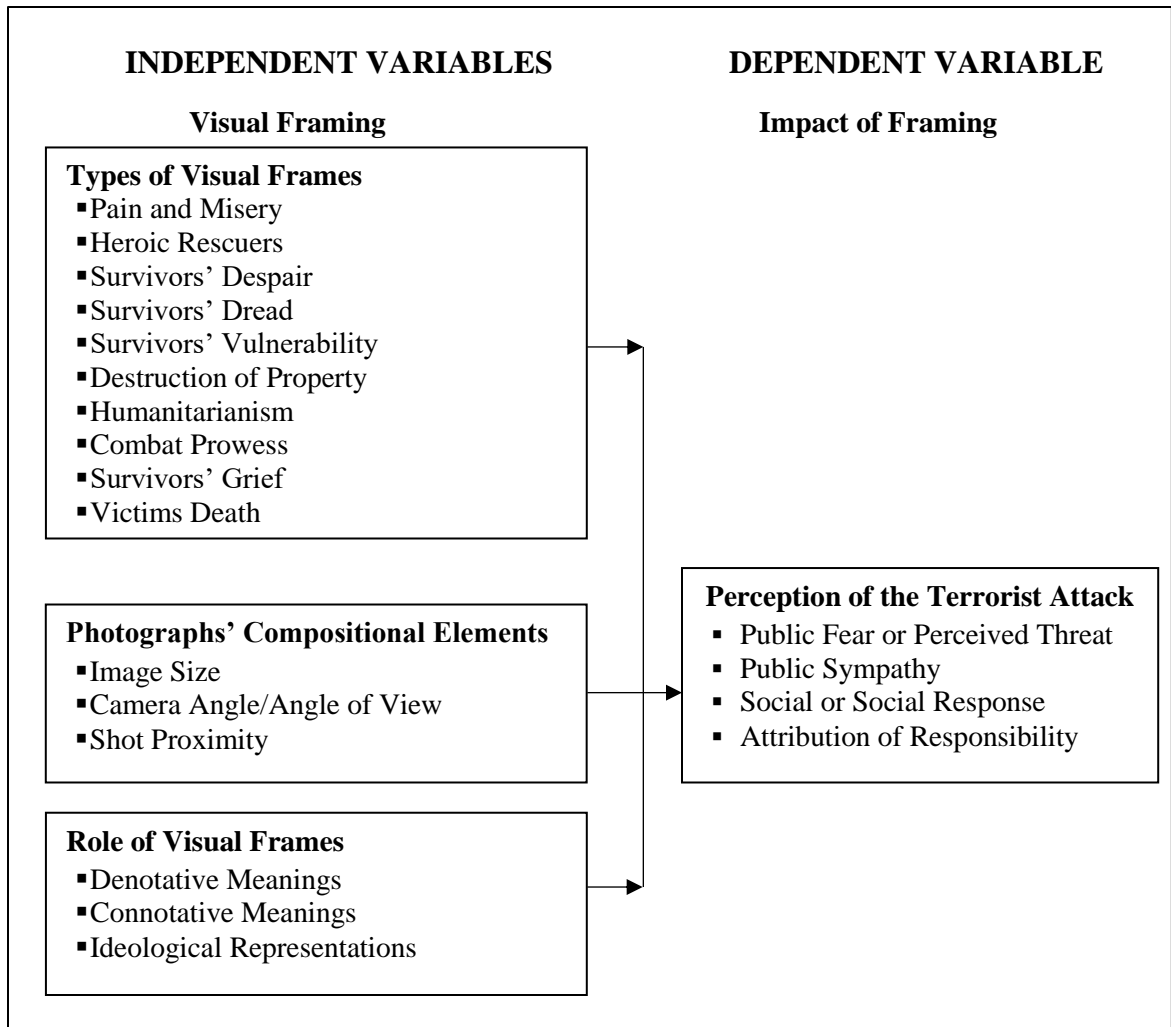
## **2.8 Relationship Between Variables**

In this study, the dependent variable was the presentation and interpretation of the photographs published in the coverage of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. This variable reflected how audiences perceived and understood the event based on the visual framing employed. The independent variable, on the other hand, was the visual framing techniques used in the photographic coverage by the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times*. These included the types of frames applied (e.g., humanitarianism, vulnerability, and despair) and the compositional elements of the photographs (e.g., angle, proximity, and depth of field). The relationship between the two variables was examined to determine how the visual framing techniques influenced audience perception and interpretation. Specifically, the study analysed how the framing and compositional choices shaped the narrative conveyed through the images and affected the audience's understanding of the terrorist attack.

## **2.9 Conceptual Framework**

The research's concept was informed by the multimodality theory and the framing theory. The two models clarify the impact of media's visual presentation on the emotional and cognitive responses of viewers. Multimodality theory is about the conceptualisation of the

interplay of different presentation modes such as visuals, language, sound, and gesture as used in communication (O'Halloran et al., 2021). In the context of analysing visual frames, compositional elements of photographs, and public perceptions of terrorist attacks, multimodality theory helps to understand how meaning is constructed through the interaction of these elements. Frames can help highlight different emotional and symbolic interpretations, which in turn affect the perception of the event (Lyons, 2016). Therefore, multimodality theory helps in understanding how images work on multiple levels to communicate facts, values, ideologies, and cultural narratives. On the other hand, framing theory is about how media and communication shape perception through the presentation of events, which influence the way people perceive and interpret events by emphasising certain aspects over others (Lindgren et al., 2022). When applied to the visual frames, compositional elements of photographs, and public perceptions of terrorist attacks, framing theory provides insight into how these elements guide audience interpretations and emotional responses (Arowolo, 2017). Therefore, it is expected that when photojournalists choose what to emphasise through framing, they shape the emotional and cognitive responses of readers, as well as the social and ideological reactions to the event they are reporting. Figure 2.1 presents the study's conceptual framework.



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework**

Source: Author (2024)

As indicated in the conceptual framework, it is expected that framing influences the public perception of terrorist events. Particularly, the visual framing and composition of terror photographs may determine how the public perceives and interprets them. According to the framing theory, the way an event is visually portrayed influences how audiences interpret and emotionally respond to it (Lindgren et al., 2022). In this context, the use of images that portray pain and misery, survivors' despair, and survivors' grief demonstrates the emotional responses of victims, and these can evoke empathy and a sense of shared tragedy among the readers. On the other hand, heroic rescuers and combat prowess focus on heroism, resilience, and power. The portrayal is expected to present rescuers or security forces as embodiments of courage. It is also expected that vulnerability and dread

emphasise the fragility and fear experienced by survivors, while victims' deaths directly capture the finality of loss. The humanitarianism frame reflects the efforts of aid and collective responsibility of some public members and rescue and relief organizations toward the affected. Therefore, different visual frames actively shape how an audience understands a terror incident by presenting certain emotions and narratives. The framing is also expected to influence societal responses to publications.

Compositional elements, such as image size, camera angle, and shot proximity, may determine the emotional intensity and focus of a photograph. Particularly, image size is the amount of space the photograph occupies within the media presentation, and this reflects its perceived importance. The compositional aspects, camera angle, may be used in manipulating power dynamics in reporting incidents. For instance, it is presumed that low angles might emphasise dominance, especially if the images are portraying rescuers' actions, while high angles can evoke vulnerability, mostly when the survivors are the subjects. On the other hand, shot proximity dictates the level of intimacy with the photographed subject. For instance, close-up shots might evoke empathy or fear by drawing viewers closer to individual emotions, whereas wide shots can provide a more distanced, objective perspective. Therefore, compositional elements interact with the frames to reinforce or modify the intended narrative.

The presentation of images through framing relates to what is usually shown in the photograph and the deeper or implicit meanings. Consequently, the conceptualization of imagery to form different perceptions aligns with the multimodality theory, whose assumption is that visuals communicate different meanings, as noted by O'Halloran et al. (2021). For example, denotative meanings may entail the straightforward depiction of events, such as an image of a collapsed building. Connotative meanings, on the other hand, introduce layers of interpretation, such as the portrayal of vulnerability or chaos in that same image. Through ideological representations, the meanings and interpretations can be extended to reflect specific values, beliefs, or political messages in the way the photograph is composed and framed. For instance, images of victims may show the brutality of terrorism, while heroic rescuer frames may convey a narrative of state control and

resilience. Therefore, framing plays a role in shaping how an incident is perceived by the public.

The perception of the terrorist attack is usually shaped by how the images are framed and composed. For instance, public fear or perceived threat is exhibited by images that depict chaos, destruction, or vulnerability. On the other hand, visuals depicting pain, suffering, and humanitarian efforts may evoke sympathy for the victims and survivors. Additionally, the way an event is framed can influence broader social or governmental responses. For example, the publications may fuel calls for justice, improvement of security measures, or the provision of humanitarian aid. Frames can explicitly suggest those responsible for the attack, whether it is the terrorists, the state, or societal failings. Consequently, framing shapes public narratives around accountability.

Overall, it is expected that the interaction between types of visual frames, compositional elements, and the role of visual frames influences the public's perception of a terrorist attack. Each element contributes to a narrative that shapes how the event is understood and how society perceives it. Therefore, public members' emotional and behavioural reactions are influenced by framing and the compositional elements of the published images. For instance, the use of heroic rescuers along a low-angle shot, which is a compositional element, may invoke a connotative meaning of national strength. The implication is that this may lead to a reduced perception of fear and an increased sense of security or control. Therefore, depending on how the images are presented, the framing of terrorist events in the media can shift public sentiment and policy, meaning that photojournalism can sensitise or moderate reporting, hence shaping the public's collective memory and response to an incident.

## **2.10 Summary**

This chapter has examined the literature that informs this study according to its objectives. In the light of the reviewed literature, the research has identified areas that require additional scholarly attention, particularly within the African context, given that many studies on visual framing have predominantly been conducted in Europe, America, and Asia. The reviewed literature highlights the significant role of visual images in conveying information and generating meaning. The chapter has explored various frame types created

in mass communication to convey information to the masses. Additionally, it has discussed the compositional elements and roles of framing as applied in different studies. Both framing theory and multimodality theory have been discussed in this chapter. Framing theory was utilised to assess how photojournalists in print media use their skills to influence audience perception and meaning-making, while multimodality theory helped evaluate how different compositional elements of photography influence the meaning derived from newspaper photographs.

Despite extensive research into the visual framing of crises, several gaps remain unaddressed. Many studies have concentrated on television and online media, while fewer have focused on how print media, especially in specific regions such as Kenya, frame terrorism through photography. Additionally, most existing research has used quantitative methods, often emphasising thematic frames like 'human interest' or 'conflict,' without delving deeply into the compositional elements of the images themselves, such as angles and subject positioning. There is also limited analysis of how different framing strategies might affect public perception and editorial decisions, particularly in the context of localised terrorist attacks like the Westgate Mall incident. This study addressed these gaps by employing a qualitative approach that scrutinised both frame types and compositional elements in print media photography to provide a critical understanding of the media's role in shaping perceptions of terrorism.

Scholars, such as Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011), have explored the broader frameworks of visual framing, including denotative, connotative, and ideological representations. However, most studies focus on events in Western contexts or global incidents, with little emphasis on how visual frames operate within African media, especially during crises like terrorism. Additionally, past research, like Khalel's (2017) analysis of online newspapers during the Egyptian Revolution, relied heavily on quantitative methods and online news sources, which might not capture the nuanced framing strategies employed in traditional print media. Moreover, while some studies, like Douai's (2014) work on the G20 summit, focused on political events, few have investigated the role of visual framing in the emotional and psychological portrayal of terrorism. This study filled these gaps by focusing on the visual framing of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack as covered by mainstream print

newspapers such as the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times*. It explored how photojournalists framed themes like heroism, suffering, and grief through compositional elements, including camera angles, focus, and symbolism. Furthermore, this research adopted a qualitative approach, offering deeper insights into the ways in which visual framing influences public perception during times of crisis.

The insights gained from this review underscore the necessity for more focused research on visual framing in African media. Future studies should aim to fill the identified gaps by investigating the unique cultural, social, and political contexts that shape visual framing in African countries. This will not only broaden the understanding of visual framing globally but also enhance the efficacy and cultural relevance of visual communication strategies within the African context. Ultimately, this chapter lays the groundwork for further exploration and provides a comprehensive foundation for the ensuing research in this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a description of the procedures that the research followed systematically in order to achieve empirical results. The chapter begins by highlighting the research design applicable for this study, followed by the target population and the sample size of the study. The chapter further discusses the sampling procedure, data collection tools and instruments, and data analysis procedures. Finally, the chapter discussed how the piloting of the instruments ensured the reliability and validity of the study, as well as the ethical considerations related to it.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The qualitative descriptive research method was used for this study. Punch (2013) postulates that the qualitative method seeks to interpret meaning non-numerically to give a deeper understanding of various research phenomena. Qualitative descriptive research is a method that aims to provide a comprehensive summary of specific events as experienced by individuals or groups (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024). It involves a straightforward description of the characteristics of phenomena, without interpreting or theorising beyond the data presented. The qualitative method is suitable when one desires to dig deeper into data by gathering detailed examples from the target population in pursuit of answering research questions (Epkins, 2011). Since the study's focus was to analyse the framing of photographs published by print media in reporting the Westgate Mall terrorist attack, a qualitative descriptive research was the most ideal.

Specifically, this study adopted a descriptive content analysis as a qualitative approach to data analysis. Mohajan (2018) defines content analysis as “a detailed and systematic method of analysing written, verbal, or visual communication messages for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases” (p. 15). The approach can be used to systematically analyse the content of communication. It involves categorising verbal or written data to identify patterns, themes, or meanings within the text. In this case, the approach was used to assess how often certain themes appeared in relation to incidents of violence. Content analysis as a method of inquiry has been tested and used in a number of disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, business, and more especially in communication and journalism.

The method is used by media and communication researchers to interpret “words and images from documents, books, newspapers, films, arts, music, and other cultural products and media” (Mohajan, 2018, p. 16). By analysing images, a deeper understanding of how societal values, beliefs, and ideologies are constructed and communicated could be gained.

The study further adopted semiology as an additional method of data analysis. Mingers and Willcocks (2017) define semiology as “the study of how meaning is generated and interpreted through signs and symbols” (p. 2). As a method of inquiry, semiology answers the pertinent question of how images and photographs make meaning beyond the superficial view (Longton, 2015). In this study, semiology dissected the images under investigation to generate wider systems of meaning that would have been missed when using related methods of inquiry. Chandler (2007) asserts that semiology as a method effectively addresses the central concern of interpretation through its ability to illustrate the connection between connotative and denotative meanings. Consequently, visual representation has the ability to trigger hidden meanings as effectively as written words (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Semiology is therefore a viable method through which news photography can be studied free from emotionally caused biases (Longton, 2015). In this case, the approach was used to explore the deeper meanings related to the narratives that influenced perceptions related to violence.

### **3.3 Target Population**

This study entailed an analysis of photographs published in the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* newspapers. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) have defined population as the entire group, subject, or object in which the research desires to ascertain some specific information. A population must therefore have one or more shared characteristics. The research selected the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers because they are the oldest, most read, and most trusted newspapers in Kenya (Obiero, 2016). Currently, the *Daily Nation* has an average circulation of 170,000 copies per day and an average readership of 4,379,400 per day. *The Standard* has a circulation of over 100,000 copies per day and an average readership of 2,223,500 per day (Kiptinness & Kiwanuka-Tondo, 2019). *The New York Times* was selected considering that it is one of the most prestigious newspapers known for its international news coverage. *The New York*

*Times* is a daily American newspaper published in New York City and owned by *The New York Times* Company. This newspaper was founded in 1851 and has gained trust from its local and international readers, having won 132 Pulitzer Prizes over the years of its existence. The newspaper circulates in most countries in the world, with a total of 26 bureaus worldwide. It has a daily circulation of 1.15 million copies and a Sunday circulation of 1.69 million. The research analysed issues published on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2013 in the selected newspapers.

### **3.4 Sample Size**

The sample size for this study was determined in terms of newspaper pages. The research analysed published photographs and captions on the first three pages of the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* newspapers. A total of 21 newspaper pages were analysed. The research analysed the pictures found in the 21 pages related to the Westgate terrorist attack. 21 photographs were drawn from *Daily Nation*, 19 from *The Standard* newspaper, and 10 from *The New York Times* newspaper. A total of 50 published photographs were analysed in all three newspapers. The unit of analysis was referred to as a figure. A figure denoted a single page of the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, or *New York Times* newspaper, containing one or more sub-figures. Additionally, the population of this study also comprised professional journalists and photojournalists. To obtain a comprehensive understanding and gather valuable insights, the researcher employed purposive sampling to select nine informants comprising media professionals and photojournalists. This approach was intentionally chosen to ensure that the participants possessed significant expertise and experience in the field of photojournalism. By focusing on individuals with substantial professional backgrounds, the study aimed to enhance the validity and richness of the data collected, thereby providing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the subject matter. The selected media professionals and photojournalists' extensive knowledge and experience in their field were critical in capturing the complexities and nuances inherent in photojournalism, contributing to the overall quality and depth of the research findings.

### **3.5 Sampling Procedure**

This study adopted a purposive sampling method of data collection. Ames, Glenton, and Lewin (2019) have argued that when conducting a qualitative study, a large sample size can weaken an effective data analysis, and therefore, using the purposive sampling method enabled the research to sample data that would give an in-depth insight into the phenomena. Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because the research sought to attain a deep insight into visual frames rather than generate mere statistical inferences. The research analysed photographs from the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times*.

The study focused on the coverage of the first three days of the attack. These days were the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2013. The research opts for these dates because the terrorist attack lasted four days, and these the days of intensive coverage. The research analysed the photographs in the first three pages of the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* newspapers. According to Jay (2002), crisis communication has a tendency to influence the media, both print and electronic, for only a short period before long-term communication strategies are put in place. Based on this reason, the research considered it paramount to select the most initial samples of the newspapers when the matter was still crispy.

The research opted to analyse newspapers on the basis that print media covers a wider range of news content in comparison to radio and television. The print media have enough space to tell their stories compared to radio and television, which are limited by the time available. Consequently, mainstream newspapers set the benchmark for determining what is newsworthy for broadcast media. In addition to the newspapers analysed, the study employed a purposive sampling procedure to select and interview a sample size of nine professional journalists and photojournalists. This sampling method was strategically chosen to ensure the inclusion of participants with substantial experience and specialised knowledge in journalism and photojournalism, thereby enriching the qualitative data and providing a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

### **3.6 Data Collection Tools and Instruments**

Data for this study were collected from three newspapers, the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times*. The focus was on images published during the period of intense

reporting on the Westgate Mall terrorist attack, specifically on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The collected images were sourced from the first, second, and third pages of these newspapers. The reason is that these pages had an extensive coverage of the incident. The selection of these dates and pages was guided by the high volume of visual content presented during this time. This allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the types of frames, compositional elements, and the impact of visual framing on the presentation and interpretation of the events.

Additionally, this study adopted a coding sheet and a semi-structured interview as the instruments for data collection. The use of these two research instruments allowed the research to examine the data through a variety of lenses, thereby enhancing the extraction of rich data from various facets of the phenomena under investigation. The study conducted nine in-depth interviews comprising media professionals and photojournalists to delve into the nuanced experiences and insights of individuals deeply embedded in the field of journalism. This qualitative method facilitated a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives, challenges, and the ethical considerations they navigated daily.

The semi-structured interview, as a complementary instrument of data collection, provided the flexibility needed to explore topics in greater depth while maintaining a consistent framework across interviews. This method allowed the interviewer to follow up on interesting points raised by the informants, thereby uncovering deeper layers of meaning and context that might not emerge in a more structured format. Moreover, the semi-structured interviews visually documented the contexts and environments in which these journalists operated. By capturing the settings in which their work takes place, the research contextualised their experiences within the broader socio-cultural and organisational frameworks that influence journalistic practice. This visual documentation was achieved through photographic evidence, which complemented the narrative data collected through interviews.

The combination of narrative interviews and photographic evidence provided a robust framework for exploring the intricate dynamics of journalistic practice. This approach offered a richer, multidimensional view of their professional realities, capturing not only the verbal articulations of their experiences but also the visual and environmental contexts

that shape their work. By integrating these diverse methods, the study could more holistically understand the complexities of journalism, offering insights into how journalists navigate their professional landscapes, the ethical dilemmas they face, and the strategies they employ to maintain journalistic integrity in a rapidly evolving media environment.

### **3.6.1 Coding**

The research coded the sampled data for the purpose of achieving a suitable organisation of the samples. Moreover, coding helped in minimising redundancy of data, as noted by Cope (2010). Coding enhanced the reduction of data by putting the photographs into small and manageable categories. The research applied three coding strategies, beginning with open coding, then axial coding, and finally selective coding, as proposed by Williams and Moser (2019). Open coding is usually the initial phase of qualitative coding that entails the breaking down of data into distinct parts to identify, name, categorise, and describe phenomena found in text (Siegle, 2023). At this stage, discrete concepts or themes in the data are evaluated, and codes or labels attached to them. The coding, which involves detailed analyses and comparisons, facilitates the discovery of emerging patterns. In the second phase, axial coding is adopted to refine and differentiate the categories created during the initial phase of open coding. It is during this stage that the data coded during open coding is reassembled in new ways to identify the relationships between categories (Williams & Moser, 2019). The subcategories are linked to a central category to clarify the context, conditions, interactions, and consequences of the phenomena. Selective coding is the final stage that entails the identification of the core category. Additionally, the other categories that are related to the core category are identified. During the process, theory is integrated and refined into the themes and the central concept (Flick, 2018). Therefore, a coherent and meaningful story that encompasses all the categories is built. Open coding was applied for the analysis of the first objective of the study; both open and selective coding were used for the second objective, and selective and axial coding was used for the third objective analysis.

Considering the complex nature of photograph analysis, the research employed MaxQDA software as a tool for data coding. Elliott (2018) postulates that using software for data

analysis enables the research to develop complex groups of codes, which would otherwise be impossible when using manual coding. The use of MaxQDA software enabled the research to accurately pull out all the data coded with a specific code for comprehensive review and analysis. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the use of technology in research cannot be overemphasized. Just as it has become the norm for researchers to use referencing software in organising texts as well as other data analysis software such as SPSS and NVivo, qualitative analysis software has become an integral part of qualitative studies (Elliott, 2018).

MaxQDA is professional software that was developed by VERBI Software GmbH, primarily to aid in digital qualitative data analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019). The software has been made available as a computer application compatible with operating systems such as Mac and Windows. MaxQDA software was invented in the mid-1980s by a young educationist and methodologist scholar, Udo Kuckartz, who was overwhelmed by the then tedious and crude methods for qualitative data analyses that heavily relied on the use of scissors, index cards, and glue to code and analyse data (Researchers, 2020). Today, MaxQDA software is used by scholars to code and analyse all sorts of unstructured data, such as interviews, audiovisuals (videos, pictures, and sound), social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram), and much more (Researchers, 2020).

A code sheet schema such as the one shown in Table 3.1 below was used to guide the coding process. The code sheet facilitated the identification of data-driven codes through viewing and reviewing sampled photographs.

**Table 3.1: Coding Sheet**

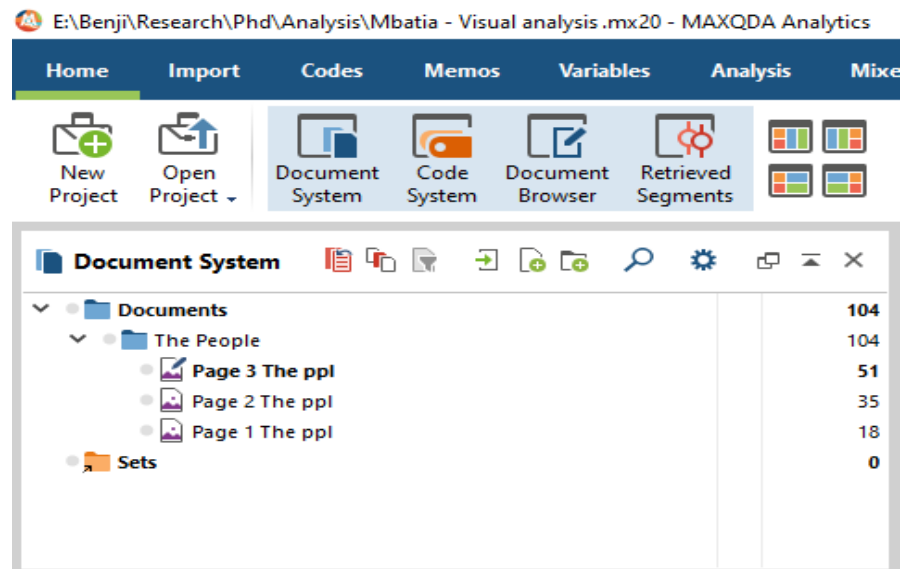
<b>Image</b>	<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Number of Pics</b>
Based on Newspaper	<i>DN/ STD/ NYT</i>	<i>22/23/24</i>	<i>P22, P23, P24</i>	<i>As per Page</i>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Objective: Frame Types</b>				
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Visual codes leading to themes</b>			
1) Pain and Misery	<i>Frowning, crying, scowling, bleeding</i>			
2) Heroic Rescuers	<i>Rescuers carrying the injured, helping people to safety</i>			

3) Survivors' Despair and Desperation	<i>Drooping shoulders, blank stares, sitting alone, reaching out for help, crying for assistance</i>		
4) Survivors' Dread	<i>Wide-eyed fear, looking over shoulders, frightened faces</i>		
5) Survivors' Vulnerability	<i>Hiding, seeking shelter, huddling together</i>		
6) Humanitarianism	<i>Holding, supporting, comforting victims, carrying</i>		
7) Destruction of Property	<i>Rubble, damaged buildings, debris, breaking, smoking, burning</i>		
8) Combat Prowess	<i>Soldiers in action, shooting, trooping, weapons</i>		
9) Survivors' Grief	<i>Crying, frowning, sobbing</i>		
10) Victims' Death	<i>Bodies lying, caskets, grieving relatives, mourning crowds</i>		
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Objective: Compositional Element</b>			
<b>Camera Angle</b>	<b>Connotative Meaning</b>		
1) High angle	<i>Demean subject – (subject seems vulnerable, weak, or frightened)</i>		
2) Eye level angle	<i>Portrays a neutral perspective – (no specific emotion imposed on subject)</i>		
3) Low angle	<i>Exalt subject – (powerful, domineering, heroic, or dangerous,)</i>		
<b>Image Size</b>	<b>Connotative Meaning</b>		
1) Large	<i>Intensify emotion/Salience – (pain, disruption, suffering)</i>		
2) Medium	<i>Neutral – (no specific emotion imposed on subject/s)</i>		
3) Small	<i>Pave room for more pictures or stories</i>		
<b>Camera Distance</b>	<b>Connotative Meaning</b>		
1) Close	<i>Amplify emotion – (pain, disruption, suffering)</i>		
2) Medium	<i>Neutral of emotions – (Emphasis on the whole subject)</i>		
3) Wide	<i>Depict context – (Places the subject on surrounding)</i>		
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Objective: The Role of Framing</b>			
<b>Major Themes</b>	<b>Sub Themes</b>	<b>Intended Role</b>	<b>Inadvertent Role</b>
1) Denotative Representations 2) Connotative Meanings 3) Ideological Representations	1) Literal Depiction, Factual Accuracy 2) Implied Meanings, Symbolism 3) Political Messaging,	1) Accurate communication of information 2) Emotional elicitation and abstract understanding 3) Provision of information	1) Missing of context, oversimplification 2) Ambiguity, possible misinterpretation 3) Bias, possible distortion of

	Communication of Cultural Values	regarding specific ideologies	reality, and propaganda
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**Coding Schema** – Informed by the Williams and Moser (2019) coding approach.

The unit of analysis for this study was an image, photo, or figure. The unit included one or more photographs on a single page of the newspaper. Following the code sheet shown in Table 3.1 above, the research imported the sampled data into the MaxQDA application and categorised the documents into three groups determined by the newspaper data source. The three categories were the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times*. Figure 3.1 below is a sample demonstration of how grouping and categorisation were done in the document system window in the MaxQDA application.



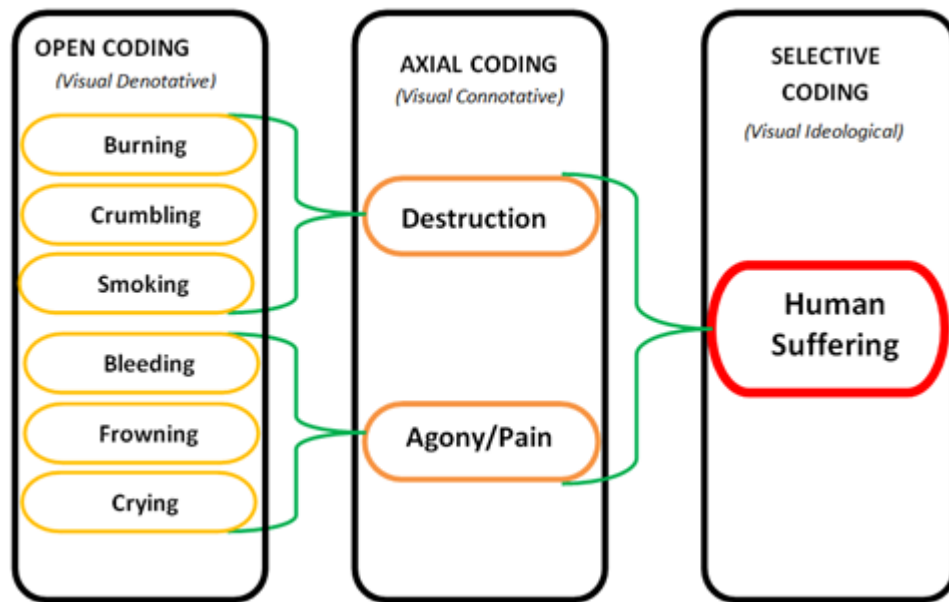
**Figure 3.1: Document System Window** (Adopted and modified from Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019).

After putting the entire sampled data into categories, the three coding levels that comprised open, axial, and selective coding, as identified by Williams and Moser (2019), were executed. Open coding involves the process of identifying data-driven codes by searching for ideas or concepts in the sampled data devoid of a previous conceptualisation (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). At this level, the research examined the image and coded the arising patterns denotatively based on visual stimuli that activated the eye when viewing the photographs. In other words, the research focused on the elementary meaning denoted

when one comes to visual contact with the images. For example, the research identified actions such as crying, running, pulling, hiding, burning, and so on, as depicted in the photographs. The “5W-1H” (who, what, where, when, and how) formulae, as proposed by Flick (2009) and cited in Moser (2019), helped the research navigate through the initial open coding process.

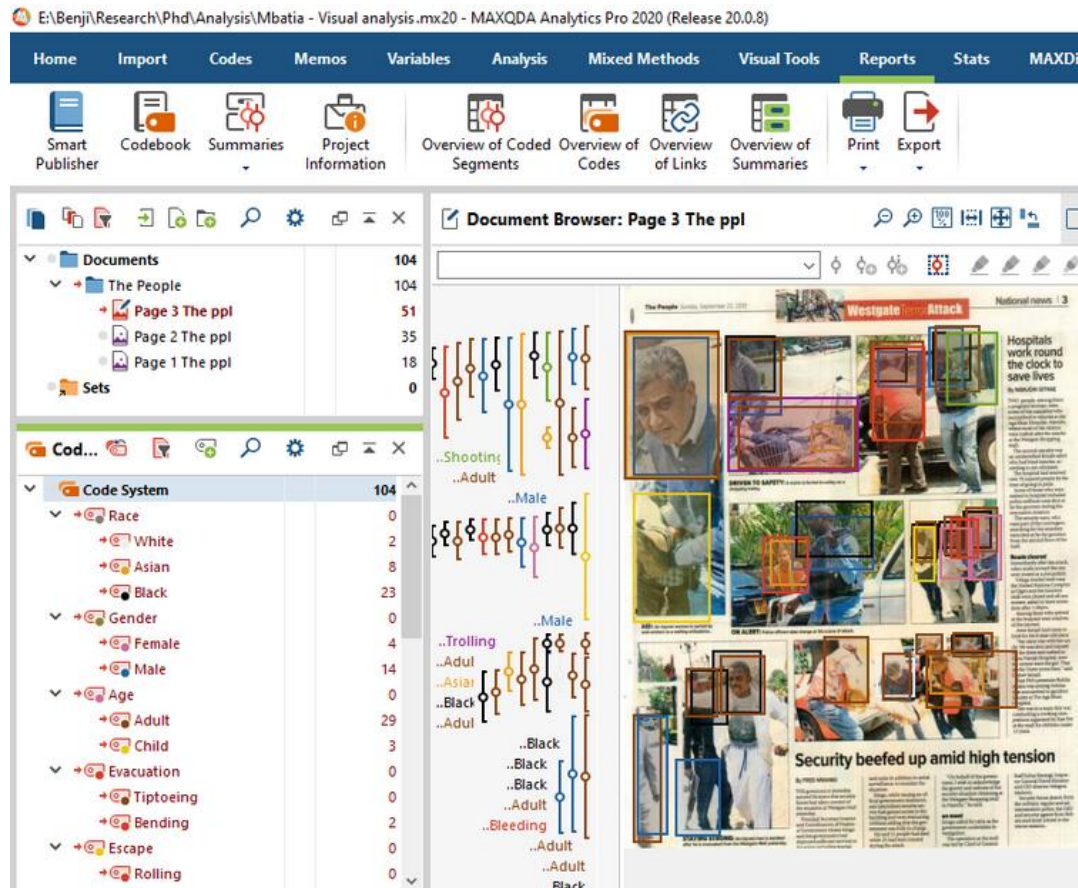
On successful completion of open coding, the research proceeded with the second coding level, referred to as axial coding. Axial coding focuses on sifting and refining the themes identified in open coding (Williams & Moser, 2019). The research identified relationships in the codes already identified in open coding to develop core codes. Comparison of themes was paramount in axial coding because the main focus at this level was to organise themes into meaningful and comprehensive categories.

Lastly, the research moved to the final coding level, referred to as selective coding, which focused on grouping themes and sub-themes derived from axial coding. These themes were integrated into cohesive and meaningful expressions. Flick (2018) posits that selective coding is simply a continuation of axial coding that leads to a superior level of “abstraction through actions that lead to an elaboration or formulation of the story of the case (p. 310).” Following this approach to visual framing, the research sought to achieve the specificity of frames in sample photographs. Figure 3.2 below is the diagrammatic representation that shows how open, axial, and selective coding were applied.



**Figure 3.2: Coding Sequence** - Adopted from Williams and Moser (2019).

Following the coding sequence represented in Figure 3.2 above, the research inputs all the sampled data into the MaxQDA application. The research then assigned data-driven code to each image by importing a figure into the document browser and then selected a segment of the photograph that was to be coded by highlighting the section using the selection tool in MaxQDA. Once a segment was selected, the researcher dragged and dropped an open code from the code system window to the highlighted segment. Coded segments were then retrieved and analysed in the retrieved segment window. Figure 3.3 shows a screenshot of how photographs were coded in MaxQDA software.



**Figure 3.3: Coding Process in MaxQDA** (Adopted and modified from Kuckartz and Rädiker, 2019).

### 3.6.2 In-Depth Interview

The third objective of this study was to determine the role that framing played in the photographs that were published after the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. To answer this question, the research adopted an in-depth interview approach as the method of data collection. An in-depth interview is a method of data collection in which the researcher interviews informants with the goal of eliciting comprehensive and deep information from the interviewee in order to attain a maximum understanding of the phenomenon (Berry, 1999). In-depth interviews normally targets expert in a specific genre who give expert information with reference to the subject of inquiry (Morris, 2015). In an in-depth interview, the interviewer is required to ask questions and follow up on the responses given by the interviewee in order to extract as much detailed information as possible (Morris,

2015). The rigorous probe characterised by an in-depth interview allowed the research to deepen the conversation on the role that framing played in the photographs published after the Westgate terrorist attack and therefore draw rich and meaningful information.

The researcher organised nine in-depth interviews targeting media professionals and photojournalists working for various mainstream print media in Kenya, such as *The Standard*, the *Daily Nation*, and the *Star*. The research administered samples of the photographs published in the aftermath of the Westgate Mall attack (well coded and numbered) to media professionals and photojournalists and asked them to view and respond to questions based on their professional experience. The in-depth interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder (Zoom H4n Pro). The researcher then transcribed the raw data for analysis. The data was categorised under major groups and sub-groups, consistent with the third objective of this study. Each in-depth interview lasted between 45 minutes and one and a half hours.

### **3.7 Reliability and Validity**

The research conducted a pre-test of the research instruments to ascertain their effectiveness in the data collection procedure. This pre-test helped to enhance the quality of the in-depth interview questions and the coding instrument. Corbin and Strauss (2008) postulate that the consistency of a qualitative study strongly requires the research to be well informed on how personal biases may impact the data collected and analysed. In line with Corbin and Strauss' (2008) view, the research endeavoured to identify and alleviate any possible biases and assumptions that could arise in the course of the study by conducting a pilot study. Notwithstanding, the researcher was aware that the interpretation of the data could possibly differ from other research that may be conducted in the future in this area of study. Further, it was noted that the findings of this study cannot be generalised irrespective of the number of times they are applied to different samples. The focus of a qualitative study is not necessarily to produce generalisable results but rather to provide an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under study (Epkins, 2010). The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of visual framing on the Westgate Mall terrorist attack that took place in Nairobi, Kenya, on September 21, 2013. Therefore, the findings of the study are not generalisable to mass communication and media as a whole.

### **3.8 Pilot Study**

The research process entailed a pilot study to assess the effectiveness of the data collection procedure and analysis techniques. The pilot study enabled the researcher to uncover technical issues, especially those related to the coding instrument that would otherwise hamper the study. In the pilot study, twelve images of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack published by the *People Daily* were analysed. The images were drawn from the first, second, and third pages of the September 22, 2013 issue. Three pilot interviews were conducted with three professional photojournalists in Nakuru town. The three informants were furnished with the twelve images of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack published by the *People Daily* and were required to respond to open-ended questions with respect to the photographs observed. From the three in-depth interviews, the research determined the necessary changes with regard to the clarity of the open-ended questions. The research also determined if the open-ended questions were consistent with the objectives of the study. Furthermore, the research used a research assistant to help test the coding schema. Both the researcher and the research assistant coded the pilot data from the *People Daily* independently for the purpose of establishing intercoder reliability. The researcher provided the independent coder with the coding schema that was used during the coding process. The researcher and the assistant researcher tested the coding schema within a period of one week, both from different geographical locations, to minimise the chances of interfering with the individual findings. On completion of the pilot study, the researcher and the assistant researcher compared their findings to establish similarities and disparities. The findings of the pilot study helped the researcher determine the reliability of the coding schema.

### **3.9 Data Analysis Procedures**

To provide answers to the three research questions of this study, the research adopted Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) four-tiered model of identifying and analysing visual frames. Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) proposed a four-level framework through which visual frames can be analysed systematically. The levels begin with analysing visual images as denotative schemes, followed by analysing visuals as stylistic-semiotic systems. The third level of analysis requires the research to analyse visuals as a connotative system, while at the final level, visuals are analysed as ideological representations.

To establish the types of frames that were used in photographs published after the Westgate attack, the research adopted the first level of visual analysis by Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011). At this level, the research examined the photographs as visual stimuli triggered by the sense of sight to pass information to the viewer's brain. The research identified frames by coding the distinct objects or subjects that the photojournalist captured. The research then combined various visual codes (sensations) into themes. The main aim at this level of analysis was to describe the photographs to determine their superficial meaning, both to the communicator (who in this study was the photojournalist) and the recipient of his messages (who was the viewer of the photographs). All the photographs published in the three newspapers were allotted specific related frame codes for grouping and identification. A single photograph could, however, exhibit more than one frame code.

To examine the compositional elements of the photographic coverage of the terrorist attack, the research combined the second and third levels of visual analysis as proposed by Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011). The second level of analysis focused on the technical styles that the photojournalist applied in the composition of the photographs captured. The research studied how compositional elements such as camera angle, image size, camera distance, depth of field, and field of view were applied to depict the scene of terror. The research then proceeded to the third level of analysis to determine the various concepts and ideas that were connoted by the compositional elements identified.

Finally, the research examined the role that framing played in the photographs that were published after the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. The research embarked on the fourth level of analysing visual images, as proposed by Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011). At this level, the research analysed photographs as ideological representations based on the data that was drawn from the in-depth interview. The research drew together both the denotative and connotative meanings derived from the first and second objectives to determine exactly what overall frames were intended to overtly and inadvertently present. The research first identified the main symbols denoted by an exemplar photograph and derived meanings connoted by that particular photograph. The research then scrutinised the significance of the meaning implied by the photograph and the narratives embedded in the data.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

In order to adhere to research ethical standards, the study adopted the basic moral guidelines for research. According to White (2020), all research involving human subjects should be conducted in accordance with three basic ethical principles, namely, respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. With regard to respect for persons, the research ensured that the informant's autonomy right was upheld. This was implemented by administering informed consent to the informants so that they could make an informed decision on whether or not to participate in the study. The researcher informed the informants to the in-depth interview about the aim and objective of the study in order to allow them to make an informed decision on whether or not to take part in the study. Further, informants were made aware that the in-depth interviews would be audio recorded and that they would be expected to consent before the recording took place. In line with the beneficence requirement, the informants were made aware that their active participation in this study was not in any way to expose them to risks or harm of any nature. The informants were informed that the research topic was not susceptible to conflict of interest but was geared to fill an academic gap. To ensure that the benefits of the research are distributed fairly, the study was designed to obtain valid and reliable results. Additionally, the findings were disseminated properly by sharing them openly and in an accessible format. An appropriate language that can be understood by interested parties was also used.

After the approval of the research proposal by the Graduate School at Laikipia University, an ethics clearance and authorisation permit to conduct the study was sought from the National Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Lastly, bearing in mind that terrorism is a very sensitive issue in Kenya, the researcher took strict measures to ensure that the data was safeguarded to avoid reigniting sorrowful memories for the victims of the attack. The researcher implemented this by first obtaining only relevant and adequate data needed for the study. Secondly, the researcher obtained only soft copy data, which was kept safe from unauthorised access as protected files on the researcher's computer. The data was kept for a period limited to the study's duration. Last but not least, the researcher acknowledged and gave credit to the relevant sources for all the copyrighted photographs that were used in this study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The general aim of the study was to assess how photojournalists framed the Westgate Mall terrorist attack through photographs that were published in the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* newspapers. This study aimed to achieve three specific objectives. Firstly, the research sought to examine the types of frames used in the photographs published to depict the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. Secondly, the study explored the compositional elements of the photographic coverage. Thirdly, an analysis of how visual framing influenced the presentation and interpretation of the photographs following the attack was carried out. These objectives guided the collection and analysis of photographic content from major newspapers, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the media's role in shaping public perception during this tragic event.

This chapter presents the findings, discussion, and interpretation of the data. The research has presented the findings systematically in line with the objectives of the study. It begins by examining the types of frames that were used in the photographs published by the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* newspapers in the aftermath of the Westgate Mall terrorism attack. Secondly, the chapter examines the compositional elements of the photographic coverage of the attack, and lastly, the chapter examines the role that framing played in the photographs that were published after the Westgate Mall terrorist attack in Nairobi, Kenya. The chapter ends each sub-section with a brief comparison of how the three newspapers visually framed the Westgate Mall terrorism attack.

### **4.2 Types of Visual Frames**

The first objective of this study was to examine the types of frames that were used in the photographs published by the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* newspapers to portray the terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall. The research partly adopted Rodriquez & Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model for analysing visual frames. The first level in this model, referred to as the denotative approach, focuses on examining images as visual stimuli. At this level, visual frames were identified by looking at the objects as plain

and visible elements in the photographs. The focus at this level was to describe the literal meaning of the visual material elements as perceived by the audience.

The second level adopted was analysing visuals as a connotative system, where photographic elements were examined by determining the symbolic meaning through a sociocultural perspective. To navigate through the denotative and connotative meanings in the photographs published, the research employed the semiotic analysis method by looking at how signs embedded in the photographs inferred meanings. The research analysed the first, second, and third pages of the data published on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup> of each of the newspapers. The data were further categorised in terms of the page number.

The frames depicted the print media's perception of the various aspects of the terrorist attack considered newsworthy to report. The first frame depicted the vulnerability of the survivors. This frame was featured in 16 of the 50 sampled photographs and was characterised by a number of factors, as shown in Table 4.1. Another frame was identified as the destruction of property, and it featured in two of the photographs that the research analysed. Separately, the frame of the heroism of rescuers featured in 10 photographs, while the frame identified as humanitarian featured in 12 photographs. The frames of victims' deaths and survivors' grief featured in 3 and 4 of the photographs that the research analysed, respectively. Other frames were pain and misery (featuring in 11 of the photographs analysed), survivors' despair and desperation (featuring in 10 of the photographs analysed), survivors' dread (featuring in 11 of the photographs analysed), and combat prowess (featuring in 18 of the photographs analysed). Table 4.1 below shows the summary of frames and their characteristics as drawn from the sampled data.

**Table 4.1: Summary of Frames and their Characteristics**

No.	Newspaper	DN	STD	NYT	Total
1	Number of pictures	21	19	10	<b>50</b>
2	Percentage	42%	38%	20%	<b>100%</b>
Type of Frame		DN	STD	NYT	Total
1	Pain and Misery	4	5	2	<b>11</b>
2	Heroic Rescuers	3	4	3	<b>10</b>
3	Survivors' Despair and Desperation	6	4	0	<b>10</b>
4	Survivors' Dread	2	5	4	<b>11</b>
5	Vulnerability of Survivors	3	9	4	<b>16</b>
6	Humanitarianism	6	6	0	<b>12</b>
7	Destruction of Property	1	1	0	<b>2</b>
8	Combat Prowess	8	9	1	<b>18</b>
9	Survivors' Grief	2	1	1	<b>4</b>
10	Victims' Death	2	0	1	<b>3</b>
<b>Totals</b>		<b>37</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>97</b>
Summary of Frames					
Positive frames		14	19	7	<b>40</b>
Negative frames		20	23	14	<b>57</b>
Positive Frames (%)		41%	45%	33%	41%
Negative Frames (%)		59%	55%	67%	59%
<b>Total Frames</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>97</b>

#### 4.2.1 Pain and Misery

One of the listed frames that is analysed in relation to how it represented and aided in the interpretation of the event is that of pain and misery. Physical pain and misery refer to the intense suffering and distress experienced by individuals due to bodily injuries, harm, or trauma. In the context of visual framing, this might involve depictions of wounded or distressed victims, bloodshed, or people enduring severe physical agony, capturing the immediate and visible impact of violence or disaster on the human body and emotions. Based on the findings, all three newspapers published photographs that featured the pain and misery frame. A total of eleven (11) out of fifty (50) photographs that the research analysed depicted survivors in pain and misery. Fig 4.1: DN/22/P1, Fig 4.26: NYT/23/P1B, and Fig 4.19: DN/23/P2 are examples of photographs that were published by the *Daily Nation* and *The New York Times* depicting survivors' pain and misery, respectively.



**Fig 4.1: DN/22/P1**



**Fig 4.19: DN/23/P2**

Fig 4.1: DN/22/P1 above shows an adult of black descent whose gender cannot be identified by the view of the picture. The victim’s face is smeared with blood as they are lying helplessly in a pool of blood, with no view of anyone to rescue them. The victim’s mouth is wide open, depicting an excruciating clamour. The eyes are wide open, suggesting a plea for help. The victim’s hair is dishevelled and mucky. This graphic photograph is complemented by a caption that reads, ‘*A victim shrieks in pain after gunmen attacked a city shopping centre, killing at least 30 people yesterday.*’ Below the caption is a sensational headline that reads “*Mall Massacre.*”

Fig 4.26: NYT/23/P1B, on the other hand, depicts a group of people walking hurriedly from the scene of terror. The focus of this picture is the evacuation of an Asian lady who is severely wounded. The analysis of this photograph through the MaxQDA software determined the victim as one in agony and misery owing to the bloody face, closed eyes, and open-mouth kinesics. She is being evacuated by two individuals, a lady and a young man, on her left and right, respectively.

Out of the eleven (11) photographs that were sampled and analysed as depicting the pain and misery frame, four (4) were published by the *Daily Nation*, five (5) by *The Standard* newspaper, and two (2) by *The New York Times*. The frame of pain and misery is explicitly portrayed by the bloody face, helpless posture, traumatised stare, and agonising yell of the victims featured. Consistent with the findings of this study, Muindi (2020) observed that media reporting was very subjective with respect to how photographs were captured and

published. Based on an interview report conducted, Muindi (2020) established that the Kenyan media was “very green in their approach” to Westgate, with journalists “struggling between telling the story and the subsequent propaganda wars (Muindi, 2020, p. 9). Likewise, an apology was made by a senior executive of the *Daily Nation* after noting the publication of the picture on the front page of their issue for September 22, 2013. Subsequently, a senior editor of the *Daily Nation* was fired for allowing the publication, which was considered “glorifying terrorism” by the *Daily Nation’s* board of directors (Muindi, 2020).

A study by Hutchison (2014) revealed that when media visually depict the faces of horrified victims in pain and misery, viewers are emotionally influenced to sympathise with the victims. Similarly, Greenwood and Jenkins (2015) posit that the victims of the vicious act of terrorism are not necessarily those brutalised, injured, or killed but also those watching the atrocities. Publishing such sensationalistic photographs on the foremost pages of national and international newspapers inadvertently serves the interests of terrorism because it achieves their basic agenda, which is to put the public in fear and grief. Through the publication of such photographs (Appendix II), the media unknowingly aggrandises the course of terrorism by inflicting terror on those who view the published photographs.

Proponents of the audience attraction and profit maximisation concepts in media reporting assert that the public’s strongest human interest is survival (Schmid, 2021). Therefore, any news that signals danger to survival, such as terror attack-related reports, is eagerly absorbed. Journalists are compelled to publish graphic images of victims of terror attacks because such events are more newsworthy than other news that does not signal any danger. Journalists often face dilemmas over whether or not to publish graphic pictures depicting suffering victims. The reason is that the publication of such images perpetuates the terrorists' propaganda while denying the media corporations’ desire to make profits. The act also has a negative impact on the public, government, and victims’ concerns. However, it is important to note that the publication of images depicting suffering among terror victims may horrify people by making them secondary victims of terror, depending on how the public members identify with the primary victims.

Pictures of the pain and misery of the victims ignite sympathy from the newspaper audience. Modern mass media publishes images of suffering victims for attention and sympathy reasons. The victims are portrayed as innocent individuals struggling with the disaster or unfavourable conditions caused by the terrorist (Laat, 2022). The images also show the sensational details of the suffering experienced or inflicted on the victim's body to explain the situation's truth and attract the viewers' or readers' attention and sympathy. Therefore, graphic images are published with the aim of attracting sympathy from the newspapers' viewers and probably increasing the audience.

The findings on the frame on pain and misery align with Rodriquez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model. The reason is that the framing depicts the link between visual and textual elements. For instance, the victims' photographs are combined with evocative captions and headlines such as "Mall Massacre," and this is expected to amplify the emotional impact on the readers. Furthermore, the pain and misery frame is congruent with the framing theory. This is evidenced by the photojournalists' focus on the intense suffering of victims, which is expected to shape the readers' perception and evoke sympathy and fear. In relation to semiotic analysis, symbols such as blood, helpless postures, and agonised expressions convey deeper meanings of vulnerability and horror. Therefore, the newspapers' photojournalists strategically used symbols and texts to create connotative and denotative meanings that strategically construct a narrative around the terrorist attack and influence the public's interpretation and emotional response.

#### **4.2.2 Heroic Rescuers**

Using the MaxQDA data analysis software, the research determined the heroic rescuers' frame by searching for plainclothes men or women armed and engaging in the rescue operation. The heroic rescuers were characterised as either those photographed armed and evacuating survivors or those armed and engaging the terrorists in combat. All three newspapers, the *Daily Nation*, *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times*, featured the heroic rescuers' frame. A total of ten (10) photographs were published, with *The Daily Nation* publishing three (3), *The Standard* four (4), and *The New York Times* three (3). See Table 4.1 and Appendix II. Fig 4.15: DN/22/P3A, Fig 4.35: STD/22/P3F, Fig 4.28: NYT/23/P2, Fig 4.39: STD/23/P2C, Fig 4.29: STD/22/P1, and Fig 4.43:

DN/22/P3 are notable examples of photographs published by *The Standard* and the *Daily Nation*, respectively, depicting heroic rescuers' frame.



**Fig 4.43: DN/22/P3**



**Fig 4.29: STD/22/P1**

One of the photographs that shows heroic rescuers is Fig 4.29: STD/22/P1. The image was published by *The Standard* newspaper on page two (2) of the September 22, 2013, issue. This photograph shows a plainclothes officer evacuating a baby and a middle-aged woman from the scene of terror. The officer is armed with an AK-47 rifle in his left hand while at the same time carrying the toddler. Based on his facial expression, as evident by the trickling sweat and the hunching posture, the officer looks anxious and tired but determined to evacuate the toddler and the woman from the crime scene. The security officer is herein portrayed as the hero, while the lady and the toddler are the victims.

Another photograph that depicted heroic rescuers was Fig 4.43: DN/22/P3. The image features three plainclothes security officers in combat positions. This photograph was published on the second page of the *Daily Nation* issue of September 23, 2013. All three officers featured are armed with handheld pistols and have taken positions in strategic locations inside the Westgate Mall building. Two are white, while one is black. All three officers have focused their eyes upward as they position their pistols to shoot. The security officer in the middle is pointing in an upward direction, likely to suggest the location of an assailant he has spotted. They are making advances to secure the mall in an attempt to

rescue and evacuate hostages. Fig 4.29: STD/22/P1 and Fig 4.43: DN/22/P3 are among the seven photographs (see Appendix II) that featured the heroism of the armed civilians and security officers risking their lives as they rushed into the ill-fated mall to evacuate victims trapped and taken hostage by the terrorists.

Notably, all the rescuers captured and determined by MaxQDA software were men. This implies that men were brave enough to risk their lives to rescue victims that were trapped in the mall. The research considered this frame positive for depicting the willingness of licensed armed civilians and security officers to risk their lives while evacuating the victims trapped by the terrorists. The terrorists viewing photographs featuring the Heroic Rescuers frame would wish that such should not have been published. They would wish to see the media publish photographs depicting helpless and vulnerable victims. This way, they would be perceived as precise and timely by their target.

The publication of images by the media showing heroic rescuers in action during terror attacks significantly influences public perception and ethics. Although such images seem to evoke strong emotions, they reshape the narrative surrounding the events to the disadvantage of the terrorists. The reason is that such photos highlight acts of bravery and resilience among civilians, armed forces personnel, volunteers, and other people (Van Tongeren et al., 2018). The images tend to inspire the public to admire the rescuers by developing positive emotions, courage, and strength. Consequently, it creates a sense of unity and collective resilience in the face of adversity. However, there is a need to present the images in a way that does not entail an excessive focus on the heroic rescuers while diverting attention from the victims and their experiences. Therefore, coverage should be balanced to avoid perpetuating the narrative that portrays the victims as passive and helpless, thereby distorting individual stories about their efforts to help themselves.

Images depicting heroic rescuers gain more prominence than those showing victims in distress. The reason for this assertion is that the former represents selective framing that shapes public perception by emphasising heroic actions to minimise suffering and vulnerability. However, it is important to publish images in a balanced way to avoid the creation of stereotypes or oversimplification of complex issues. Images should portray diverse perspectives to depict the multifaceted nature of terrorist attacks and permit respect

for the dignity and agency of all the involved people (White, 2020). For instance, responsible journalism can lead to the publication of images that provoke public outrage against terror and condemnation of the perpetrators. Consequently, a backlash against the terrorists could undermine their cause and goals by diminishing their support, as the public will isolate them and seek to strengthen counterterrorism efforts.

Denotatively, the heroic rescuers' images clearly depict armed civilians and officers actively engaged in rescue efforts. Additionally, the visual presentation and textual anchoring used contextualises them to shape viewers' interpretations, and this aligns with Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model. In line with the framing theory, the photographs construct a narrative that emphasises heroism and resilience, and this overshadows victim vulnerability. The connotative meanings embedded within the images, such as the portrayal of masculinity and courage in the face of terror, affirm the application of semiosis. Therefore, the heroic rescuers' frame influences public perception by portraying a powerful counter-narrative to the terrorists' intent that had sought to foster fear and helplessness.

#### **4.2.3 Survivors' Despair and Desperation**

Survivors' despair and desperation was the third frame identified and analysed. With the help of MaxQDA software, the research determined the survivors' despair frame as those photographs that featured characters as helpless and hopeless based on picture element composition. Survivors' despair refers to the profound emotional pain and sorrow experienced by individuals who have lived through a traumatic event, such as a terrorist attack, and are coping with the loss of loved ones, friends, or community members. This frame highlights the aftermath of the tragedy, focusing on the emotional impact and suffering of those who remain after the immediate danger has passed. In the context of the Westgate Mall attack, the survivors' grief frame would depict images and narratives that capture the heart-wrenching moments of mourning and loss. Photographs might show survivors at the scene or in memorial settings, visibly distressed, crying, or holding onto each other for comfort. The findings established that the survivors' despair frame was explicit in four (4) of the photographs that the research analysed. The *Daily Nation* published three (3) photographs featuring this frame, while *The Standard* published one

(1) photograph portraying survivors' despair (see Appendix II). Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B and Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1 below, published by the *Daily Nation* and *The New York Times*, are clear examples of how the print media exploited the survivors' despair frame.



**Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B**



**Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1**

One of the images depicting the despair and desperation of survivors, Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B, was published by the *Daily Nation* on the second page of their 22<sup>nd</sup> issue of September 2013. This figure shows a male adult of Asian descent who has been wounded, as occasioned by the assault within the Westgate Mall premises. This man is featured seated on the cabro floor outside the Westgate Mall building. The man is soaked in blood, likely oozing from a gunshot wound on part of his body. Both his hands and feet are stained with blood. His pair of slacks is likewise blood-drenched, but it is not clear to the viewer from which part of the body the victim is wounded. The victim is portrayed seated hopelessly, with no one in sight to attend to his distress. His face is depicted as red and blotched, the eyelids are puffy, and the eyes are bloodshot. A drop of tears is seen on his left cheek.

Notably, among six photographs that were published on this page of the *Daily Nation*, Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B was the only one with a missing caption. This was probably meant to insinuate that the viewer fills the gap. The framing of this picture draws the viewer to empathy upon seeing the plight of the victim in deep agony and tears on his cheeks with no one in sight to offer a helping hand. A frame of despair amidst a crisis is envisaged.

The second photograph, NYT/23/P1, was published by *The New York Times* on September 23, 2013. This photograph portrays three (3) persons, comprising two ladies and a young man. The mood portrayed by the people captured in this photograph is one of despair. The young man is seated in between a lady (left) and an unidentified person (right) on the concrete public bench. A relatively elderly woman is bending towards the young man while holding him by her right hand. A description caption ascribed to this figure reads: Above, *a man whose father was among the victims was comforted outside a mortuary*. This caption plays a significant role in orienting the viewer to what the photograph features. The subjects visible in this picture are donned in black apparel as a social symbol, insinuating a moment of grief. The father, who is a symbol of livelihood, has been killed by the terrorist, leaving the young man in a state of despair. This set of photographs, Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B and NYT/23/P1, would greatly appeal to terrorists if they were to view them. Both photographs imply that victims have been left very hopeless in the course of the attack. The objective of terrorists is to inflict fear on people, and therefore, by publishing photographs depicting a sense of despair, the print media is knowingly or unknowingly heightening the course of terrorism.

As shown through Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B and NYT/23/P, depicting a survivor's despair through published images by the media has various implications. First, the media plays its role in informing the public about current events. However, such publications can raise awareness among the public about the human impact of terrorism (Iyer et al., 2014). Therefore, the images may evoke empathy and encourage public support for measures to prevent future attacks. It is expected that portraying the emotional toll on individuals and communities through images showing survivors' despair would deepen understanding and foster solidarity. However, it should be noted that such images can sensationalise the tragedy, violate the privacy and dignity of survivors, and potentially traumatise the victims

and their families. Therefore, journalists should engage in the responsible publication of images.

In this case, the absence of captions in some photographs is in sync with Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model because it allows readers to construct their own narratives. Consequently, survivors' despair and desperation frame intensified the emotional impact on the public. The literal depiction of survivors' visible anguish and the deeper meanings, such as the portrayal of vulnerability and helplessness exhibited in the images, portray denotative and connotative meanings, respectively. Additionally, the selection of these images focused on evoking empathy and conveying the human cost of terrorism, and this aligns with the framing theory. Lastly, the symbols of despair and grief, such as bloodstains and mournful body language, are in sync with semiotic analysis. The reason is that the frames were used to uncover the underlying messages conveyed by the media.

#### **4.2.4 Survivors' Dread**

The fourth frame identified and analysed by the research was the survivor's dread. This frame was determined by examining the facial expressions and posture of survivors with the help of MaxQDA software. Characteristics such as frowned faces and open-mouth posture were identified using the MaxQDA software to determine dread in survivors. This frame was featured in a total of eleven (11) photographs (see Table 4.1 and Appendix II). The *Daily Nation* published two (2) photographs that featured survivors' dread, *The Standard* five (5), and *The New York Times* four (4). Fig 4.16: DN/22/P3C and Fig 4.34: STD/22/P3E are examples of photos depicting survivors' dread. Additionally, STD/22/P2B and Fig 4.11: DN/22/P2 below are examples of how the newspapers depicted the survivors' dread frame.



**Fig 4.47: STD/22/P2B**



**Fig 4.11: DN/22/P2**

One of the photos, Fig 4.47: STD/22/P2B, shows a batch of about ten (10) people hurriedly escaping the scene of terror. The subjects framed in this shot depict a mixture of race, age, and gender. Based on the analysis drawn from MaxQDA software, five (5) out of the ten subjects depicted displayed a frowning facial expression. Four (4) of the five (5) victims whose facial appearance was captured displayed an open-mouth posture, with the lady at the extreme right (towards the background) palming her cheeks in utter shock and dread.

The next photograph, Fig 4.11: DN/22/P2, depicts a plainclothes male security officer evacuating a white female lady, accompanied by her two children, from the Westgate Mall premises. This photograph is captioned, “*A security agent escorts a mother and her children to safety.*” The security officer is armed with a pistol rifle held in his right hand. The white lady holds firmly to her two children as she skedaddles to safety. Her facial expression depicts popping eyes complemented by an open-mouth stance. This facial expression alludes to an emotional state of utter astonishment and dread. The children’s facial expression appears a little terrified but oblivious to the peril at hand. Photographs depicting emotional victims equally can evoke the emotions of distant viewers (Anis, 2022). Such photographs are not only published to appeal to viewers’ emotions but also to increase revenue collected from the sale of newspaper copies. By publishing such photographs, viewers can only imagine the height of dread that engulfed the survivors in the wake of the terror attack. They are terrified of seeing the dreadfulness of the survivors. Therefore, the depiction of photographs advances the course of terrorism by terrifying viewers.

The literal depiction of dread through observable characteristics such as facial expressions and posture, as identified by the MaxQDA software, confirms the utilisation of the denotative approach in the survivor's dread frame. Additionally, the portrayal of elements like frowned faces and open-mouth posture aligns with Rodriquez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model, which emphasises the interplay between visual elements and readers' reactions. The application of framing theory is evident in how the media selected and highlighted these distressing moments to shape public perception and emotional responses, emphasising the survivors' dread to evoke empathy or fear. The connotative system is also evident in this frame, as the emotions of shock and dread go beyond the literal expressions, conveying deeper meanings of vulnerability and helplessness associated with the attack. The frame further portrays semiosis because symbolic implications of the survivors' depicted fear are exhibited. Generally, the survivors' dread frame shows the print media's potential in amplifying the emotional impact of the event for the audience.

#### 4.2.5 Survivors' Vulnerability

The fifth frame that the research established was survivors' vulnerability. Survivors' vulnerability refers to the depiction of individuals who have endured a traumatic or life-threatening event and are portrayed as being physically, emotionally, or psychologically fragile and exposed. The frame was shown through images or narratives that focus on their physical injuries, emotional distress, or their dependence on rescuers for safety. Sixteen (16) of all the photographs that were published by the three newspapers alluded to this frame. The *Daily Nation* published three (3) pictures, *The Standard* nine (9), and *The New York Times* four (4) photographs featuring this frame (see Appendix II). With the help of MaxQDA, women and children were categorised as the most vulnerable to the attack. Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C and Fig 4.40: STD/23/P2D below are examples.



Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C

Fig 4.40: STD/23/P2D

One of the photographs showing vulnerability, Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C, depicts a woman and two children lying prone on the floor. The three are next to a restaurant counter topped with an assortment of kitchen appliances. The woman is captured embracing the younger child with her left arm as she also holds the other's elbow. Six rounds of ammunition are visibly scattered around the subjects, insinuating the peril surrounding the woman and the young ones. The rounds of ammunition are likely to have fallen off a magazine after the continuous fire exchange. The three are lying prone with their faces turned to the right in utter desperation. The ring on the woman's finger is an indication that she is married. It is likely that by the time this shot is captured, her husband is oblivious to the peril that has befallen his wife and children. This picture contains a descriptive caption that reads, "A woman protected children from the attackers by hiding behind a restaurant counter." Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C frames women and children as the most vulnerable victims of the attack.

Similarly, Fig 4.40: STD/23/P2D features two adult ladies, a white lady supporting an injured black lady on a supermarket trolley. This photograph portrays the female gender as the victim of the heinous attack. The facial expression of the injured black lady draws the viewer to the indexical perspective, which depicts her lower lip quivering with her face contorted and frowning as she bursts into tears. This picture depicts the level of agony that the victim is undergoing. The injured, lady is being laid on a supermarket trolley to be evacuated. This photograph not only depicts the heights of desperation but also indicates that women are mostly the victims of such catastrophes.

A number of studies have shown that the media has the tendency to frame women and children as the most vulnerable victims of catastrophes (Carpenter, 2005; Janković et al., 2017). The fact that women and children are usually fashioned as vulnerable groups predisposes them as perfect candidates to frame the terror of a disastrous ordeal. Particularly, the portrayal of mothers with children usually represents the symbols of causality. The finding of this study with reference to the vulnerability frame concurs with Hutchison's (2014) finding that women and children are the most photographed subjects in disasters and are usually framed in their most perilous circumstances of the ordeal.

Similarly, the findings in this study agree with the findings by Janković et al. (2017), who examined how the media reported the flood disaster that occurred in Serbia in the year 2014. Janković et al. (2017) established that the media portrayed women as the most terrified and vulnerable victims of the disaster. In the same study, men were portrayed as heroic rescuers in their efforts to save lives. This study observed the same trends, in the sense that women were photographed as victims while men were framed as heroic rescuers. Publishing photographs reinforcing the frame of women and children as the most vulnerable victims of the terror attack glorifies terrorism by alluding to the fact that the terrorists hit where it hurt most. The mass media is expected to take a gender-neutral approach when reporting terrorism and other forms of disaster. This way, the media will not only enhance ethics with reference to victims of a disaster but also reduce the likelihood of misrepresenting women and children during a disaster.

According to Anis (2022), mass media prioritises depicting the suffering of disaster victims in their reporting. The reason is that pictures and footage of such victims usually heighten the scale and intensity of the disaster. Jařab (2020) indicates that the media's role is to shape public perception and understanding of terrorist attacks. While reporting, the media ends up publishing sensational images in what is generally referred to as media terrorism. The reason for this is that the media publishes the dramatic aspects of terror attacks to attract widespread attention from the general public. Fortunately, for terrorist groups, they find an opportunity to exploit this fascination. Therefore, terrorists strategically carry out acts that can capture maximum media coverage to generate global attention.

The survivors' vulnerability frame shows the relationship between visual elements and their impact on public perception. For instance, in this case, it has been shown how images of vulnerable survivors influence emotional responses, and this aligns with Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model. The literal depiction of survivor's physical injuries, emotional distress, and dependence on rescuers affirms the application of the denotative approach. This direct portrayal of suffering aligns with the framing theory, where the media emphasises the vulnerability of the victims to shape public perception of the attack's impact. The connotative system is also relevant because the images evoke deeper meanings of helplessness and emotional fragility, symbolising the broader human cost of terrorism.

In line with the semiotic analysis, the visual elements, such as facial expressions and body language, reveal underlying narratives about victimisation and gender.

#### 4.2.6 Humanitarianism

The sixth frame that this study identified and examined was humanitarian. Humanitarianism refers to the portrayal of efforts focused on providing aid, support, and relief to those affected by a crisis or disaster. This frame emphasises compassion, altruism, and the collective responsibility to help individuals in need. In the context of the Westgate Mall attack, the humanitarianism frame would be depicted through images or stories of people providing medical care, offering emotional support, distributing food and water, or organising safe spaces for survivors. Humanitarianism as a frame was featured in twelve (12) photographs that were published by the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* newspapers in the wake of the Westgate terrorism attack. *The Daily Nation* featured humanitarianism in three (6) photographs, *The Standard* in six (6), and *The New York Times* in none. Fig 4.37: STD/23/P2 and Fig 4.38: STD/23/P2B below are typical examples of photographs that feature the humanitarian frame.



**Fig 4.37: STD/23/P2**



**Fig 4.38: STD/23/P2B**

The first photograph depicting humanitarianism, Fig 4.37: STD/23/P2 above, shows members of the Somali community living in Nairobi, delivering food to the soldiers at the Westgate Mall during the night of 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2013. The photograph shows that some Kenyans were committed to helping in fighting terrorism. After a long battle with the assailants at the mall, it was apparent that the security personnel were going to spend the night there fighting the terrorists. Members of the public felt it was important to supply

such patriots with food and drinks. This photograph depicts the humanitarian frame on the basis that members of the public were concerned about the victims', security personnel members', and survivors' welfare.

On the other hand, Fig 4.38: STD/23/P2B depicts a teenager displaying a placard. The teenager featured in this photograph is among other activists campaigning to sensitise the public about the need to donate blood to aid injured victims. The caption to this photograph reads: "*Children join the campaign to sensitise passers-by to donate blood for the attack victims at KenCom yesterday.*" The frame connoted by this presentation is that of humanitarian action in times of adversity. The children are depicted taking an active role in campaigning for the well-being of the wounded victims in the attack. The young children are using their scating skills to move about the city as they persuade the public to donate blood to the wounded victims of the terrorist attack.

It is noted that there were no photographs of humanitarian efforts like food or water supply for rescuers during the 2013 Westgate Mall attack by *The New York Times*. The reason is that the images published by *The New York Times* did not specifically focus on showing the positive aspect of the terror attack. As an international newspaper, its coverage was likely focused on showing the intensity of the attack, highlighting the dramatic and graphic aspects of the event to capture the global audience's attention. Editors often prioritise such content to reflect the scale of the tragedy. Therefore, images related to humanitarian efforts might not have been included due to space and editorial focus constraints.

The theme framed here is that of humanitarianism in the midst of human suffering. This frame was considered positive on the basis that it depicts humanity in adversity. By publishing pictures that depict humanity in adversity, the perpetrators of the heinous attack are reminded that their effort to destabilise peace in the country is met by the vehement resilience of the Kenyan people. The portrayal of such pictures depicting humanitarian frames is evidence of the value bestowed on human life. The mass media may be justified in featuring some photographs depicting injured victims, accompanied by those of a humanitarian aspect, for the purpose of drawing sympathy towards those that are affected in the course of appealing for their help. Joyce (2013) asserts that human emotions are

usually aroused by the depiction of suffering, resulting in care and empathy, which resonates with the ethics of reporting issues affecting humanity.

The humanitarianism frame shows that visual elements and their emotional resonance can be strategically used to evoke sympathy and compassion, aligning with the depiction of humanitarian efforts, which aligns with Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model. The denotative approach is also evident in the literal portrayal of aid workers and activists providing support to the victims, such as paramedics assisting the injured and children advocating for blood donations. This straightforward representation lays the foundation for the framing theory, where the media emphasises altruism and collective responsibility in response to the attack. The connotative system further deepens this narrative by suggesting resilience and unity in the face of adversity, conveying a broader message of societal solidarity against terrorism. Through semiotic analysis, visual elements such as facial expressions and symbolic actions, like holding a placard, can reveal underlying meanings related to compassion and collective action. By focusing on humanitarian responses, the print media highlighted the immediate relief efforts. It also promoted a sense of hope and resistance against terror.

#### **4.2.7 Destruction of Property**

The seventh frame identified and analysed was the mass destruction of property. Destruction of property refers to the intentional or accidental damage, vandalism, or annihilation of buildings, infrastructure, and other physical assets during events such as conflicts, natural disasters, or terrorist attacks. The destruction of property would be depicted through images or descriptions of shattered glass, burnt buildings and emission of smoke, bullet-riddled walls, damaged shopfronts, overturned furniture, and the general disarray of the mall's interior and exterior. Both the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers published photographs that featured this frame with each of the newspapers carrying one photograph alluding to this frame. Fig 4.4: DN/24/P1 and Fig 4.10: STD/24/P1B below are samples of the published photographs that featured the destruction of property frame.



One of the figures showing the frame of property destruction, Fig 4.4: DN/24/P1 above, was published by the *Daily Nation* on the front page of the September 24, 2013 issue. This photograph depicts an aerial view of the Westgate Mall building with a huge cloud of smoke rising above it. The photograph occupies five columns of the news article and shows the enormous Westgate Mall building and its environs. The focus of this shot is to depict the rising smoke above the building. This shot is accompanied by a descriptive caption that reads: *Anxiety and fear gripped the country yesterday after a fire broke out in a section of Westgate Mall. The blaze started at 1 p.m. and had not been put out by 9 p.m.* True to the

outline ascribed to these pictures, the audience is left anxious to know what exactly was burning and being destroyed inside the mall. The audience cannot take the claim by the Interior Cabinet secretary that militants have set mattresses ablaze to distract security forces from hunting them down. On the contrary, the viewer speculates a cremation of the civilians' taken hostage by the terrorists (The *Daily Nation*, 2013).

Similarly, Fig 4.10: STD/24/P1B was published by *The Standard* newspaper on September 24, 2013. This photograph serves as the cover page for the entire issue. The picture occupies the entire front page from the top, bottom, left, and right margins. The photograph depicts a thick cloud of smoke rising from a specific section above the Westgate Mall building. Similar to Fig 4.4: DN/24/P1, the highly risen smoke in Fig 4.10: STD/24/P1B gives the viewer a perspective that implies the extent to which terror has risen beyond the ability to contain it. This photograph is accompanied by a headline in bold black typeface that reads, "*Deadly Standoff.*" The headline suggests that the four terrorists within the Westgate Mall premises have been able to stand off a heavy military convoy that has been deployed, resulting in a stalemate. This headline is followed by another descriptive caption on top of the picture that reads, "*Bursts of gunfire and loud explosions rang out as security forces battled to break the siege on Westgate Mall by terrorists on Day Three. A plume of black smoke billowed from the building.*" Looking at this photograph, accompanied by the headline, the viewer is shuttered from all hopes of the successful rescue of the civilians taken captive inside the mall.

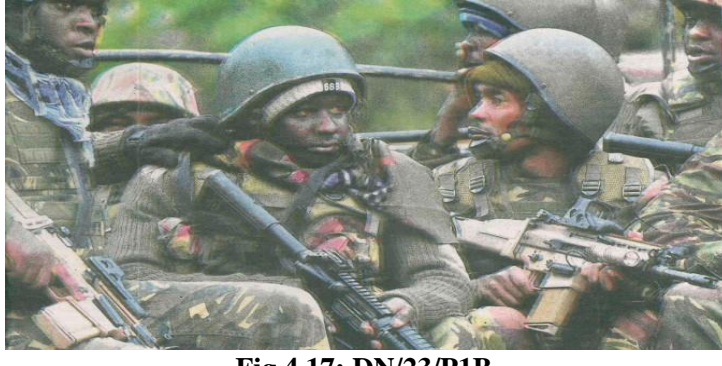
This finding concurs with Muindi's (2020) research, which established that the Kenyan public was not confident that the government was in full control of the situation at Westgate Mall. For example, in response to the question raised by the media and the public after visually depicting the plumes of smoke that rose above the mall, the authority's report was contradictory. Initially, they asserted that it was a military tactic aimed at forcing the terrorists out but later claimed that the assailants were responsible for it (Muindi, 2020). Publishing such a photograph in front of two national dailies in the wake of terrorism alludes to the fact that the media is inadvertently aggrandising the course of terrorism.

It has been noted that the visual representations in media can heighten the emotional impact on the readers. Images of the Westgate Mall engulfed in smoke serve to intensify the

public's anxiety and fear, and this is congruent with Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model. Denotatively, the images straightforwardly depict the aftermath of the attack, such as burnt buildings, providing a raw visual record of the devastation. The depiction aligns with the framing theory, where the media's focus on destruction amplifies the perceived chaos and loss, potentially shaping public perception towards a sense of insecurity and helplessness. Since the visuals evoke deeper associations of turmoil and helplessness, they connotatively offer a hint of the state's inability to protect its citizens. Lastly, semiotic analysis helps deconstruct the symbolic meanings behind these images. For instance, the rising smoke and widespread damage not only signify physical destruction but also represent a breakdown of order and control.

#### **4.2.8 Combat Prowess**

Combat prowess is the skill, bravery, and effectiveness displayed by those in a combat situation. Such individuals show their tactical abilities, discipline, and courage when under pressure. The frame highlights the heroic and strategic actions taken by security forces, military personnel, or armed responders during incidents such as terrorist attacks. In the context of the Westgate Mall attack, the combat prowess frame would focus on the actions of the security forces and law enforcement agencies. This would entail photos showing security forces as they engaged the terrorists, rescued hostages, and attempted to regain control of the situation. Photographs and narratives under this frame might depict scenes of armed officers in tactical gear, strategic manoeuvres, and moments of confrontation or coordination among the rescuers. The frame of combat prowess was featured in a total of eighteen (18) photographs from the sampled data. Eight (8) of these photographs were published by the *Daily Nation*, while nine (9) were published by *The Standard* newspaper, and *The New York Times* published one (1) photograph with this frame from the sampled data. Fig 4.17: DN/23/P1B, Fig 4.18: DN/23/P1C, Fig 4.27: NYT/23/P1D, and Fig 4.41: STD/24/P2, published by the *Daily Nation*, *The New York Times*, and *The Standard* newspaper, respectively, are examples of photographs that featured combat prowess.



**Fig 4.17: DN/23/P1B**



**Fig 4.41: STD/24/P2**

One of the images showing combat prowess, Fig 4.17: DN/23/P1B, is a medium-close-up shot of a battalion troop on a military track. This photograph bears a descriptive caption that reads, “*Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) soldiers arrive in Westlands to take part in the fight to retake the Westgate Mall from terrorists holding an unknown number of hostages. The troops were later locked up in a fierce firefight with the Somali militants inside the upmarket shopping complex in a final push to end a siege that has left 68 dead and about 100 injured.*” This elite squad from the KDF featured in this photograph is clad in full military regalia. The military officers are also equipped with sophisticated firearms, including the AK-47 and other firearms fastened to their apparel and cocked in readiness for combat. A total of six military officers are visible in this shot. They are dressed in bulletproof jackets and battlefield helmets, complete with ear muffs, in readiness for a fierce engagement. The theme of combat prowess is framed.

On the other hand, Fig 4.41: STD/24/P2 depicts a scene within the Westgate Mall building where security personnel have taken positions, lying prone in what seems like a fierce fire

exchange with the assailants. Four military officers are depicted herein: two in the foreground and the other two in the middle ground. All four officers are crawling on their bellies, taking cover from flying bullets. Towards the left middle ground are used rounds of ammunition, evidence of the ongoing, intense fire exchange. The scene is void of civilians, a clear indication that hostages on this floor are taking cover or have been evacuated, leaving the area a battlefield between the terrorists and the security forces. The theme of combat prowess is framed in this scene. The presence of security officers in action, as shown above, is an indication that the government has well-trained personnel to deal with terrorism.

Likewise, the frame indicates the commitment of the Kenyan government to enhance the safety of its citizens. All the photographs, such as Fig 4.45: DN/24/P1D, were published to feature the combat prowess and aimed at giving viewers hope (see Appendix II). The viewer sees that the government has taken fierce action against the assailants and that there is hope at the end of the tunnel. This frame is meant to appeal to and persuade the audience, therefore making them feel secure. The researcher, therefore, considers this theme positive because it offers security to viewers, and on the other hand, the terrorist group is made aware that swift action has been taken not only to rescue those taken hostage but also to deal decisively with the terrorists.

By framing combat prowess in the terror attack images published by the media, the perceived power of influence is communicated inadvertently. The images have various implications, depending on the perspective involved. For instance, the images may imply that terrorists are a formidable force to have managed to attack civilians and injure them in a country with armed forces. Therefore, the images may portray terrorists as capable of achieving their goals. On the other hand, the depiction of combat prowess in the published images may indicate the country's armed forces' response capabilities (Boukhars, 2021). The photographs foster a sense of patriotism and national unity because they showcase the security forces' skills, bravery, and determination to keep civilians secure. Therefore, the images evoke feelings of pride and encourage the public to support the country's defence efforts.

When the media frames images that highlight security forces' combat prowess, it instills public confidence in the government's ability to protect citizens. The images showcase the armed forces' effective response and future attack prevention strategies (Jones et al., 2021). Consequently, the images act as a deterrent message to the terrorists. It is expected that images will discourage individuals or groups from engaging in violent attacks because they will be met with deadly responses from the security forces. Furthermore, the images communicate resilience and defiance in the face of terrorism. The reason for this assertion is that images of combat prowess depict the security forces as courageous and unwavering in their commitment. Therefore, the public will have the perception that the armed forces are focused on safeguarding the country against adversity.

It has been shown that in line with Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model, the combat prowess frame can significantly impact public perception. The reason is that the repeated emphasis on tactical manoeuvres and military strength reinforces the narrative of state power and control. The explicit depiction of military presence and actions presents the situation denotatively. Through a connotative analysis, the images present deeper meanings of patriotism, security, and resilience. Therefore, the photographs can be regarded as symbols of national defence and defiance against terrorism. The images' ability to shape public opinion by portraying security forces in a heroic light and cultivating a sense of confidence in governmental response capabilities is aligned with the framing theory. Through semiotic analysis, the imagery can be unpacked, and elements like military regalia and battle formations can be interpreted as signs that communicate the government's readiness and resolve to counteract threats.

#### **4.2.9 Survivors' Grief**

Survivors' grief refers to the profound emotional pain and sorrow experienced by individuals who have lived through a traumatic event, such as a terrorist attack. In such cases, the individuals are coping with loss. In the context of the Westgate Mall attack, the survivors' grief frame would depict images and narratives that capture the heart-wrenching moments of mourning and loss. Photographs might show survivors at the scene or in memorial settings, visibly distressed, crying, or holding onto each other for comfort. Survivors' grief was featured in a total of four (4) photographs from the sampled data that

the research analysed. The *Daily Nation* published two (2) photographs featuring this frame, and *The Standard* and *The New York Times* published one (1) photograph each. Fig 4.22: DN/24/P3 and Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1 are examples of photographs that were analysed with respect to this frame.



**Fig 4.22: DN/24/P3**



**Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1**

One of the photographs featuring survivor's grief, Fig 4.22: DN/24/P3, depicts a group of mourners ferrying a corpse to the cemetery for burial. This image is accompanied by a descriptive caption that reads: *Relatives and Muslim faithful carry the body of Rehman Mehbub, 18, who was killed in crossfire between armed men and the police at the Westgate Shopping Mall on Sunday.* The mourners are in a sombre mood, with most of their heads slightly bent forward as they approach the burial site. An elderly man wearing an Islamic

kufi on his head is leading the procession towards the graveyard. The kufi on his head denotes him as the sheikh who oversees this burial ceremony. As per the Islamic religion, only men are allowed to bury the dead, and so this picture comprises solely male individuals. The body of the dead victim is wrapped in sheets and ferried to the burial site. Ironically, the front page of this issue presented a fierce battle against the assailants. Publishing this image on the third page of the newspaper is like giving the outcome of the battle. Terrorists are viewed as victors who have left a scourge of deaths. The themes of grief and death are framed.

Separately, Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1 depicts three persons, comprising two ladies and a young man. The mood portrayed by the people captured in this photograph is intense grief. The young man is seated in between a lady (left) and an unidentified person (right) on the concrete public bench. An elderly woman is bending towards the young man while holding him by her right hand. A description caption ascribed to this figure reads: “*Above, a man whose father was among the victims was comforted outside a mortuary.*” This caption plays a significant role in orienting the viewer to what the photograph is about. The three subjects visible in this picture are donned in black apparel as a social symbol, insinuating a moment of grief. This picture, published by *The New York Times* newspaper, symbolises the culmination of the three-day siege at the Westgate Mall premises.

It is ironic to the viewer that for the previous two days' issues, the security personnel were on a mission to rescue the hostages and evict the assailants, but the viewer ends up seeing photographs of mourners instead of pictures of triumph against the terrorists. To this end, terrorists are portrayed as victors who have left many dead and multiple injured. The frame of grief and loss is evinced in this photograph. These findings concur with Hutchison (2014), who examined how photographs of the 2004 Asian tsunami as published by *The New York Times* depicted victims of the disaster. The findings in Hutchison's study established that victims were portrayed with faces depicting extreme grief. Hutchison concluded that such depiction is a common media trope when reporting on catastrophes. Publishing such a photograph (Fig 4.22 DN/24/P2 and Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1) therefore portrays terrorists as victors and hence inadvertently aggrandises the course of terrorism.

The survivors' grief frame, as portrayed in media coverage of the Westgate Mall attack, shows how the repetition of grief-filled imagery can evoke strong emotional responses from readers. The use of this frame to shape the public's perception is congruent with Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model. The explicit, literal scenes of mourning, such as funerals and sorrowful faces, represent the denotative meanings. In contrast, connotative meanings of collective loss, helplessness, and emotional devastation can be drawn from the subjects' facial expressions. The images' focus of attention on the personal costs of terrorism, which positions the survivors as symbols of pain and endurance rather than victors in the battle, aligns with the framing theory. Through semiotic analysis, the symbolisation of grief by visual cues, such as black clothing and bowed heads, is assessed. Ultimately, the frame elicits empathy, depicting the devastating aftermath of terrorism and shifting focus from combat victory to the human toll, and this influences the public's emotional engagement with the event.

#### 4.2.10 Victim's Death

Victims' death refers to the portrayal and representation of individuals who have lost their lives during a catastrophic event such as a terrorist attack. This frame captures the finality and tragedy of lives cut short by such violence, emphasising the devastating human cost. In the context of the Westgate Mall attack, this frame would include photographs and narratives depicting the aftermath of the attack, showing bodies of those who were killed, covered or uncovered, amidst the scene of destruction. The frame of victims' deaths was featured in a total of three (3) photographs published from the sampled data. The *Daily Nation* published two (2) photographs, and *The New York Times* published one (1) photograph. Fig 4.14: DN/22/P2F and Fig 4.23: NYT/22/P1 below are samples of photographs published alluding to the victim's death frame.



Fig 4.14: DN/22/P2F



Fig 4.23: NYT/22/P1

The first image featuring death, Fig 4.14: DN/22/P2F, depicts a deserted scene of an outdoor kitchen setup located on the rooftop of the Westgate Mall building. Two adults are framed in this shot. The picture portrays a male and female adult, both of black descent. An Asian lady featured on the right side of the picture is seen directing a black staff member to withdraw a cupboard drawer that seems to be concealing the corpse of a victim killed by the terrorists. The victim's feet can be seen on the floor, following the gesturing direction indicated by the Asian lady. Several kitchen appliances, such as a microwave, cupboards, ovens, and utensils, are scattered on the floor. This photograph is assigned a descriptive caption that reads: "*The chaotic scene where broadcaster Rahila Adatia was shot dead.*" It is through reading the caption that the viewer gets to know that the victim lying on the floor and concealed by the cupboards is dead. The scene is chaotic, as evidenced by the litter dropped on the floor. The overriding frame of this image is that of death.

On the other hand, Fig 4.46: NYT/22/P1E depicts a chaotic scene in which a total of five bodies lie on the ground. An individual who seems to be a paramedic is squatting in an attempt to assist an injured or otherwise dead victim in getting on the stretcher for evacuation. The other individual in a reflector vest is seen walking on the adjacent path toward other injured or dead victims. The caption ascribed to this photograph reads: "*The injured and dead lay side by side after the shootings.*" The scene depicted appears to be the rooftop where the cooking was ongoing before the invasion of the assailants. Blood stains appear smeared and dry on the cabro floor of this upper section of the Westgate Mall building. The victims' apparel is stained with blood oozing from gunshot injuries. This scene is horrific and traumatising from the viewer's perspective. The frame of death, defeat, and horror is evinced in this photograph.

The framing of victims' deaths in the publication of terror attack images by the media plays a notable role in shaping public perception and understanding of the incident. In this case, the framing influences how the information is presented and contextualised. Consequently, the portrayal can influence how the public interprets and makes sense of the news. The depiction of victims' deaths through published images of terror attacks evokes emotions in readers and viewers. Particularly, the sight of dead victims elicits empathy, sadness, anger, or fear among public members. Consequently, it is expected that such an emotional impact

will influence people's attitudes toward the terrorist and may inform the response to terrorism that such people would take.

Secondly, publishing images portraying the deaths of victims signifies vulnerability. The photographs are a reflection of the affected communities and individuals' vulnerability to terrorism. The media emphasises the human toll of terror attacks by publishing such pictures. Consequently, the publications can foster a sense of compassion among the affected people. The images also instigate a desire for justice and support. However, the images may unintentionally perpetuate the terrorists' goal of spreading fear among the targeted people.

Images of victims' deaths, published by the media while covering terror attack events, can shape the narratives surrounding the incident. This happens when the media publishes selected images accompanied by informative text that narrates the storyline. The depiction emphasises specific aspects of the event, and this influences how people perceive the incident. For instance, the public learns about the motivations behind the terrorist attack. This way, the public can assess the impact of terror on society and the effectiveness of counterterrorism measures.

Another impact of media-published images portraying terror victims' deaths is political. In this case, the public may be influenced to form opinions about policies. Therefore, the media, through the publication of images showing victims' deaths, frames discussions on political issues such as national security and counterterrorism strategies. This way, the media fosters public support for specific policies and government responses, especially those aimed at preventing future deaths. However, it should be noted that media houses should be considerate when publishing images, especially those depicting victims' deaths. The reason is that such images are expected to have emotional impacts on the affected families and the public in general. Therefore, photojournalists should be keen to preserve the victims' and their families' dignity (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 2022). It is vital to shade or blur some parts of the images or shroud the faces to avoid upsetting families and the public.

The portrayal of victims' deaths in reporting the Westgate Mall attack aligns with Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model. Upon seeing the graphic images published by the newspapers, readers' emotional responses and interpretation of events can be influenced. Denotatively, the images capture the literal scene of death and chaos, such as bodies lying on the ground, and this conveys the brutal finality of the victims' fate. The deeper emotional responses that evoke feelings of fear, vulnerability, and loss within the readers are created when one derives the connotative meaning of the events. The explanation of how these images focus on the victims' deaths, which makes readers perceive the events as a tragedy centred on human loss rather than a battle for security or justice, can be linked to the framing theory. Through semiotic analysis, symbols like blood-stained clothing and scattered kitchenware signify death and disorder, amplifying the horror of the attack. Such framing can shape public discourse around terrorism, stirring emotions that inform opinions on security policies and responses while inadvertently furthering the terrorists' goals of spreading fear.

#### **4.2.11 Summary**

The analysis of the types of frames used by newspapers in reporting the Westgate Mall terrorist attack revealed that the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* used various frames. The pain and misery frame showcases the intense suffering of victims through graphic images depicting injuries and emotional distress, aiming to evoke sympathy and fear among audiences. In contrast, the heroic rescuers frame emphasises the bravery of armed civilians and security personnel, portraying their efforts to evacuate victims and combat the attackers, which shapes public perception positively and fosters admiration for these rescuers. However, the balance in coverage is crucial to avoid overshadowing the victims' experiences, ensuring a nuanced narrative that respects both their suffering and the heroism displayed during the crisis.

On the other hand, the survivors' vulnerability frame depicted individuals, especially women and children, as emotionally and physically fragile in the aftermath of the event. On the other hand, the humanitarianism frame emphasised collective efforts to provide aid and support to victims, highlighting compassion and resilience in the face of adversity. The destruction of property frame illustrated the extensive damage inflicted during the attack,

using powerful imagery of smoke and wreckage to convey the scale of the disaster. Together, these frames shape public perception, reinforcing themes of vulnerability, humanitarian response, and the physical and emotional toll of terrorism.

The survivor's grief and despair frame illustrates the profound emotional pain and sorrow experienced by survivors following the attack. Photographs highlight individuals in distress, mourning loved ones, and experiencing helplessness. For example, images from the *Daily Nation* and *The New York Times* depict wounded victims and grieving individuals, evoking empathy and emphasising the human cost of the tragedy. However, such portrayals can sensationalise the event and potentially violate the dignity of survivors. Similarly, the survivors' dread frame shows fright among the victims through facial expressions and postures of survivors. Characterised by frowning faces and open mouths, images showcase the fear and shock experienced during the attack. Multiple photographs across various publications convey a sense of urgency and panic among individuals escaping the scene. These depictions serve to heighten public emotional response, reinforcing the impact of the terror attack while also presenting the media's role in shaping perceptions of fear and vulnerability.

The combat prowess frame focuses on the skill and bravery exhibited by security forces during the Westgate Mall attack, highlighting their tactical abilities and courage under pressure. It emphasises the heroic actions taken by military personnel and law enforcement, showcasing their efforts to regain control and rescue hostages through images of armed officers in action. Photographs featuring this frame were published by the *Daily Nation* and *Standard* newspapers. The images depicted scenes that evoke patriotism and instil public confidence in the government's ability to protect citizens. In contrast, the survivors' grief frame captures the profound emotional pain of those affected by the attack, illustrating moments of mourning and loss and ultimately shifting focus from combat success to the human toll of terrorism.

#### **4.3 Compositional Elements of the Photographs**

The second objective of this study sought to review the photographs' compositional elements. The *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* published images with different compositional characteristics during the Westgate Mall attack period. The

purpose of this analysis was to visually frame the terrorist attack based on the components of the photographs circulated by print media. Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) second (stylistic-semiotic) and third (connotative approach) levels of visual assessment were adopted. Using the second level of analysis, an evaluation of how meaning is inferred through various compositional elements was conducted. The main focus was to determine the framing of the images based on the angle of view, proximity, image size, and shot proximity, as well as their connotative implications. Additionally, the components of the photographs were assessed in line with the objects, subjects, or people regarding how they exemplify specific meanings and concepts. The analysis entailed a review of photographs' compositional elements, in each case, in terms of various sizes, different camera angles, and shot proximity options. The *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* published the images analysed.

The images were labelled using the image number (from Fig 4.1 to Fig 4:50), then the respective newspaper abbreviations, followed by the publication date and page number. Specifically, the *Daily Nation* was abbreviated as DN, *The Standard* as STD, and *The New York Times* as NYT. Dates were also represented by abbreviated codes, such as 22 for September 22nd, 23 for September 23rd, and 24 for September 24th. Page identification utilised the prefix "P" followed by the page number. In cases where multiple images of the same category appeared on the same page, the first image's page number was designated with the alphabetical letter "A," the next with "B," and so on. For example, an image with the code Fig 4.1: DN/22/P1 signifies that the photograph was the first figure in numbering (Fig 4.1) and published by *Daily Nation* on September 22, 2013, on page 1 of the edition. The code Fig 4.38: STD/23/P2B indicates that this was image number 38 (Fig 4.38), which was the second photograph published by *The Standard* on September 23, 2013, on the second page. An image labelled Fig 4.43: NYT/24/P3 denotes that the image was number 43 (Fig 4.43) published by *The New York Times* on September 24, 2013, on page 3.

#### **4.3.1. Image Size**

Various newspapers have different standards for determining image sizes. Additionally, the print display rate differs among newspapers. For instance, as per *Daily Nation*, the print display rate cards are determined by the proportion of the page an image takes. For

example, an image covering a full page measures 33 cm x 6 col. junior page images are 24 cm x 4 col, while half-page ones are 33 cm x 3 col or 16.3 cm x 6 col (Nation Media Group, 2021). Quarter-page images are 16.3 cm x 3 col or 12.6 cm x 4 col or 8.5 col x 6 col, while one-eighth-page ones are 12.6 cm x 2 col or 8.5 cm x 3 col (Nation Media Group, 2021). This study adopted the *Daily Nation's* units of measurement to determine the size of the pictures published. The image sizes were distinguished into three broad categories as: large, medium, or small.

First, a published image was considered large if its dimension was higher or equal to 24 cm x 4 col. This category comprised all image sizes that fell between the junior and the full-page sizes. The researcher observed that the main reason that some images are made larger than others in a newspaper is to enhance visual appeal. Secondly, the size of an image was deemed medium when its dimension measured greater than or equal to 33 cm x 3 col or 16.3 cm x 6 col (half-page) and 16.3 cm x 3 col or 12.6 cm x 4 col or 8.5 col x 6 col (quarter page), but not equal to or higher than 24 cm x 4 col (junior page). The researcher observed that medium-sized images in newspapers allow space for additional visual appeals or informational appeals in the limited space available. Finally, an image was deemed small when its dimension measurement was equal to or smaller than 12.6 cm x 2 col or 8.5 cm x 3 col (an eighth page). Similar to medium images, newspaper photographs are made small to allow space for other visual appeals or to allow room for additional information appeals in terms of story articles. Considering the characterisation of images per compositional elements, particularly size, Table 2 summarises the categorisation.

**Table 4.2: Image Categorization by Size**

No.	Newspaper	DN	STD	NYT	Total	Percentage
1	Number of Pictures	21	19	10	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>
2	Percentage	42%	38%	20%	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
No	Type of Frame	DN	STD	NYT	TOTAL	Percentage
1	Large	5	7	4	<b>16</b>	<b>32%</b>
2	Medium	5	7	3	<b>15</b>	<b>30%</b>
3	Small	11	5	3	<b>19</b>	<b>38%</b>
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

As indicated in Table 2, the newspapers published large, medium, and small sizes of images on different dates during the Westgate Mall attack. Small images were the most common across the three newspapers, the *Daily Nation*, *The New York Times*, and *The Standard*,

with a total of 19 pictures, accounting for 38% of the total frames analyzed. Large images were also significant, with 16 frames representing 32% of the total. Medium photographs were the least frequent, with 15 frames, making up 30% of the total. These results indicate that small images dominated the coverage, though large and medium photos were also significant. In the next section, a critical analysis of each compositional element is presented.

**Large-Sized Images:** It was found that 16 out of the 50 images that were analysed were large. Five of the large images were from *Daily Nation*, seven from *The Standard*, and four from *The New York Times*. The intentional use of large images by newspapers in reporting incidents like terror attacks is a deliberate editorial decision aimed at capturing readers' attention, creating a connection with the audience, and influencing public opinion. Therefore, large images help the media in reporting events and shaping societal responses to traumatic events. An example is Fig 4.30 STD/22/P2A, published by *The Standard* newspaper. The image shows a man running, carrying a child. Behind the man are two women and another elderly man, as shown below.



Fig 4.30: STD/22/P2A

The *Daily Nation* also published large images. An example is that of the photo published on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2013 on the first page of the newspaper, Fig 4.20: DN/24/P1B. The image shows rescuers running. Other large images published by the newspapers were

Fig 4.1: DN/22/P1, Fig 4.16: DN/22/P3C, Fig 4.17: DN/23/P1B, Fig 4.20: DN/24/P1B, Fig 4.43: DN/22/P3, Fig 4.23: NYT/23/P1, Fig 4.24: NYT/22/P3, Fig 4.46: NYT/22/P1E, Fig 4.10: STD/24/P1B, Fig 4.33: STD/22/P3D, Fig 4.34: STD/22/P3E, Fig 4.37: STD/23/P2, Fig 4.41: STD/24/P2, and Fig 4.47: STD/22/P2B (see Appendix II).



**Fig 4.20: DN/24/P1B**

The research findings agree with existing literature regarding the use of large images in print media. For instance, Cope et al. (2011) indicate that large and vivid imaging increases the chances of the object being viewed more favourably by the audience. Additionally, Ulloa et al. (2015) affirm that news with large images is attractive to readers. Hoffman and Wallach (2007) noted that news on the front page of a newspaper accompanied by large photographs has more influence upon readers compared to the news with small photographs in the inner parts of the newspaper. Consequently, information can be passed easily and recalled for a long time. Since the journalists' focus is to ensure their news is viewed and readership of their newspapers increases, they tend to post large images. This happens, especially when the news is covering a recent popular or traumatising event that has affected several people. However, in the pursuit of increasing readership and viewership of certain print media, the publication of large images indirectly becomes the intended action to fall into the terrorists' trap.

Although the publication of large images of the Westgate Shopping Mall terror attack by newspapers to report the incident may be regarded as part of the responsibility of the print media to inform the public, the act raises ethical considerations regarding the balance between informative reporting and the possible harm the graphic content can cause and

how this may impact public perception and emotional responses to such events. According to Pfefferbaum et al. (2014), the reaction to large images depicting terror can either shape public opinion by framing terrorism as a crime against humanity or cause trauma among the affected.

Previous studies have indicated that frequent viewing of large images of terror victims caused post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among those who had to watch the death or severe injury of a relative, family member, or close friend (Ahern et al., 2004; McLeish & Del Ben, 2008). Large images can influence emotions and create a lasting impression on readers. Consequently, this framing done by *The New York Times*, *The Standard*, and the *Daily Nation* may have fostered fear and anxiety among the readers. According to Jařab (2020), terrorists rely on the images shared by the media to spread fear to people. As much as the reporting might have been accurate, the use of large images also fostered sensationalism, probably affecting the mental health and emotional well-being of some readers.

The editors could have considered reducing the number of graphic images and replacing them with descriptive texts. Therefore, it would be appropriate to adhere to established journalism standards and guidelines when reporting on sensitive topics like terror attacks. However, it should be noted that the framing of images depicting terror attacks is a complex issue because there is a delicate balance between freedom of the press and responsible reporting, since it is unclear whether restriction of the publication of graphic images in the aftermath of a terror attack would infringe on journalistic freedom or protect the public interest.

It has been noted that the analysis of large images in terror reporting aligns with the multimodality theory, which posits that meaning is communicated through multiple modes, such as visual and textual elements. In this context, large images served as a powerful mode for conveying emotional and cognitive responses to traumatic events, and this enhanced the textual narrative. According to Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model, images contribute to framing by amplifying the emotional impact of news stories and influencing public perception. The deliberate use of large visuals in newspapers like the *Daily Nation*, *Standard*, and *New York Times* demonstrates how visual framing, as part of

the editorial strategy, can affect societal reactions to terror incidents. The impact is effected either by informing or causing emotional distress.

**Medium-Sized Images:** It was found that 15 out of the 50 images that were analysed were medium-sized. Five of the medium-sized images were from the *Daily Nation*, seven from *The Standard*, and three from *The New York Times*. The publication of medium-sized images in newspapers when reporting terror attacks represents an editorial strategy that seeks to balance visual information with the ethical considerations of sensitivity and responsible journalism. Therefore, medium-sized images are used in shaping the narrative pertaining to traumatic events while sustaining informative reporting and minimising emotional potential harm to the audience. Three representative images were analysed. The images were published in different sections of the newspapers, depending on the mood the publishers wanted to convey. The *Daily Nation* published a medium-sized photograph on the first page of its edition of the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2013, Fig 4.5: DN/24/P2B. The image shows soldiers squatting. The police officers look alert and prepared to counter terrorists.



**Fig 4.5: DN/24/P2B**

*The New York Times* also published a medium-sized image, Fig 4.8: NYT/23/P1A, on the first page of the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 edition. The photograph shows people getting out of the shopping mall that was attacked. The individuals are crawling as they move to safety. Other medium images published by the newspapers were Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B, Fig 4.4: DN/24/P1, Fig 4.22: DN/24/P3, Fig 4.42: DN/22/P2C, Fig 4.6: NYT/22/P2, Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C, Fig 4.9: STD/24/P1, Fig 4.29: STD/22/P1, Fig 4.31: STD/22/P3C, Fig 4.32:

STD/22/P3B, Fig 4.35: STD/22/P3F, Fig 4.36: STD/23/P1, and Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3 (See Appendix II).



**Fig 4.8:**  
**NYT/23/P1A**

The publication of medium-sized images by *The New York Times*, the *Daily Nation*, and *The Standard* in reporting the Westgate Shopping Mall terror attack demonstrated a balanced and responsible approach to journalism. The reason is that this framing was appropriate for conveying essential information to the public while still regulating the potential emotional consequences for readers (Valkenburg et al., 1999). Framing refers to the selection of aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in communicating an event or concept (Bilgen, 2013). By using medium-sized images, the three newspapers were able to define the terrorism problem appropriately, explain the causal interpretation, and perform a moral evaluation. Rather than push the hard news to the public, the newspaper editors used medium-sized images to make it informative. The photographs were used to promote a theme pertaining to the reporting of terrorist incidents (Schmid, 2021). This way, the editors framed the images in a way that reduced or softened the ingredients of real-life terror by minimising drama, tragedy, shock, anger, grief, fear, and panic, as suggested by Holman et al. (2013). The overall implication is that the medium-sized images demonstrated sensitivity to readers from the editors, who were considerate of their readers' emotional well-being. This type of responsible reporting, using medium-sized images, can foster trustworthiness and credibility. The two aspects are vital for maintaining the media's role as an information source during critical events.

The use of medium-sized images in reporting terror attacks is congruent with multimodality theory which emphasises the role of different communicative modes such

as visual and textual, in shaping meaning. In this case, medium-sized images created a balance between informing the public and minimising emotional harm. According to Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model, the framing of these images served to influence public perception. The reason is that the framing provided essential information without sensationalising the events. By adopting this approach, the three newspapers, the *Daily Nation*, *Standard*, and *New York Times*, demonstrated responsible journalism. The reason is that the photojournalists framed terrorism in a way that informs while safeguarding emotional well-being, thereby enhancing trust and credibility.

**Small-Sized Images:** It was found that 19 out of the 50 images that were analysed were small-sized. A total of 11 of the small images were from the *Daily Nation*, five from *The Standard*, and three were from *The New York Times*. Small-sized images are used in reporting terror events as a photojournalism strategy aimed at mitigating potential psychological distress, adhering to ethical considerations, and challenging traditional sensationalism, thereby fostering a more measured and responsible approach to visual storytelling in the context of sensitive and traumatic events. However, the use of numerous small images, especially those published on the second and third pages of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, was meant to create room for more pictures, and this resulted in the denationalisation of the terror attack. One of the small-sized images was published by the *Daily Nation* on page 2 of the September 22, 2013, edition. The image shows a man in gloves escorting another whose clothes seem bathed in blood (Fig 4.12: DN/22/P2A). The man must have been injured during the attack. Other small images that were published by the three newspapers were Fig 4.3: DN/22/P2G, Fig 4.11: DN/22/P2, Fig 4.13: DN/22/P2E, Fig 4.14: DN/22/P2F, Fig 4.15: DN/22/P3A, Fig 4.18: DN/23/P1C, Fig 4.19: DN/23/P2, Fig 4.21: DN/24/P2, Fig 4.44: DN/24/P1C, Fig 4.45: DN/24/P1D, Fig 4.26: NYT/23/P1B, Fig 4.27: NYT/23/P1D, Fig 4.28: NYT/23/P2, Fig 4.38: STD/23/P2B, Fig 4.39: STD/23/P2C, Fig 4.40: STD/23/P2D, Fig 4.48: STD/22/P2C, and Fig 4.49: STD/23/P2F (see Appendix II).



**Fig 4.12: DN/22/P2A**

The publication of small images by the *Daily Nation*, *New York Times*, and *The Standard* could have demonstrated a responsible and sensitive approach to journalism. However, since the dailies published numerous such images, the photojournalists failed to minimise the potential emotional harm to readers. Although the editors were fulfilling the crucial role of informing the public about the terror incidents, their use of numerous small images of the incident made the reporting graphic because the photographs denoted the ordeals the victims underwent. Images tend to create a long-lasting impression on the public compared to written descriptions, however vivid the editors may try to make them appear. Numerous and graphic small images can evoke strong emotional responses just like medium or large ones (DiGrazia et al., 2013). Therefore, using small images by the three newspapers was deliberate, and this increased the risk of causing distress and trauma to the audience by sensationalising the terror attack.

In this case, editors displayed graphic content through the many small-sized images. As much as the editors sought to fulfil their role of information provision, they caused distress to the public by exposing people to graphic content (Abdalla et al., 2021). However, in support of the use of numerous small-sized images, some people may argue that the excessive sanitisation or minimisation of visual representation of terror events might lead to a lack of awareness about their severity. The reason is that by using fewer images, the

media could be downplaying the impact of a terror attack, which could hinder the public's understanding of the gravity of such incidents and the importance of appropriate responses and preventive measures. Instead of publishing numerous and graphic small images, it could have been more responsible to publish fewer such images, supplemented with contextually relevant descriptive text and expert analysis. This way, the readers could have been adequately informed without exposing them to unnecessary emotional harm. According to Schmid (2021), print media's coverage of terror attacks should be restricted to "facts" and must not imply encouragement, glorification, or condoning of acts of terrorism. Additionally, there is a need to avoid causing unnecessary panic, alarm, or stress. Therefore, the focus should be on humanising the victims and reducing the prominence of imagery of the perpetrators while promoting narratives of community and cross-community solidarity.

The photojournalists achieved their goal of evoking emotions and conveying a message to the public, through the use of numerous graphic images that sensationalised the incident. The reason is that when a news story is framed with pictures, consumers can decode the message easily. Therefore, the audience is more likely to be attracted to such a story than to stories presented without photos (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2018). The effectiveness of the use of small, clear images to present news explains why editors always prune down competing pictures and frame their news stories with the best images, even if they are small in size (Griffin, 2004b). Bendito (2005) asserts that the use of pictures in print media is an effective strategy for attracting readers and sharing information with the public. The reason is that photographs appeal to both sight and emotion and stay longer in the reader's memory than written words. By the use of such pictures, editors of the *Daily Nation*, *The New York Times*, and *The Standard* presented the terror attack in a graphic manner.

The use of numerous small-sized images in reporting terror events is in sync with the lens of multimodality theory. The reason is that multiple images were used to facilitate communication and meaning. While small images are often perceived as less intrusive, in this case, their abundance contributed to a heightened emotional impact, blurring the line between responsible journalism and sensationalism. According to Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) quadratic model, this framing could heighten the emotional response

of the audience, as the repeated use of small graphic images amplified the traumatic visual narrative. Although the intent was to inform, the saturation of small images risks overstimulation and distress, undermining ethical journalistic goals of balanced reporting.

#### **4.3.2 Camera Angle/Angle of View**

Camera angle, or angle of view, is another compositional strategy evident in the images used to report the Westgate Mall terror attack incident because it plays a pivotal role in shaping the narrative, influencing perception, and evoking emotional responses. The choice of camera angle is a considered decision made by photojournalists and editors to impact how the audience interprets the event. Camera angle is defined as the measurement in degrees of the width of the frame from the point of the lens (MasterClass, 2021). According to Sakota (2023), the particular location where the lens is placed when taking a photograph is the camera angle. Usually, the camera's location in relation to the object to be captured and the subject the project entails has a significant impact on how viewers perceive the subject. The angle of view is customarily measured in degrees.

Camera angles influence the visual representation of the images, thus influencing the nature of the communication that a photojournalist intends to make. For instance, a journalist can create a particular interpersonal narrative for the audience. An example is the use of a low-angle shot, meaning the camera person looks up at the object when taking the shot. Similarly, the angle of view influences the power relations between the subject and the reader. Shields (2014) indicates that through the choice of lens, perspective, and camera angle, the photojournalist predetermines the readers' view on the issue under analysis. Low-angle perspectives that include shots taken looking up at the object make the object appear to have power over the viewer, while high-angle shots seem to diminish the subjects.

Typically, fewer degrees imply a small angle, and this means a tighter frame on the subject. On the other hand, a high angle is characterised by more degree and a wider frame, making the object appear smaller in size and vulnerable (Kindem, 2015). The camera angle can influence the audience's reactions. In this study, camera angles such as high, eye-level, low, bird's-eye view or overhead, medium shot, Dutch tilt, and ground-level variations were assessed. The *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* published

various camera angle shots in September 2013. For instance, there were high-angle, eye-angle, and low-angle shots. However, the three angles of view (high, medium, and low) were the common ones.

**High-Angle.** High-angle images are those taken by the photographer placing the lens a few inches above the subject. Therefore, the images were taken while the journalist was looking down on the objects. Additionally, the photographer may have tilted their camera downward before taking the shot. In a high camera angle, the camera points down toward the subject (Hutchison, 2023). A high camera angle is defined as the angle of depression in relation to the camera position and the subject (Mission Valley ROP, 2023). For example, an angle of depression occurs when the photographer is at a higher altitude than the subject they are photographing. When the photographer focuses on a subject at a distance lower than the camera, an angle occurs between the imaginary horizontal line (determined by the eye level of the photographer) and the line connecting the subject with the camera lens.

A number of photographs published in the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* were high-angle images. One such image is Fig 4.3: DN/22/P2G, which was published on the second page of the *Daily Nation* on September 22, 2013. The image depicts two emergency responders attending to an injured person lying on the ground. The responders appear to be administering first aid or providing some form of medical assistance, likely in response to a crisis or accident. The person receiving aid seems to be conscious but lying in a vulnerable position. The red and orange vests worn by the responders suggest they are part of an organised emergency response team, possibly paramedics or Red Cross volunteers.

The photograph is taken from a high-angle shot, where the camera is positioned above the subjects, looking down. This angle often emphasises the vulnerability of the person being helped and creates a sense of urgency and attention toward the rescue efforts. The high angle also gives viewers a broader perspective of the scene, highlighting the responders' actions and the gravity of the situation. Fahmy (2010) suggests that such imagery, especially in the context of disaster reporting, has the power to shape the audience's emotional response and alter their perception of the event. The use of themes like horror

and despair is a deliberate choice to evoke empathy and highlight human suffering. Additionally, the photojournalist has utilised high-angle shots in other instances to reinforce these themes. Other images taken from a high-angle include Fig 4.12: DN/22/P2A, Fig 4.22: DN/24/P2, and Fig 4.6: NYT/22/P2 (see Appendix II).



**Fig 4.3: DN/22/P2G**

On the first page of *The New York Times* of September 23, 2013, a high-angle image was published. The photograph may have been taken from a high angle of slightly less than 90 degrees. The image shows a woman and two children lying down (Fig 4.6: NYT/22/P2). They are hiding behind a kitchen counter. They are also shielded by the partition that separates the kitchen from the rest of the area. A plastic bag can be seen adjacent to them. Probably these were shoppers who were caught up in the commotion. The photo carries significant emotional and narrative implications given that it is taken from a high angle. This perspective diminishes the apparent stature of the woman and two children in the photograph, presenting them in a less dominant position within the frame. The act of hiding behind a kitchen counter further reinforces a sense of vulnerability and defencelessness. According to James (2021), such photographs show the physical and emotional turmoil or loss the individual is undergoing. This spatial arrangement is depicted in the photograph as the woman and children lie down, seeking refuge behind the kitchen counter and shielded by a partition that separates the kitchen from the rest of the area.

The high-angle perspective in this image symbolically conveys a state of reduced physical and emotional strength, emphasising the subjects' vulnerability. The sheltering gesture and defensive posture may elicit feelings of pity and empathy in the viewer (Brick Central,

2022). The reason is that the subjects appear to be navigating a situation that requires protection and concealment. The choice of a high-angle shot enhances the emotional impact of the image, creating a heightened sense of tension, fear, and urgency. It invites viewers to emotionally engage with the subjects' experiences, recognising the universal emotions associated with fear and the instinct to protect loved ones. Furthermore, the spatial context provided by the high-angle perspective contributes to the overall storytelling of the image. It highlights the physical barriers, such as the kitchen counter and partition, that the subjects are using for protection. The elevated viewpoint emphasises the subjects' isolation and concealment, reinforcing their attempt to find safety amidst a threatening situation.



**Fig 4.6: NYT/22/P2**

Although the use of high-angle images by newspapers in reporting a terror attack can generally be regarded as a connotation of desperation for the subject, it also depicts superiority in some instances. Therefore, the photographs influence public perception and emotional response, affecting the framing of the event. For instance, previous research shows that images taken from above or from a high angle may be judged negatively because the reader views them from above (Maathuis, 2010). Therefore, in photography, a high camera angle is considered demeaning to the subject, considering the camera is strategically positioned above the subject and pointing downwards (James, 2021). This makes the subject featured in the photograph appear short and stout. In terrorism reporting,

high-angle shots may connote weakness, passivity, and insignificance (Valkenburg et al., 1999). A high camera angle is often used when a photojournalist intends to frame the subject as being cornered. In some cases, the high-angle images of soldiers are meant to indicate how the officers have been cornered. On the other hand, high-angle images of civilians portray them as small, weak, and vulnerable. The images portray drama to convey the emotions associated with the terrorist attack.

**Eye-Level Angle.** Another compositional strategy adopted by photojournalists when reporting terror is the intentional utilisation of eye-level angle shots to establish a direct and intimate visual connection between the viewer and the subjects. The approach fosters a sense of eye contact that helps readers understand the struggles and emotional disturbances experienced by the victims. This deliberate approach enhances empathy and serves as a compelling storytelling device by making the situation real. According to Sutherland (2004), eye-level shots are used in factual situations to make readers believe the scene is real. The publication of such images conveys the human impact of terrorism and compels the audience to engage with the narratives on a deeper emotional level. Eye-level shots were published by the newspapers when reporting the Westgate Mall terror attack.

For instance, on the first page of *The New York Times* of September 23, 2013, there was an eye-level image, Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1. The photograph shows a group of people, likely family or close friends, are consoling a man who appears to be grieving or in emotional distress. Two women are seen gently comforting the man, providing both emotional and physical support. The setting appears to be outside, with the bench indicating a public or semi-public space, such as a park or courtyard, perhaps near a hospital or community centre. This photograph is taken from an eye-level angle, which places the camera directly at the subject's eye height.

The eye-level shot allows viewers to feel more connected to the scene, as it mimics how a person would naturally view the situation. This angle fosters empathy by placing the viewer on the same plane as the subjects, making the interaction appear more personal and intimate, and emphasising the emotional intensity of the moment. The image conveys a sense of care, compassion, and solidarity during a difficult time. Most of the other images

were normal eye-level angle shots. Such photographs include Fig 4.12: DN/22/P2A, Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B, Fig 4.43: DN/22/P3, Fig 4.19: DN/23/P2, Fig 4.22: DN/24/P2, Fig 4.46: NYT/22/P1E, Fig 4.24: NYT/22/P3, Fig 4.30: STD/22/P2A, Fig 4.47: STD/22/P2B, Fig 4.32: STD/22/P3B, and Fig 4.38: STD/23/P2B (see Appendix II).



**Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1**

The use of an eye-level angle of view in shooting the images that were published by the newspapers during the terrorist attack on the Westgate Shopping Mall makes the events appear realistic and conveys a natural point of view to the audience. Such images offer a natural and relatable point of view because they present scenes from a perspective that mimics how a person would see events in real life (Spence & Navarro, 2011). Therefore, a sense of immersion that allows readers to empathise with the victims, witness the gravity of the situation, and understand the impact of the terror attack on the affected individuals is created. Eye-level shots are viewed from a neutral perspective. Additionally, when a shot is taken from an eye-level angle, the resultant image can be trusted more than those taken from lowered or raised angles (Baranowski & Hecht, 2017). The implication is that photojournalists should try to apply the most appropriate angle of view when taking photos. It should be noted that the eye-level camera angle is drawn from human sensory behaviour and mimics how humans see in real life. Human eyes are always connected to the subjects they are interacting with. The eye-level camera angle is often used when the photographer intends to draw emotions through the facial expression of the subject. The eye-level angle is perfect for conveying emotion and picking up facial detail and expression. Shooting eye-

level photographs makes images appear more natural. The reason is that the images are like what one would actually see. However, this angle of view may leave some photographs a little dull. Additionally, eye-level shots of graphic and realistic imagery may cause distress to readers, particularly those directly impacted by the attack.

**Low-Angle Shots.** The strategic utilisation of low-angle shots in the visual representation of terror-related news reporting functions as a potent tool for conveying dominance and power. Shots taken from a low angle make the object more superior and positively judged because the audience looks at it from below. A low-angle shot may depict an object or person as powerful and important (Merkt et al., 2022). The reason is that it fosters a perceptual hierarchy that positions the subject as superior, thereby influencing public perception and reinforcing the narrative of authority within the context of the depicted terror issues (Wetzstein, 2017). Therefore, in addition to high-angle and normal eye-level images, low-angle photographs were published by the newspapers under analysis. In this case, a low-angle shot is taken by the cameraman looking up at the subject from below their eye level (Sutherland, 2004). Therefore, the photographer shoots upwards, which might force them to sit or squat. A low camera angle can therefore be defined as the angle of elevation in relation to the camera position and the subject being photographed (Mission Valley ROP, 2023). The angle of elevation is inversely proportional to the angle of depression. This means that the elevation angle is the opposite of the angle of depression. The elevation angle occurs when the photographer focuses on a subject(s) at a distance higher than the camera.

By publishing photographs captured from a lower vantage point, such as ground level or a slight tilt upward, photojournalists create a visual dynamic where the subject appears towering and dominant in the frame. This deliberate compositional choice is a technical decision for communicating power dynamics and dominance. Fig 4.46: NYT/23/P1E is one of the low-angle shot images published by *The New York Times*.



**Fig 4.46: NYT/23/P1E**

As can be seen, the photograph was probably taken from a lower floor. It shows rescuers with guns walking up the elevator holding short guns that they are pointing towards the top of a building where they suspect the terrorists who attacked the building could be hiding (Fig 4.46: NYT/23/P1E). The image portrays the rescuers as courageous individuals willing to confront the dangerous situation to save lives and protect civilians. The low angle emphasises the rescuers' determination and commitment to their life-saving and counter-terrorism missions. The pointed guns and the upward perspective add tension and suspense to the scene. Such a view leaves the reader wondering what might have happened next. The framing emphasises the sense of authority among the subjects. The image has effectively conveyed the perceived dominance of authorities and security forces as the counterforce against terrorism (Hoffmann et al., 2023). The reason is that the low-angle shot is a compositional strategy that creates a symbolic hierarchy of the police, who are visually elevated above the viewer.

Usage of low-angle images heightens the impact of the narrative by emphasising the strength and control exerted by the soldiers as they combat or respond to acts of terror. The use of a low-angle shot makes the subject appear taller than expected, thus emphasising power (Gruber et al., 2023). Through the image, the victims are also seen as victorious because they managed to get out unhurt. The compositional strategy empowers the survivors, and this concurs with the assertion by Dyksterhouse (2023) that the use of the low camera angle makes the subjects appear superior. In sum, the intentional use of low-angle shots in the visual representation of Westgate Mall terror attack news reporting serves

as a means of conveying dominance and power dynamics. The images manipulate the readers' perspectives through the visual compositional elements that reinforce the authoritative narrative surrounding the police officers involved in addressing and combating terrorism. There were other low-angle shots, such as Fig 4.43: DN/22/P3, Fig 4.1: DN/22/P1, Fig 4.50: STD/23/P2F, and Fig 4.31: STD/22/P3 (see Appendix II).

The use of low-angle shots by the three newspapers in reporting the terror events during the attack on the Westgate Shopping Mall facilitated the depiction of dominance and power. In this case, the subject is shown to have authority (Covey et al., 2012). Therefore, since most of the images taken from a low-angle point of view had soldiers and rescuers as the subjects, the approach emphasised authority. The images showing victims had a connotation of empowerment, courage, and resilience to adversity. The low-angle shots are appropriate for making subjects appear bigger and mightier. The photojournalists have managed to portray the images through this angle to make them closer, taller, and wider. Therefore, the subjects portrayed through the low-angle shots appear dominant, powerful, and strong.

**Bird's-Eye View Angle/Overhead Shot.** The deliberate publication of bird's-eye view angles or overhead shots in the documentation of terror attacks within news reporting encapsulates a connotative meaning of a sense of insignificance and helplessness among the depicted subjects. The meaning expands to the broader affected community because the editors utilised the visual perspective of overhead shots to emphasise the vulnerability and overwhelming nature of the terror incident (Aldredge, 2022). A bird's-eye view angle falls under the high camera angle. However, in this case, the photographer takes the shot while looking down on the object from above, typically from 90 degrees. Only one image, Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C, was an overhead shot. The image was published on the first page of the September 23, 2013, edition of *The New York Times*. The image shows a survivor woman lying on the floor with her two kids. They are hiding behind the kitchen counter. The bird's-eye shot helps the reader or viewer get a lot of details about the scene.



**Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C**

Images taken from a bird's-eye-view angle connote insignificance and helplessness. Therefore, the use of a bird's-eye view image by *The New York Times* was a way of showing how the shooting spree caught some victims off-guard and rendered them desperate (Mamer & Rosenberg, 2013). However, the bird's-eye photographs provide a full display of the scene, which makes the reader understand the situation and perceive the events objectively (Goddu, 2020). Therefore, the framing shows how helpless the victims are to emphasise the grave impacts of terrorism (Aldredge, 2022). At the same time, the use of a bird's-eye shot offers the viewer or reader an opportunity to have a full picture of the scene, including surroundings, to formulate an impartial interpretation of the occurrences.

**Wide-Angle Shot.** The wide-angle shot images used in the reporting of the Westgate Mall terrorist incident depicted responsible journalism aimed at providing a comprehensive visual narrative. However, the compositional strategy unintentionally elevated the perception of threat, the empowerment of perpetrators through visual emphasis, and the elicitation of fear and anxiety among the readers.

In the case of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack, some of the images published by the newspapers were wide shots. Such shots help identify the subject in relation to their background. The implication is that the images show the subject or person standing in front, and the background is visible. Most of the images published by the *Daily Nation* were wide

shots. For instance, Fig 4.20: DN/2 4/P1B, which was published by the newspaper's edition of 24/9/2013, page 1, shows the subjects and the background, meaning it was a wide shot. Other wide-angle images were Fig 4.30: STD/22/P2A and Fig 4.41: STD/24/P2 (see Appendix II).



**Fig 4.20: DN/24/P1B**

The use of wide-angle shot images by the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* may be regarded as responsible reporting. According to Chao and Jiarui (2023), the wide shot records an original ecology that is close to real life. Therefore, the Westgate Mall attack images depict what happened in real life. Consequently, the images make readers understand the events as if they had witnessed them. The implication is that the approach gives the audience a sense of closeness and participation in the events. However, the exposure inadvertently depicts aspects of the elevation of threat, empowerment of perpetrators, and fear and anxiety. This visual portrayal inadvertently communicates a sense of vulnerability, emphasising the potential targets and the scale of the incident. The towering nature of the structures may unintentionally contribute to the perception of the threat's magnitude, and this could potentially magnify the impact of the reported events to the advantage of the terrorists, who want their work to be seen as an achievement.

Additionally, by visually highlighting the architectural features from a lower vantage point, the images may amplify the perpetrators' dominance and control over the depicted space. The composition unintentionally frames the scene in a way that emphasises the strategic advantage of the terrorists. This way, wide-shot images may reinforce the presence of

terrorists and their impact on the environment. Moreover, the portrayal of scenes from a wide angle can evoke fear and anxiety among the readers. The heightened perspective creates a sense of helplessness or vulnerability as viewers perceive the enormity of the situation. The upward perspective of the images accentuated the height and size of the shopping mall and other objects around it. Consequently, it amplifies the perception of the threat of terrorism. Wide-angle shots magnify the dimensional scale of the damage across space (Liu, 2018). Generally, the images convey the danger of terror attacks, thus empowering the perpetrators. However, the photographs visually convey the seriousness of the threat by creating a specific narrative and emotional responses.

**Medium-Angle Shot.** The medium-shot camera angle refers to an image taken from a distance that is neither long nor close. Therefore, a medium-shot camera angle image shows the subject's upper torso. Typically, the photograph shows a person's body from head to waist. Such shots are appropriate for photographs if those taking them want to capture both the facial expression and body language of the subjects. A medium-wide shot is usually long enough to show the surrounding area and, at the same time, close enough to show some aspects of the subject's facial expression depicting emotions. The use of medium-angle shots offers a balanced and comprehensive view of the scene by avoiding extreme distortion. As noted by Adams (2023), this compositional strategy helps in the origination of an accurate narrative of the event by capturing a visual perspective that creates a balance between proximity and context. The three newspapers under analysis published medium-shot camera-angle images during the terror attack period. For instance, Fig 4.35: STD/22/P3F is a medium-angle shot showing a relief service provider at work. Numerous other images were medium-angle shots. For instance, Fig 4.1: DN/22/P1, Fig 4.16: DN/22/P3C, Fig 4.32: STD/22/P3B, and Fig 4.9: STD/24/P1 were shot from a medium angle (see Appendix II).



**Fig 4.35: STD/22/P3F**

The use of Medium Angle Shot (MAS) images in reporting Westgate Shopping Mall's terror attack incident provided a comprehensive view of the scene without the extreme distortion that shaped the narrative of the event. For instance, Fig 4.35: STD/22/P3F, published by *The Standard* newspaper, shows a lady wearing protective gear, including a helmet, a reflective safety vest, and arm pads, suggesting they are engaged in a physical activity, possibly roller skating or biking. She is dressed in a red sports jersey, smiling and seemingly in motion, indicating commitment to what she is doing. The background features a busy setting with people and vehicles, adding to the rescue mission ongoing at the scene. The image is a medium shot because it frames the subject from approximately the waist to the top of the head. The focus is on the individual, but part of the surrounding environment is also visible, providing context without overwhelming the central subject. This shot allows the viewer to observe the subject's facial expressions and body language while still offering a sense of their location.

Considering the features of the image (Fig 4.35: STD/22/P3F), it influenced public perception and triggered a medium level of emotional responses. The reason is that images that show the subject's mood usually influence the readers' perception about the event being captured (Grabbe et al., 2016). Such images are regarded as emotional equalisers

because they balance the objects and the surroundings (Lawrence, 2023). Furthermore, the images facilitated the depiction of the right scale of the incident's complexity. Medium-angle shots tend to tell a story (Owens, 2017). In this case, a balanced representation of the event was presented through the imagery. However, it should be noted that the MAS images could cause a strong emotional response to the incidents from the readers. The reason is that the distance of the lenses from the subjects is medium, which creates a proximity that may not overwhelm the readers with graphic details but is clear enough to evoke emotions. Consequently, the framing facilitates the engagement and connection of readers with the victims and witnesses.

**Ground-Level Shot.** In the case of a ground-level shot, the photographer places the entire camera's height on ground level with the subject. The shot makes the subject appear bigger and superior (Hewitt, 2010). It also increases the viewers' alertness because it makes them more active and uses the subject's appearance to build an idea, thus helping the photojournalist build an idea more easily (Lannom, 2019). One such image was published by the *Daily Nation* on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013, on page 1. The image shows a police officer taking cover behind a car and another beside him as they engage in what seems to be a fierce fire exchange. The photograph has been framed from an extremely low camera angle, to the extent that the image appears somewhat distorted proportionally. The low camera angle features the police officer as extremely huge and masculine compared to the car behind which he is taking cover (Fig 4.45: DN/24/P1D). The photographer has further applied relatively wide-shot proximity. The use of the wide shot has enabled the photographer to not only frame the main subject but also capture elements in the foreground, middle ground, and background surrounding the subject. The subject occupies the foreground.



**Fig 4.45: DN/24/P1D**

The three newspapers' use of ground-level shot images in reporting the Westgate shopping mall terror attack in Kenya in 2013 portrayed immediacy and superiority. The framing was appropriate in showing how the situation required urgent responses from security personnel. The images created a real-time feel of the unfolding events because they made the audience feel as though they were on the ground, witnessing the events. The main implication is that the framing caused tension and emotions among the readers. As indicated by Lannom (2019), the compositional approach fosters a genuine connection between the audience and the reported occurrences by offering a balanced visual perspective that avoids extreme distortion. The shot captures the immediacy and authenticity of the scene and intensifies emotional responses among readers. By conveying the subject's environmental details with clarity, this compositional strategy humanises the experiences of those involved. Therefore, it effectively communicates the gravity of events. However, since the image was showing a soldier in combat mode, the ground-level shot image emphasised their resilience, superiority, and commitment to protect lives (Schummer et al., 2007). The reason is that a photo taken from ground level emphasises the vastness of the object and the structures around it, hence connoting strength.

### **4.3.3 Shot Proximity**

The next compositional element considered for this study is shot proximity. Shot proximity refers to the camera's distance in relation to the subject being framed. Shot proximity is a

significant compositional method a photojournalist uses to frame different photographs. A photojournalist applies shot proximity to determine which aspects of the scene to reveal and which to conceal. Shot proximity influences shot size. Shot size refers to how big or small the frame is in relation to the subject. The main question that should be answered in relation to shot proximity is whether or not the subject fills the frame. Therefore, in examining the compositional elements of the photographic coverage of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack, the analysis of shot proximity reveals its pivotal role as a tool for photojournalists to selectively unveil or obscure aspects of the scene.

**Extremely-Wide Shot.** The use of extreme wide-shot images in the reporting of terror attacks serves as a strategic narrative device because it adeptly establishes the contextual setting of the scene. This way, the images provided readers with details of the environment surrounding the subject and enhanced their understanding of the events as they unfolded. An extreme wide shot is used to establish the setting of the scene, and this is the reason it is usually long (Cadrage GmbH, 2022). The photographer ensures the image covers the subject, though the main focus is on depicting the surroundings as clearly as possible. Such images show the subject from head to toe. Additionally, the subject is relatively small compared to the nearby objects or environment. Photojournalists use a short focal length when taking such shots (Medoff & Fink, 2012). In this case, few photographs met the extreme wide-shot requirements. For instance, Fig 4.10: STD/24/P1B was published by *The Standard*. The image depicts security personnel lying on the floor in combat. The image covers an extensive area of the mall. The purpose of taking this extreme wide shot was to display as much background as possible to let the reader form a mental picture of what was happening and what it took to rescue people. Another extremely wide-angle photograph was Fig 4.4: DN/24/P1 (see Appendix II).



Fig 4.10: STD/24/P1B

A photojournalist often uses an extremely long shot to make the subject appear small against the surroundings. The subject is framed to appear distant and unfamiliar to the surroundings (Psaroloco Media Literacy, 2020). With this shot's proximity, the subject is usually framed as overwhelmed by the surroundings. The shot is often used to emphasise the location and/or isolation of the subject. Although critics may indicate that the use of extreme long or wide-shot images in reporting the Westgate Shopping Mall terror attacks may have augmented the vulnerability of the victims and rescuers, such images provided a comprehensive view of the scene and its surroundings, hence portraying the context and scale of the event. The extreme wide or long shot images capture a wide area, which means they offer a complete picture of the scene (Thurlow & Thurlow, 2013). In this case, the images were appropriately framed to help the readers understand what was going on during the attack.

**Medium-Wide Shot.** This shot is also referred to as the medium-long shot and abbreviated as MWS or MLS. Usually, this shot frames the subject from the knees or slightly below the knees upwards (Lannom, 2020). A medium-wide shot is usually long enough to show the surrounding area and, at the same time, close enough to show some aspects of the subject's facial expression depicting emotions. Medium shots are a common form of focalisation in photojournalism (Thierry, 2011). The reason is that the approach entails the

insertion of subjects in larger frames. This shot strikes a balance between a full shot and a medium shot. Medium-wide-shot images are a compositional element that brings readers closer to the action and tells more of the story (Delfin, 2015). Five photographs were published by the dailies, one of them being (Fig 4.28: NYT/23/P2). Since the compositional strategy of a medium-wide shot entails the depiction of the subjects' faces, it can be seen that the rescuers are under tension. The shot's proximity is appropriate for conveying the tension and urgency of the scene. The medium-wide shot compositional strategy captures enough of the surrounding environment to establish context while allowing a view of the rescuers' body language and expressions. Therefore, the medium-wide shot strikes a balance between revealing the subjects' body language and maintaining a contextual awareness of the surroundings. The image's composition allows readers to empathise with the rescuers' state of mind but also grounds them in the broader context of the rescue operation. There were other Medium Wide Shot images such as Fig 4.31: STD/22/P3 (see Appendix II).



**Fig 4.28: NYT/23/P2**

Generally, the publication of medium-wide-shot images by *The Standard*, the *Daily Nation*, and *The New York Times* while reporting on the Westgate Shopping Mall terror attack connoted aspects of proximity, humanisation, and ethical considerations. The reason is that the photographs show a balance between context and subject while capturing different perspectives on the incident (Kolodzy, 2013). Therefore, the view provided by the images is close enough for the reader to view the scenes and process the events as they

occurred. Additionally, viewers were able to see and ascertain the impact of the terror attack on the immediate vicinity (DiZazzo, 2012). This way, the readers of the newspapers could understand the effects of the tragic event and the challenges it posed to the rescuers and victims. Moreover, the images portray a clear depiction of the magnitude of the disaster. Therefore, even though the images may have sparked shock, concern, and sorrow, the reader had a chance to understand the impact of the attack. This way, the readers could visually connect with the affected individuals by viewing the events vividly. Consequently, the images evoked emotional engagement and empathy. The portrayal of individuals and their environment facilitates the humanisation of the subjects. Therefore, readers can identify with the rescuers and victims as relatable people rather than anonymous individuals. However, medium-shot images tend to breach the privacy and dignity of the portrayed individuals.

**Wide Shot:** A wide shot entails placing the lens closer to the subject. Photographs taken from the wide shot perspective have visible subjects that do not cover the entire frame. Therefore, a wide shot image is characterised by some remaining space above, below, to the left, and to the right. In this case, the viewer can see the image background clearly. The purpose of the wide shot is usually to show the subject in relation to its immediate environment. Some of the analysed images were wide shots. For instance, the images published on pages 1 and 2 of *The New York Times* on 22/09/2013 were wide shots. Other photographs were published by *The New York Times* on page 3 on 22/09/2013 and page 1 on 23/09/2013. As for the page 1 and page images of the 22/09/2013 *New York Times* newspaper, the photographs show similar subjects, but taken from a different angle. The image on page 2 of the day's newspaper was taken from an obtuse angle, while the image on page 1 of the same paper was an aerial shot. The image below shows the subjects at the centre. The surrounding space shows the background of the photo as a kitchen or washroom area.



Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C

The wide shot above has been applied strategically to depict in full frame and reveal their immediate surroundings. Based on this wide-angle perspective, the image is framed in such a manner that the viewer clearly comprehends the physical context in which an action was frozen. Although wide-shot images used by the three newspapers to report might have exposed the victims and rescuers, they successfully portrayed context and scale. The reason is that the photojournalists managed to capture expansive views of the scene and its surroundings. Therefore, readers were able to view and understand the context under which the event occurred. Additionally, viewers were able to see and ascertain the impact of the terror attack on the immediate vicinity (DiZazzo, 2012). This way, the readers of the newspapers could understand the effects of the tragic event and the challenges it posed to the rescuers and victims. Moreover, the images portray a clear depiction of the magnitude of the disaster. Therefore, even though the images may have sparked shock, concern, and sorrow, the reader had a chance to understand the impact of the attack.

**Medium-Close-Up Shot.** A medium close-up shot is an image taken when the photographer frames the subject slightly above their head to the middle of their torso (Lannom, 2020). In essence, the shot captures the shoulders, the chest, and upwards to the top of the head. This shot is closer to the medium shot but slightly longer than the close-up. In this type of shot, the subject usually takes up the full frame. The photographer will usually allow some safety room above and below the subject. The purpose of this shot is to reveal the subject's full appearance to the audience. A full shot is also used when the

photographer wants to feature multiple characters in a single scene. The audience can view the subject's countenance more clearly without necessarily getting too close.

Figure 4.2: DN/22/P2B is one such image that was published by the *Daily Nation* on September 22, 2013, on page 2. The image features a male adult of Asian descent wounded by the assault within the Westgate Mall premises. This man is seated on the cobblestone floor outside the Westgate Mall building. The man is soaked in blood oozing from a gunshot wound on his body. The medium-close shot of this photograph signifies its visual importance. The focus of the subject is appropriate to allow for multiple photographic placements in the available but limited space. In addition, the photojournalist has employed medium-close-up shot proximity to frame the subject in his immediate environment. The medium-close-up shot proximity has allowed the audience to visually and mentally interact with the element surrounding the subject's immediate environment, reinforcing mental images of the devastating acts of the assailants. Furthermore, the photojournalist has enhanced the freezing action surrounding the subject, depicting stashed supermarket trollies and the feet of two people observed in the background. The photographer has been able to depict the chaotic scene surrounding this terror victim. Other images that exhibited the medium wide shot composition characteristics were Fig 4.46: NYT/22/P1E, Fig 4.12: DN/22/P2A, Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B, Fig 4.6: NYT/22/P2, and Fig 4.24: NYT/22/P3.



**Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B**

Although there may be ethical concerns about the numerous medium-close-up shots published by the three newspapers when reporting the Westgate shopping mall terror attack

incident, it can be asserted that the images portrayed individuality and emotional intensity appropriately. Medium-close-up images in the reporting of the terror attack at the Westgate Mall align with the principles of responsible photographic coverage. The compositional choice creates a balance between showing the individuals' facial expressions and emotions. Such a portrayal is vital in conveying the human impact of the incident (Roberts, 2024). Therefore, the approach enables photojournalists to create a narrative focus on specific individuals within the larger story, fostering a connection between the audience and the personal experiences of those affected by the tragedy.

**Close-Up.** In photography as well as in film and television, a close-up shot is a type of shot that focuses on the subject's face to reveal emotions (Adobe, 2023b). Human beings are emotional beings, and the primary means through which people express emotions is through facial expressions (EMEET, 2023). Several studies in psychology have been conducted to examine the universality of human emotions as revealed in facial expressions (Matsumoto et al., 2008). The aforementioned studies were conducted by different researchers in different parts of the world and involved different methodologies, as well as drawing participants from diverse cultural backgrounds (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2012). In this case, only one image, Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3, met the characteristics of a close-up. The image shows a man crying while being consoled by two women. Probably, the man had lost a close relative through the terrorist attack.



**Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3**

As much as the proponents of freedom of the press may support the publication of close-up images during the reporting of the Westgate Shopping Mall terror attack, it should be noted that such photographs portray trauma and promote sensationalism. According to Freeman (2021), a close-up picture is intimate because it causes negative emotions. The reason is that the images show clear details of the subjects, hence allowing the reader to capture numerous details about the subjects' feelings and expressions (Ness, 2020). Consequently, the readers may be traumatised by the intensity of the negative impacts of the incident. For instance, seeing the survivor, the affected person, or responders struggling in pain or crying creates strong emotions. In such cases, the readers may sympathise with the affected people (Hardin & Kiernan, 2022). Therefore, they focus on one interesting subject and portray every important detail to tell a story.

#### **4.3.4 Summary**

Analysis of the compositional elements of the images published by *The Standard*, the *Daily Nation*, and *The New York Times*' photojournalists during the Westgate Mall terror attack period revealed that angle of view, shot proximity, and image size play an important role in framing the event. It has been demonstrated that camera angle refers to the camera's physical position in relation to the subject during exposure. The position of the photograph significantly affects how the viewer perceives the scene. A photojournalist can choose various types of camera angles when composing a shot. The choice of camera angle is determined either by the actual proximal angle of the photojournalist from the subject or by the self-positioning of the photojournalist based on the perspective they intend to convey. This study mainly focused on three major camera angles, categorised as high, middle/eye-level, and low-camera angles. The angle of view refers to how much of the scene is captured.

In this case, the editors of the three newspapers managed to strike a balance between high, low, and eye-level angles when positing their photographs. Each image successfully portrays the message and evokes the intended emotions. Low-angle images made the readers appreciate the superiority and capability of the photographed subjects. Eye-level shots also invoked trust and other appropriate feelings in the reader. Most of the photographs had been taken from an eye-level angle. According to Merkt and Sochatzy

(2015), camera angles are used in specific contexts to facilitate political communication and propagate propaganda, where applicable.

In terms of image size, it was established that large images were often used on the front pages of newspapers to facilitate the creation of the intended visual appeal. On the other hand, medium and small images were published on other pages to create additional visual and informational content within a limited space. The analysis revealed that large images were prominent on the front pages. Such photographs covered substantial portions of the pages where they were published. All sizes of images were used to depict scenes of rescue operations, victims in pain, security forces in action, and the aftermath of the attacks. However, the medium-sized images seemed inclined towards emotion creation because they depicted survivors, security forces, and victims seeking safety. Numerous small-sized images were published because they occupy smaller space. Nevertheless, the small images contributed to the overall storytelling by depicting injured individuals being helped and frightened people running for safety. Therefore, it was asserted that the three newspapers strategically used various image sizes to attract readership and convey emotional impact.

Regarding shot proximity, the journalists used different shots to take images, depending on what they wanted the reader to understand and the emotions they wanted to create. For instance, extremely wide shots were applied to take photographs that were supposed to depict a detailed scene. Other shots, such as medium shots, medium-wide shots, and wide shots, were utilised accordingly. In addition, the photographers used medium-close-up camera proximity to frame some of these images. The combination of the medium close-up camera distance and the eye-level camera angles by a photographer draws the viewer closer to the visual elements depicted in the scene. Close-up images were sparingly used because they invoked sombre emotions. Moreover, depicting suffering people in print media may indirectly help the terrorists spread fear. Therefore, close-up photographs, especially the ones showing the subjects' facial expressions, were limited in the publications.

#### **4.4 The Role of Visual Framing in the West Gate Terrorist Attack**

The third objective of this study was to assess the role that framing played in the photographs published after the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. To answer this research

question, twelve photographs were purposively selected: four published by the *Daily Nation*, four by *The Standard*, and the last four published by *The New York Times*. The research adopted Rodriguez and Dimitrova's (2011) fourth method of analysing visual images. At this level, the research analysed photographs as ideological representations by examining data drawn from the in-depth interview. Then, the research drew the denotative and connotative meanings derived in the first and second objectives to determine the overall frames that the photojournalists intended overtly and inadvertently. Finally, the research identified the major symbols denoted by an exemplar photograph to draw meaning connoted from that particular photograph.

Nine interviews targeting mass media professionals and photojournalists were conducted. All the informants identified had vast experience in the print media industry, either as local or international correspondence or informants. The informants were shown the 12 samples of photographs that were captured in the aftermath of the Westgate Mall attack and asked to respond to questions based on their professional experiences. Data drawn from the in-depth interviews were analysed qualitatively using descriptive and interpretative approaches. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) indicated that relevant information about an issue under investigation is obtained through an assessment of expert opinions and interpretations. The study explored informant views, feelings, and beliefs to obtain rich, open-ended data, explain phenomena, and eventually draw conclusions. The in-depth interviews aimed to explore the informants' perspectives on the role that framing played in the photographs published in the wake of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack.

#### **4.4.1 Informants' Demographics and Characteristics**

The researcher conducted a total of nine (9) in-depth interviews. The table below shows the bio-data information of the interviewees. Each interviewee was assigned a code name to keep their identity anonymous and disguise any information they revealed to uphold the principle of confidentiality. Specifically, the interviewees were anonymised through the following coding, ID01, ID02, ID03, ID04, ID05, ID06, ID07, ID08, and ID09. Table 4.2 below shows the informants' demographic and characteristics as drawn from the data gathered in the in-depth interview.

**Table 4.2: Informants' Demographics and Characteristics**

<b>Demographic Factor</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender (N = 9)</b>		
Male	6	66.67%
Female	3	33.33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Affiliation (N = 9)</b>		
Local Media	7	77.78%
International Media	2	22.22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Age (N = 9)</b>		
18-25	2	22.22%
26-35	4	44.44%
36-45	2	22.22%
46 and Above	1	11.11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Training (N = 9)</b>		
College	7	77.78%
Workshop	1	11.11%
Self	1	11.11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Academic Level (N = 9)</b>		
Certificate	0	0.00%
Diploma	1	11.11%
Bachelors	3	33.33%
Masters	3	33.33%
PhD	2	22.22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Practice Nature (N = 9)</b>		
Reporter and Media Trainer	1	11.11%
Columnist and Media Trainer	1	11.11%
Photojournalist and Photographer	2	22.22%
Photojournalist, Photographer, and Reporter	3	33.33%
Reporter, Media Trainer, and Media Regulator	1	11.11%
Photojournalist, Photographer, and Media Trainer	1	11.11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Years of Experience (N = 9)</b>		
3-5	3	33.33%
6-10	4	44.44%
11-15	2	22.22%
16 and above	2	22.22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

From the findings in Table 4.2 above, six informants (66.67%) were male, while three (33.33%) were female. Based on these results, photojournalism and journalism at large are male-dominated professions. This could be attributed to journalism and photojournalism being male-dominated careers, as noted by Almond (2020) and Chebbine (2023). Separately, seven (77.78%) of the journalists interviewed were affiliated with local mainstream media houses in Kenya, while two (22.22%) of the informants were affiliated with international mainstream newspapers. The researcher purposefully made this selection to allow a balance of the local and international mainstream newspaper representation, considering that the study targeted two local print media and one international print media.

Concerning age distribution, two (22.22%) informants were in the age bracket of 18-25; four (44.44%) fell between 26-35, two (22.22%) were between 36-46, and one (11.11%) was above 46 years old. This age distribution demonstrates that journalism and photojournalism are fields dominated by young people, as most informants fell below 35 years of age, in agreement with Ireri's (2016) findings, which indicated that photojournalists in Kenya are in their mid-30s, particularly, 34 years on average. The researcher further observed that seven (77.78%) of the nine informants had obtained formal education in college to train as journalists. Two (22.22%) of the informants trained in different careers but later developed an interest in photojournalism and delved into it. Regarding academic qualifications, one (11.11%) of the informants had attained a diploma, two (22.22%) had bachelor's degrees, three (33.33%) had master's degrees, and two were PhD holders. The research observed that a majority of the informants were involved in more than one aspect of journalism. Thus, six (66.67%) of the informants practised as photojournalists as well as photographers. One (11.11%) of the informants practised as a newspaper reporter and one (11.11%) as a newspaper columnist. Of the nine informants, three (33.33%) practised as media trainers in institutions of higher learning and one (11.11%) practised as a media regulator. Lastly, three (33.33%) of the informants had 3-5 years of experience in practice, three (33.33%) with experience ranging from 6 to 10 years; one had (11.11%) experience falling between 11 and 15, and two (22.22%) with more than 16 years of experience in the field and practice of journalism.

The insights gathered from the study involving nine informants are valuable because the findings were reliable and robust, given the specific nature of the study. The focus was on a highly specialised subgroup within the media industry population. Therefore, the results offer valuable insights within this unique context. The study's exploratory nature sought to focus on specific research questions, and the qualitative data collected provided the informants' valuable perspectives.

#### **4.4.2 Insights into Visual Framing's Role in the West Gate Terrorist Attack**

Based on the responses pertaining to the role of visual framing, it was established that visual framing extended beyond shaping public perception. These representations include denotative aspects, which directly convey the depicted events or scenes. These assertions are supported by ID05, who stated, *"The few humanitarian photos didn't make as much noise because the graphic ones dominated the narrative."* Additionally, connotative elements, which imply underlying meanings or associations, were also noted. For instance, ID03 said, *"The images published during the Westgate attack felt curated to provoke fear and sympathy, not hope."* Moreover, visual framing involved ideological representations that reflect the values, beliefs, or agendas of the framers. Therefore, visual framing shaped denotative, connotative, and ideological dimensions by constructing narratives that influence how audiences interpret and understand the events depicted, such as the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. Therefore, visual framing does not only shape immediate perceptions, but it also constructs broader narratives that impact societal understanding and memory of such events.

#### **4.4.3 Construction of Denotative Representations**

Based on the responses, the photographs published during the Westgate Mall terrorist attack captured the real happenings. For instance, ID02 said, *"The photos provided a clear view of the location, layout, and immediate surroundings, allowing newspaper readers to visualise the context in which the Westgate Mall terrorist attack incident occurred."* Other informants, such as ID05 and ID07, shared similar notions. This confirmed that viewers constructed denotative representations based on the images. The reason for this is that the photographs captured the physical scene, the people involved, and the immediate aftermath of the Westgate Mall attack. The findings concur with the role of framing, as noted by

Parveen and Showkat (2020), in that it invites the readers to pay attention and view the directly portrayed reality. Visuals are easily understood and retained in a reader's memory because they show events as they happen.

The images published during the Westgate Mall attack were a result of a combination of photography and photojournalism. It should be noted that while unedited images were supposed to be used to tell a story, a little manipulation may have been necessary to meet certain requirements (Chinedu-Okeke, 2015; Maillot, 2019; *The New York Times* Company, 2022). As noted by Adobe (2023), the fast publication of the images by the newspapers emphasises the role of media in informing the public. The reason is that the pictures taken by photojournalists must be shared through media. At times, photojournalists and editors have no option but to publish gruesome images that portray violent injustices amid complaints from the public because they need to tell the story as it is. In the Westgate Mall attack case, the images were carefully framed to present the happenings of the time and create.

Visual framing in the Westgate Mall attack incident evoked a stronger comprehension of the happenings because the images were vivid. The reason for this is that through photographs, the viewer is immersed in the scene while the images convey information that words alone cannot capture, not only in journalism but also in general communication (Schifferstein et al., 2021). In agreement with this assertion, ID03 had said:

I would rate the effectiveness of the images depicting the physical scene of the Westgate Mall attack as highly effective. The clarity of the view of the location, layout, and immediate surroundings made me visualise the context in which the incident occurred.

The essence of news is to share factual information appropriately (The News Manual, 2022). It is the role of the newspaper editors to ensure the information to be published is accurate, reliable, meaningful, and factual (American Press Institute, 2019; MCKillop Library, 2023). Therefore, it was confirmed that through visual framing, photojournalism informs society about the day-to-day happenings in the world. The findings affirm the observation of Ingram and Henshall (2008) that without appropriately framed images, many people would not read a newspaper because it would be dull and challenging to read.

Visual framing played an important role in making viewers understand the incident and gain a sense of the environment in which the tragic event took place.

Visual framing in news photography influences how readers understand an event. In this case, the images depicting the happenings and immediate aftermath of the Westgate Mall attack had a profound effect on shaping readers' understanding of the terrorist attack. ID01 said, *"In my opinion, images featuring individuals involved in the Westgate Mall attack significantly contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the event."* These photos conveyed the factual consequences and aftermath in a stark and poignant manner. The reason for this is that the photos captured the involved people's actions and conveyed their emotions, as well as highlighting their roles within the incident. Research shows that images evoke emotional reactions in viewers, making the items portray information more efficiently than text (Kujur & Singh, 2020). Seeing the expressions and reactions of those present added a human dimension to the tragedy, making it easier to empathise with and comprehend the impact on individuals. According to the Bonn Institute (2023), photojournalists crop parts of the image or publish the entire photograph to communicate specific issues. Therefore, when the whole scene is captured through visual framing, the readers get to know the whole picture about the event. In this case, the visual evidence of the destruction, injuries, rescue efforts, and chaos that ensued provided a powerful narrative of the incident's aftermath, leaving a lasting impression on readers' understanding of the tragic event.

#### **4.4.4 Infusion of Connotative Meanings**

As per the informants' responses, the images related to the Westgate Mall attack evoked emotions, symbols, and cultural references. For instance, a informant said that the images created emotions among readers. The assertions concur with Alegria (2020), who indicates that photojournalism is "raw" because the photographs are never edited. Instead, the images are presented the way they are captured to preserve the authenticity of the moments. In such a case, events are captured as they happen and are aimed at invoking emotions among the viewers (Mortensen & Gade, 2018). Therefore, the visual framing of the photographs covering the Westgate Mall attack provided an insight into the human aspect of the incident. ID04 said, *"Given the fear, anguish, and resilience portrayed in the photos,*

*I pitied the affected individuals.*” Generally, as much as the visual framing may have focused on presenting factual information about the incident, readers decoded a sense of fear and the courage displayed by those confronted with adversity. Similarly, Bornberg (2022) had shown that framing in photography is associated with symbolic meanings in addition to its content-based communication. The reason for this is that the readers’ culture influences how they interpret images (D’Angelo et al., 2019). Therefore, based on the visual framing adopted, readers can create a suggestive secondary meaning of the images, depending on the attitudes, religious, political, or philosophical persuasions of a nation or group of people at the time of the publication. However, according to Shahin (2016), visual framing of crime may be affected by socio-political biases. Therefore, the realities of violence can be distorted by readers’ perspectives.

It was established that the images featuring the Westgate Mall were visually framed to deepen the emotional impact and cultural resonance of the incident. For instance, ID05 stated, *“I was disheartened by the sight of damaged property exhibited in the photographs.”* Therefore, images that showed injured people and damaged buildings and other property symbolised an attack on the nation's unity and resilience. The images heightened the emotional connection to the event, making it more than just an isolated incident but a reflection of the broader destruction of unity, peace, cultural values, and identity.

Visual framing entails the presentation of certain concepts through pictures to highlight or promote a desired interpretation of issues (Parveen & Showkat, 2020). The main focus of photojournalists is to cover an issue visually in a way that provokes cognitive responses from the target audience. It entails the presentation of images through camera angles, viewpoints, and image sizes to tell a specific story. Sizing influences visual framing significantly because large-sized images create a sense of more prominence for the readers. Proximity and angles of view also determine the connotative meanings that readers form. For instance, a close-up shot of a violent occurrence makes the issue appear more serious than when the same event is covered by a long shot. Therefore, visual framing influences the readers’ perceptions and creation of connotative meanings of the situation being covered.

Visual framing can be used to filter crime ideas for the public. For instance, the images covering the Westgate Mall attack were visually framed to communicate and shape discourses of fear, crime, and justice in society. For instance, ID03 said, "*The images published during the Westgate attack felt curated to provoke fear and sympathy, not hope.*" This way, the images facilitated the representation of the dominant cultural and political issues affecting the victims, the affected, and the perpetrators. Generally, the photojournalists' aim is to document reality (Rafiee et al., 2021). However, in some cases, the images can be framed in a way that can be interpreted by some readers as stereotyping crime.

#### **4.4.5 Embedding of Ideological Representations**

Visual framing of the Westgate Mall attack images was used to highlight themes, communicate political or social contexts, or promote particular viewpoints. Therefore, the images were framed to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the event. According to the informants, the images were visually framed to show resilience, unity, and societal vulnerabilities. ID06 stated, "*Some of the images showed desperate victims, while others depicted committed rescuers and security forces agents responding to the attack accordingly to save lives and restore order.*" Therefore, based on the responses, photographs published during the Westgate Mall attack showcased the strength of the community in the face of adversity. It was also noted that other images highlighted the nation's vulnerability to extremists' violence. The findings concur with previous research that images are essential in assessing the socio-political ideas and experiences surrounding an issue (Parveen & Showkat, 2020). In the Westgate Mall terrorist attack case, the published images were visually framed to communicate the impact of the variations in political beliefs and social values.

It was established that the images effectively highlighted political and social contexts related to the event by portraying the impact on diverse communities and capturing the emotions of those affected. Some images prominently promoted themes of solidarity and emphasised the need for change. For instance, the images of victims of the Westgate Mall attack coming together as a community to rescue others emphasised the need to address a common challenge and strongly conveyed the perspective that unity is crucial for societal

progress. ID04 highlighted the importance of unity in the face of adversity, stating, *"The coming together of the Westgate Mall attack victims, as demonstrated by the images, showed a sense of community and cooperation to address a common challenge."* Visual framing can be used to promote particular viewpoints, and this aids in understanding the event by embedding particular themes (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). The visuals published during the Westgate Mall attack influenced people's perceptions of political and social dynamics by shedding light on the injustices and challenges that civilians face. Therefore, the photos could be used to advocate social change.

Visual framing entails the framing of events as they occurred without altering any aspects because they also want to sell news. This is the reason a few photographs published by print media may display the dead victims, especially if the news is covering a violent attack event such as terrorism (Fishman, 2018). However, Perlmutter (2013) suggests that despite individual biases, many photojournalists strive to adhere to a code of ethics that demands impartiality. The issue with a section of readers is that they usually want photos to be altered before they are published. However, when such is done, some critics still say the news events are not presented as they occurred. For example, a photojournalist took and published a photo of a naked girl fleeing an attack during the Vietnam War (Harris, 2015). As much as the photograph was emotional, the photojournalist was not biased. However, the readers believed it was subjective to show the naked girl, whereas the photojournalist's aim was to expose the horrors of war. As an unbiased witness, the photojournalist was supposed to report what transpired through imagery. This way, the photojournalist engaged in truth-telling, which is one of the tenets of ethical journalism.

#### **4.4.6 Visual Framing's Role Based on Informants' Photographic Analysis**

An analysis of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack photographs as elements of ideological representation was carried out. The review entailed the use of the data acquired through in-depth interviews. Subsequently, the denotative and connotative interpretations stemming from the first and second objectives were scrutinised. The aim was to discern the overarching frames that were deliberately and inadvertently constructed by photojournalists. Finally, the principal symbols depicted by an exemplar photograph were examined to extract connotative significance from the specific imagery presented.

One of the salient images that caught the attention of the viewers was Fig 4.1: DN/22/P1, which was published on the front page of *Daily Nation* newspaper on September 22, 2013. Visual framing within Fig 4.1: DN/22/P1 generated denotative meanings through the depiction of distress, fear, and vulnerability. It is evident from the subject's facial expressions and bodily postures. The informants described scenes of horror, trauma, and panic, emphasising the explicit message conveyed by the photojournalist regarding the intensity of the terror attack and the resulting human suffering. Phrases such as "shocked to death," "distressed," and "at a point of death" highlighted the distressing nature of the image, reflecting the immediate impact on viewers and the perceived severity of the situation captured within the frame. For instance, ID05 said that:

You can tell that this person is at a point of death, and you can tell that they are screaming for help or pleading for mercy. You can see from their eyes that they are screaming in shock, and their facial expression shows that they are shocked to death.

In agreement with the statement, ID02 also said, "*He or she may have also wanted to communicate the pain, shock, or anguish level witnessed at the mall.*" The photograph presents the scene with gory details and close proximity, which contribute to the denotative representation of terror and anguish. Visual framing also created connotative meanings within the image, which were also derived from the implicit messages conveyed by the photojournalist, as interpreted by informants. Themes of panic, fear, and trauma were perceived as reflecting broader societal narratives surrounding the implications of terrorism and its effects on individuals and communities. For example, ID07 stated:

It's a sense of panic; the country gets into a panic and a sense of fear as people will fear going to the mall, but from the perspective of the terrorist, this is their joy because they love it when they have an impact on a story.

The portrayal of vulnerability and suffering in the image evoked emotional responses from viewers, eliciting a sense of empathy and concern for the victims depicted. Additionally, informants noted the impact of the photograph on public perception, suggesting that it served to intensify feelings of fear and insecurity within society, thereby contributing to a sense of collective unease.

Finally, based on the visual framing of this image, ideological representations were derived. In this case, the depiction reflected deeper societal issues and perspectives, as inferred from informants' interpretations. The framing and composition of the photograph

were perceived as subjective, emphasising the emotional impact on viewers and the potential consequences of sensationalising tragedy for journalistic purposes. Some informants expressed concern over the glorification of terror and the perpetuation of fear through the publication of graphic images, highlighting broader ethical considerations in photojournalism. For instance, ID05 said:

First of all, the composition of the photo is gory. The reason why they decided to do that is to show the intensity of the terror attack, to capture attention, and to try to draw the attention of the world to the kind of human suffering happening because of the attack.

The photojournalist's implicit message regarding the intensity of the attack and the need for public awareness was contrasted with concerns about the ethical implications of exploiting human suffering for sensationalism, underscoring the complex relationship between visual framing, audience interpretation, and socio-political contexts.

While photojournalists aimed to portray the situation as it was, they strategically employed compositional techniques to frame and sensationalise images, inadvertently evoking distress among viewers and raising critical questions about the ethics of journalistic representation. In this case, the unintended consequences of photojournalists' compositional techniques are acknowledged. It is noted that the photojournalists' efforts to depict reality can sometimes lead to sensationalised and distressing images (Newton, 2013). Usually, photojournalists aim at capturing and presenting the truth of a particular situation. Unfortunately, as the photojournalists seek to present the events in a "raw" format, they end up publishing captivating and emotionally impactful imagery. This way, the photojournalists' adoption of some compositional techniques may unintentionally sensationalise events and create distress among readers. Therefore, there is a conflict between the photojournalists' objective pursuit of reality documentation and the inadvertent results of the visual storytelling strategies they employ.

It is noted that the media seems to rely on sensational and distressing images to attract the attention of readers (Moeller, 1999). However, it should be noted that the role of media is to get the attention of readers so that it can convey information. Since it is not the photojournalists who manipulate the images to make them sensational, there is nothing

wrong with reporting the events as they occur. Additionally, if the media fails to publish images of events, the public will not know the magnitude of the event. Therefore, photojournalists should be objective in their work. However, according to public judgement, some images can lead to compassion fatigue as the public may become desensitised to suffering. Due to the pressure to report events as they occur, photojournalists have been forced to disregard the emotional impact of the images that they publish (Voninski, 2017). Moreover, the role of photojournalists is to report events through imagery. They are also supposed to ensure their published images evoke the intended emotions so the public can acknowledge what happened and take the necessary steps to stay safe or prevent similar occurrences in the future. The public interprets the images subjectively, and this makes them blame journalists for something they did not intend to convey because they do not manipulate the photographs. The need to grab the attention of readers should not be confused with a deliberate cause of emotional disturbance. Therefore, it is noted that photojournalists face significant ethical dilemmas as they use compositional techniques in their work. The reason is that critics emphasise the unintentional consequences of sensationalising images, which they believe can lead to viewer distress. Unfortunately, such judgements ignore the critical need for responsible and ethical storytelling played by photojournalists.

Another image with notable thematic elements was Fig 4.29: STD/22/P1. The image depicts a publication by *The Standard* newspaper on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September, 2013. Informants were shown this picture in a photo album and were required to examine it and comment on the thematic elements that the photojournalist deployed to frame Fig 4.29: STD/22/P1.



**Fig 4.29: STD/22/P1**

In this case, the visual framing adopted did not only shape public perception, but it also created denotative, connotative, and ideological representations within the image. Fig 4.29: STD/22/P1 embodies the heroic qualities attributed to the subjects. The framing from the knees to the top of the subjects' heads, reminiscent of cinematic conventions, described the characters with their actions, portraying them as poised and heroic figures. The proximity of the shot allowed for a range of denotative meanings, evident in phrases from informants describing fear and vulnerability in the depicted subjects. For instance, ID02 said:

Just from the look of it, you can tell that there is a plainclothes police officer who is courageous enough to carry a baby in one hand and the gun in the other. The lady behind is afraid but takes comfort in trailing behind the police officer ahead of her.

The denotative representations in this image conveyed a sense of urgency and danger, yet they also hinted at resilience and courage, particularly through the actions of the plainclothes police officer striving to ensure protection by carrying a child to safety.

Furthermore, the visual details evident in Fig 4.29: STD/22/P1 added depth to the connotative narrative, illustrating a broader context of assistance and solidarity amidst the chaos. Informants' comments highlighted the movement and expressions of fear among the characters, emphasising the subjective interpretation of the scene. ID02 said, *“The photojournalist may have wanted to convey a message of hope and, at the same time,*

*bravery even in the face of fear. When you see the picture, you see some level of optimism framed in the composition.*” The juxtaposition of characters in different proximities within the frame contributed to the connotative representation of hope amidst terror. This duality of denotative and connotative meanings within the visual framing created a layered narrative, prompting viewers to perceive both the immediate danger and the resilience of the human spirit.

On the other hand, the implicit message conveyed by the photojournalist through the composition of Fig 4.29: STD/22/P1 further enriched the ideological representation within the visual framing. Informants interpreted the photographer's intent to convey both hope and terror, reflecting the complexity of the situation depicted. The collocation of heroic actions with expressions of fear communicated a narrative of bravery in the face of adversity, underscoring the importance of striving to ensure safety in times of crisis. This is affirmed by ID06's sentiments:

This photograph was a good choice for the front page of the newspaper because it captures what we call the humanitarian aspects of war or terror. The photographer has focused on people who are helping each other out of danger.

This ideological representation highlighted the photojournalist's role in shaping public perceptions and evoking emotional responses through visual storytelling. The main urge is that people should embrace compassion and solidarity in the face of adversity. Overall, the subjective nature of the image's framing elicited different interpretations pertaining to the ideology of terror.

Although the photojournalist may have expected the aspect of hope to dominate the perception of viewers and still show some terror through the photograph, terror seemed to prevail in the readers' perspective despite the photograph being non-graphic. The reason is that humans have a higher rate of negativity bias (Vaish et al., 2008). The implication is that even though the photojournalist did not depict a graphic image, the audience could still perceive the message of terror. The photojournalist aimed at informing the public that, despite the impending danger, many civilians escaped alive. Such an image was not justified in appearing on the front page of the newspaper. It is noted that if viewers anticipate seeing a scene of terror based on the context in which the image is presented or

their prior exposure to similar images, they may be more inclined to interpret it as such. How an image or story is presented can heavily influence how it is perceived (Li & Xie, 2019). Media outlets often use headlines, captions, or accompanying stories to frame an image in a particular way. For instance, viewers may focus more on hope if an image is framed as "a scene of hope in a troubled region." However, if the image is framed as "a region plagued by terror," viewers are more likely to see terror.

There is a need to note that photojournalism can convey the realities of the world. Journalists also aim at evoking specific emotions or responses from viewers. In the case of image F4.4.2, the photojournalist's intent was likely to emphasise hope, but despite this intention, it is observed that viewers tend to perceive a prevailing sense of terror in the photograph. The readers' interpretation aligns with negativity bias in psychology, which suggests that negative stimuli, events, or emotions tend to have a more significant impact on individuals than positive ones (Hilgard et al., 2014). Unfortunately, the bias is deeply rooted in humans' evolutionary history and serves as a survival mechanism, which makes them more attuned to potential threats.

Another notable image with thematic was Fig 4.23: NYT/22/P1. It depicts the picture that was published on the front page of *The New York Times* newspaper on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September, 2013. Informants were shown this picture in a photo album and were required to examine it and comment on several thematic features.



**Fig 4.23: NYT/22/P1**

The visual framing of Fig 4.23: NYT/22/P1 created denotative meanings through the positioning and portrayal of various elements captured within the photograph. Informants described seeing many people lying down, suspected to be dead based on their postures. Specific details, such as an armed civilian appearing to administer first aid and the presence of women lying on the ground, added to the denotative representation of death and chaos. The composition of the photograph, framed from an eye-level camera angle with wide proximity and deep depth of field, contributed to the denotative interpretation of the scene. For instance, ID06 said:

The first impression I get from looking at this picture is death. I see multiple people lying down, and I assume that they are dead based on their lying postures. Nevertheless, there is one person who seems to be administering first aid to a severely wounded victim.

Research has shown that visual framing can have a significant influence on viewer engagement (Ison et al., 2024). Therefore, the visual framing of Fig 4.23: NYT/22/P1 facilitated the creation of denotative meaning by allowing viewers to discern the details and context captured within the photograph.

Connotative meanings within Fig 4.23: NYT/22/P1 were also derived from the visual framing and implicit messages conveyed by the photojournalist. Informants perceived themes of pain, anguish, and panic. ID02 said, *“This photograph shows pain, anguish, death, and chaos. To a minimal extent, it also depicts humanity, considering that someone is offering help to a victim of the attack.”* From the visual framing, the photojournalists evoked feelings of anxiety and helplessness through the graphic depiction of injured and deceased individuals. The presence of individuals attempting to administer first aid amidst the chaos added a layer of humanity to the scene, juxtaposing moments of compassion with scenes of devastation. The wide-shot proximity chosen by the photojournalist further emphasised the scale of the tragedy, amplifying the connotative representation of terror and despair.

Thirdly, the visual framing of Fig 4.23: NYT/22/P1 embedded ideological representations that reflected broader societal narratives and perspectives, as interpreted by informants. Some viewed the framing and publication of the photograph as an attempt to shed light on the intensity of the attack and the humanitarian aspects of war or terror. However, others

perceived the image as a deliberate attempt to sensationalise and exploit the tragedy for political or ideological purposes. The subjective nature of the photograph's framing was evident in informants' comments, with some noting the potential biases and agendas behind its composition and publication. For instance, ID08 said:

I know that you may not like it, but *The New York Times* is doing this on purpose. They are saying, “Everybody in the rest of the world, look at those idiots in Africa. They haven’t made enough sense! They are killing each other, and this is what it looks like. Don’t go to Africa. Africa is failing.

These sentiments affirm that ultimately, the image sparked debates about objectivity versus subjectivity in photojournalism, highlighting the complex interplay between visual framing, audience interpretation, and socio-political contexts. This is an affirmation that the reporting of terrorism-related violence has remained sensational. However, in line with the multimodality theory, the research has shown that visual elements, such as photographs, are essential in communication.

Considering the findings regarding Fig 4.23: NYT/22/P1, when a photograph is appropriately framed, the composition, angle, lighting, and other elements of the image effectively convey the intended message or evoke the desired emotional response from the viewer (Parveen & Showkat, 2020). In this context, the photographers captured an image that aligns with their intended narrative or objective. However, it should be noted that we recognise that reality is multifaceted and subjective. Each individual may perceive and interpret reality differently based on their personal experiences, beliefs, and biases. Therefore, while the photography was appropriately framed to convey a specific aspect of reality, some observers may have created their own interpretations. Nevertheless, appropriately framed photographs can offer valuable insights into reality by highlighting certain aspects or perspectives that might otherwise go unnoticed. Through careful composition and presentation, photographers can draw attention to significant details, emotions, or events, providing viewers with a deeper understanding of the subject matter depicted.

It also emerged that thematic elements can be deduced from images as appears in Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B: The photograph that was published on the second page of the *Daily Nation* newspaper on September 22, 2013. The study informants were shown this picture in a

photo album and were required to examine it and comment on the various thematic features. The visual framing in the image of Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B generated denotative meanings through the portrayal of despair, hopelessness, and desperation evident in the subject's body language and facial expression. Informants described the scene as depicting a person who appears to have given up, sitting helplessly and bleeding. ID09 said that:

When I look at this picture, I see a person sitting down; he is bleeding, and it looks like he has a broken leg. The photojournalist took this picture from a high angle to communicate that the subject in this picture was in anguish. This shows that what happened here was a serious attack.

The explicit message conveyed by the photojournalist emphasised themes of anguish and vulnerability, with viewers interpreting the image as a representation of severe distress and adversity. Compositional techniques such as cropping were noted by informants, highlighting the deliberate focus on the subject to intensify the impact of their plight. This confirms that the reporting of terrorism-related violence continues to be sensationalised. However, according to multimodality theory, research has shown that visual elements, such as photographs, play a crucial role in communication.

The connotative meanings within the image were derived from the implicit messages conveyed by the photojournalist, as interpreted by informants. The framing of Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B was perceived as communicating broader societal narratives about Kenya's vulnerability and inability to cope with adversity. Viewers inferred a message of despair and abandonment, with the image serving as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by the nation in times of crisis. In agreement with this, ID04 said;

The image portrays pain—someone who is helpless sitting on the ground. As you can see, it is a medium close-up shot because we can see the full body of the victim or the person crying, so in my analysis, the photojournalist is showing an act of terror or somebody going through intense pain.

The photojournalist's implicit portrayal of Kenya as a nation in turmoil elicited feelings of empathy and concern among viewers, prompting reflections on the country's resilience and capacity to respond to such challenges.

Ideological representations within the image reflected deeper societal issues and perspectives, as inferred from informants' interpretations. The framing of Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B was perceived as subjective, with informants noting deliberate compositional choices aimed at evoking emotional responses from viewers. According to ID02, *“The message coming across is that we cannot help ourselves. This picture depicts pure desperation in times of adversity. This is probably a person of a different nationality being a victim of terrorism.”* The photojournalist's portrayal of Kenya's plight was seen as contributing to broader discourses about the country's socio-political landscape and its capacity to address crises effectively. Viewers grappled with questions about national identity, resilience, and responsibility, highlighting the complex interplay between visual framing, audience interpretation, and socio-political contexts.

Based on the responses cited, the photojournalist was subjective in framing Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B. Informants observed that the composition deliberately targeted a sole victim in anguish, hopelessness, and desperation. Informants argued that this photograph should not have been published because it intruded on the viewer's peace. The photojournalist's aim when publishing Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B was to depict despair, hopelessness, and desperation so the viewers could sympathise with the subject framed and understand the graveness of the ordeal, but the viewers developed a different perspective, indicating that Kenya was wrongly displayed as an ill-prepared country to deal with terrorism and that this raised panic since the photograph targeted just one distressed individual. It is noted that the media can influence public opinion by highlighting certain issues or aspects of events (Santos et al., 2022). When a distressing image such as Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B gains prominence in media coverage, it can set the agenda for public discourse and shape how people perceive a given situation.

The interpretations made by readers are influenced by their cognitive biases and preconceptions. For instance, with confirmation bias, individuals tend to interpret information in a way that confirms their existing beliefs or fears. In this case, the unintended portrayal of Kenya as ill-prepared to deal with terrorism was suggested by the viewers. Crowd psychology and behaviour during emergencies can determine how media representations can influence public responses. If viewers perceive Kenya as unprepared, their panic and fear can increase whenever they see some images. The overall impact is

that it hinders effective responses to terrorism. Therefore, the gap between the photojournalist's intent and the audience's interpretation of image Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B shows that photojournalists face a challenge as they seek to influence public opinion.

The portrayal of fear was noted in Fig 4.13: DN/22/P2E. The image was published on the second page of *Daily Nation* newspaper on September 22, 2013. Informants were shown this picture and were required to comment on various thematic features.



**Fig 4.13: DN/22/P2E**

The visual framing of Fig 4.13: DN/22/P2E created denotative meanings through the portrayal of desperation and fear evident in the actions of the individuals depicted. Informants interpreted the image as showing people on their knees or crawling away, suggesting a sense of urgency and danger. For instance, ID04 said, *“We can see a lot of people running away from the attack scene. I can tell that this image shows a lot of fear.”* This explicit message conveyed by the photojournalist emphasised themes of fear and vulnerability, with viewers inferring that the depicted individuals were attempting to escape from a threatening situation. The composition of the image, with individuals on their knees or crawling, served as a visual cue for the dire circumstances faced during the Westgate Mall attack.

The connotative meanings within the image were derived from the implicit messages conveyed by the photojournalist, as interpreted by informants. The framing of Fig 4.13: DN/22/P2E was perceived as communicating broader societal narratives about resilience and survival in the face of adversity. According to ID02;

The image shows a group of people crawling away, using the cement slab on the right to cover them. Again, this one speaks of fear, and you can tell these people were desperate to find themselves out of the scene.

ID07 also said:

I think when I see it, I see a sense of desperation. People are desperate, whether it is for safety, security, or help, but you can see that for an adult to walk on their knees means they are desperate for something.

Viewers inferred a message of hope amidst despair, with the image serving as a reminder of the human capacity to persevere in challenging circumstances. The photojournalist's portrayal of individuals seeking safety through unconventional means elicited feelings of empathy and solidarity among viewers, prompting reflections on the human spirit and the resilience of communities in times of crisis.

Ideological representations within the image reflected deeper societal issues and perspectives, as inferred from informants' interpretations. The framing of Fig 4.13: DN/22/P2E was seen as highlighting the impact of terrorism on communities and the need for preparedness and resilience. ID06 stated:

This is a photo of people who are on their knees. Actually, the sole interpretation is that the country has been brought to its knees by the terrorists, and they have to move on their knees. It is actually reminiscent of what we call a natural disaster, which is hitting so hard that people have to go on their knees and move, just like it happens in most cases of terror of whatever kind.

Viewers grappled with questions about national security, social cohesion, and the role of the media in shaping public perceptions of risk and safety. The photojournalist's deliberate framing of the image as a visual narrative of survival and resilience contributed to broader discourses about the human experience in the face of adversity, emphasising the importance of solidarity and collective action in responding to crises.

Even though the image depicted terror, the composition was mindful and therefore did not drive the viewer into excessive fear and grief. It can be asserted that the photojournalist's framing of Fig 4.13: DN/22/P2E was appropriate in depicting the gravity of the terror situation and the need to be prepared to use any means possible, including crawling and

rolling, to seek safety. The role of photojournalism is to provide a visual narrative of significant events and convey reality to the public. This aligns with the principles of documentary photography, where the authenticity of the captured moment is paramount (Berger, 2013). Therefore, there is a need for photojournalists to ensure they use effective visual communication by adopting appropriate framing, composition, and perspective to evoke emotions and convey a narrative. Photography can elicit emotional responses and promote understanding of complex situations if used properly. The photojournalist's deliberate choice to frame an image in a way that conveys a particular message or perspective influences the readers' perception of reality. In Figure 4.13: DN/22/P2E, the framing may have been intentionally chosen to underscore the urgency and desperation of the situation. Photojournalists should also use their profession to create public awareness and preparedness in coping with extreme situations.

As it emerged from Fig 4.47: STD/22/P2B, fear, terror, and disruption were among the common themes from the Westgate Mall attack. The image was published on the second page of *The Standard* newspaper on September 22, 2013.



**Fig 4.47: STD/22/P2B**

The denotative meanings derived from the visual framing of Fig 4.47: STD/22/P2B were centred around the portrayal of fear, terror, and disruption. Informants interpreted the image as depicting individuals fleeing from a scene of chaos, with expressions of terror

and desperation evident on their faces. For instance, ID05 noted, *“People are running from the scene of the attack. I can see most of them bending in a certain way, probably trying to miss gunshots while holding their ears, maybe from the loud noise.”* The composition of the photograph, with multiple subjects in various states of distress, served to highlight the severity of the situation and the urgency of the escape. Additionally, the presence of individuals dressed in work attire, possibly disrupted from their daily activities by the attack, contributed to the denotative meaning of disruption and economic harm caused by terrorism.

Connotative meanings within the image were inferred from the implicit messages conveyed by the photojournalist's composition. Viewers perceived broader societal narratives about the impact of terrorism on communities, economic activities, and social cohesion. ID09 stated:

The theme the photographer is passing is apprehension. The photographer was communicating that what was happening was not a normal thing but a terrifying situation. The photographer is working hard to make sure you see the maximum number of faces.

The framing of multiple faces, each displaying expressions of fear and desperation, elicited empathy and solidarity among viewers, prompting reflections on the human toll of violence and conflict. The inclusion of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds further emphasised the universal nature of the threat posed by terrorism, transcending ethnic or racial divides.

Ideological representations embedded in the image reflected deeper societal issues and perspectives, as interpreted by informants. The framing of 4.47: STD/22/P2B portrayed a narrative of terror and resilience, with individuals depicted as both victims of violence and agents of survival. Affirming these findings, ID06 said:

Remember also that in all the photos we have seen, people of different cultures exist. There is an issue of inclusion in that no one is safe under terrorism. You can see everyone running, women and men. It is something that affects people of all races. Suppose you look at the facial expression. Of course, it is terror. Everyone is terrified, and there is a lot of desperation.

The photojournalist's deliberate choice to capture the moment of escape amidst chaos underscored themes of courage, solidarity, and the human capacity to overcome adversity. Additionally, the inclusion of a security officer in the frame hinted at efforts towards rescue and intervention, suggesting a message of hope amidst despair. Overall, the visual framing of 4.47: STD/22/P2B contributed to broader discourses about the impact of terrorism on communities and the resilience of individuals in the face of crisis.

It is noted that the photojournalist's aim of depicting disruption through 4.47: STD/22/P2B was attained since the audience agreed that the image was a symbol of the chaos caused by the terror attack. Therefore, the photojournalist's aim of telling a story of what happened was attained because the intentions were congruent with the readers' perceptions. According to literature, photojournalists seek to capture the essence of significant moments, thus helping viewers understand the disruption and chaos associated with them (Busst, 2012). However, the interpretation of images is based on semiotics, or simply, signs and symbols. Therefore, visual symbols can evoke specific meanings and emotions. 4.47: STD/22/P2B was composed to include visual elements and symbolism that resonate with the audience's understanding of disruption.

Additionally, viewer perception and emotional responses to visual media also influenced how the image was interpreted. 4.47: STD/22/P2B resonated emotionally with viewers because they could interpret it as a symbol of chaos. Therefore, photojournalists should accurately represent events and avoid sensationalism at the same time. In this case, 4.47: STD/22/P2B depicts disruption that aligns with the ethical standards to maintain journalistic integrity. Therefore, the successful depiction of disruption through the image 4.47: STD/22/P2B, as perceived by the audience, demonstrates the power of photojournalism in conveying the chaos resulting from a terror attack. It is essential to understand the role of visual symbolism, viewer perception, and ethical considerations in photojournalism. Such knowledge is also helpful to the viewers.

Concepts of pain, anguish, and desperation were evident in Fig 4.40: STD/23/P2D. The photograph was published on the second page of *The Standard* newspaper on September 22, 2013.



**Fig 4.40: STD/23/P2D**

The denotative meanings inferred from the visual framing of Fig 4.40: STD/23/P2D primarily revolved around themes of pain, anguish, and desperation. Informants described the explicit message conveyed by the photograph as depicting a woman in tears, clutching onto another individual for support. ID07 said:

There is a black lady who is in tears. The photographer has zoomed in on her face to show she is in pain and traumatised. She is so much in pain, and tears are coming out; her mouth is wide open, and a white lady is holding her, trying to rescue her.

Furthermore, the use of a supermarket cart to transport a wounded victim highlighted the urgency and desperation of the situation, suggesting that individuals were resorting to unconventional means to seek safety amidst the chaos of the terror attack. Additionally, the presence of racial and gender disparities among the depicted individuals underscored broader societal issues of vulnerability and inequality in the face of violence.

Connotative meanings within the image were derived from the implicit messages conveyed by the photojournalist's composition. Informants interpreted the photograph as highlighting the vulnerability of women and the importance of solidarity and support in times of crisis. ID02 said:

The picture shows a woman crying in complete anguish, and while it borders on the intrusion into grief, it has some level of hope. If you look at her left hand and

how she is clutching onto the white lady, she believes that this lady is her only hope, and if you look clearly, she is on a supermarket cart.

The sentiments were supported by ID03, who stated, “*The photographer tries to show that women are always considered to be more victims than men.*” The image portrayed a narrative of empathy and human connection, as evidenced by the white woman's gesture of assistance towards the black woman. This connoted themes of unity and compassion amidst adversity, challenging societal stereotypes, and emphasising the shared humanity of individuals regardless of race or gender.

Ideological representations embedded in the image reflected deeper societal perspectives and narratives, as interpreted by informants. The framing of Fig 4.40: STD/23/P2D depicted broader themes of gender dynamics and racial disparities in the context of terrorism and disaster. The photojournalist's implicit message highlighted the disproportionate impact of violence on marginalised groups, particularly women, while also showcasing acts of solidarity and resilience in the face of adversity. This was affirmed by ID04, who said:

What they want to portray, if you look at these images we have analysed, is that terrorists aim at inflicting fear on the public. The moment they know that the most vulnerable in society are women and children, they attack women and children. They portray them as being in more danger than other community members.

Additionally, the image served as a commentary on the importance of community support and mutual aid in times of crisis, challenging the prevailing narratives of fear and division. Overall, the visual framing of Fig 4.40: STD/23/P2D contributed to broader discourses about vulnerability, solidarity, and social cohesion in the wake of traumatic events.

As much as the photojournalist aimed at depicting pain, agony, gender, and disregard for race when it comes to helping each other during desperate situations through Fig 4.40: STD/23/P2D, the readers' perceptions were inclined toward female vulnerability and the racial aspects depicted through the picture. Therefore, the audience believed that the image was meant to show how vulnerable women were in the wake of this disaster. They also noted that the concerned woman and the victims were not of the same race. Instead of acknowledging the creativity and swift actions taken by rescuers by using supermarket

cargo trolleys to help victims, the readers identified the image as an explicit photograph depicting how desperate the country was during the terror attack. The readers' negative bias contributed to their identification of the racial differences in the subjects rather than the unity symbolised.

Through Fig 4.40: STD/23/P2D, the photojournalist may have inadvertently conveyed the idea of female vulnerability, which is a well-documented theme in photojournalism (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2019). Additionally, the visual representation of race in media is also evident. Images can perpetuate racial stereotypes and biases. In STD/22/P2D, the perceived racial aspects may stem from the way individuals of different backgrounds are portrayed. However, the commonest observation is the perception of female vulnerability. Such a perception is influenced by gender stereotypes that are deeply rooted in society. Persistent beliefs in society associate women with traits like warmth and vulnerability (Gurieva et al., 2022). The stereotypes affect how viewers interpret images. Finally, cognitive bias affected how the image was interpreted. In this case, confirmation bias may have made the readers see what they expected or wanted to see. Consequently, they are inclined to focus on gender vulnerability and racial dynamics. Therefore, the gap between the photojournalist's intent and the audience's perception of the image Fig 4.40: STD/23/P2D shows the complexity of visual communication and the influence of societal norms, stereotypes, and media framing on interpretation.

It also emerged that the theme of anguish and agony was prevalent during the Westgate Mall terror attack, as shown in Fig 4.26: NYT/23/P1B. The photograph was published on the second page of *The New York Times* on September 23, 2013. The study informants were presented with this photograph on a photo album and asked to comment on the thematic features used to frame the image.



**Fig 4.26: NYT/23/P1B**

The denotative meanings extracted from the visual framing of Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C focused on the explicit elements captured within the photograph. Informants described seeing a scene with multiple individuals, including a woman covered in blood and being assisted by another woman. The presence of blood on the injured woman's face, coupled with her weakened state, suggested she had sustained significant injuries. The inclusion of several faces in the image aimed to show the broad impact of the attack, emphasising the widespread suffering and distress experienced by those caught in the violence. ID04 said:

I can see several guys. Six clearly shown guys. In the background, there is something like a building. There is a lady with blood all over who is being assisted by another lady. Something to note is that she is of a different racial background from the men around her, but a lady of the same race is assisting her. From the picture, she is injured and being assisted to go and seek some medical help, or maybe being evacuated away from danger.

Overall, the denotative meanings highlighted the graphic nature of the image and the immediate aftermath of a terror attack, with a focus on the physical and emotional toll on the victims.

Connotative meanings within the image were derived from the implicit messages conveyed by the photojournalist's composition. Informants interpreted the photograph as depicting scenes of pain, anguish, and distress, evoking feelings of empathy and sympathy among viewers. The presence of the injured woman at the centre of the image symbolised the vulnerability of civilians in the face of terrorism. In agreement with this, ID05 said, *“Concerning how this photograph has been framed, the audience may think that terrorists are targeting the female gender because only women are depicted severely wounded.”* However, the assistance provided by another woman underscored themes of compassion and solidarity amidst adversity. Additionally, the depiction of women as the primary victims of the attack hinted at broader societal issues of gender-based violence and discrimination.

Ideological representations embedded in the image reflected deeper societal perspectives and narratives surrounding terrorism and violence. Informants observed that the photojournalist aimed to portray the terror, fear, and intimidation inflicted by such attacks, emphasising the psychological impact on individuals and communities. ID06 said:

The goal of terrorism is to bring terror into people’s hearts and minds, and they have achieved that because people will end up seeing this lady injured. The other side shows people being there for each other when there is an act of terrorism. So I could tell that in those two angles.

The subjective nature of the framing, focusing on the emotional and visceral aspects of the scene, contributed to a sense of panic and urgency among viewers. Furthermore, the selective inclusion of certain individuals and elements in the composition highlighted the photojournalist's intent to convey specific messages about vulnerability, solidarity, and resilience in the face of adversity. Similar findings were reported by Nissine (2012). Overall, the visual framing of Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C served to provoke critical reflections on the human cost of terrorism and the importance of collective support and solidarity in times of crisis.

Although the photojournalist’s focus was on making the viewers have sympathy for terror victims through Fig 4.26: NYT/23/P1B, the readers ended up creating the perception that the image portrayed fear, grief, pain, anguish, and distress. Based on the way the image

was framed, it was challenging for the viewers to ignore the pain, distress, and agony the victims were undergoing and just feel sympathy for them. Editors usually seek to evoke empathy and sympathy for the subjects depicted. Berger (2013) indicates that visual cues can elicit emotional responses and prompt viewers to contemplate the experiences of the portrayed subjects. Such emotions are triggered by visual elements, composition, and context. Since framing is an intentional activity, Fig 4.26: NYT/23/P1B was meant to accentuate the pain and distress of the victims. The purpose was to make the readers feel empathy, but they simultaneously felt sympathy and other emotions, such as fear or grief. The reason is that there were cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias, which made the readers see what they expected.

The themes of survival, protection, and vulnerability were also evident in Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C since it shows individuals in fear and uncertainty, portraying the instinctual response to seek shelter or safety in a dangerous situation. The photograph was published on the second page of *The New York Times* on September 23, 2013.



**Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C**

The denotative meanings of Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P2, as interpreted by the informants, centre around the visual elements captured in the photograph, such as the image of a woman and her children lying on the floor, suggesting they are seeking cover during an attack. The explicit perception emphasises the immediate visual details, such as the positioning of the individuals and their expressions, to convey a sense of vulnerability and danger. ID02

affirmed this by saying, *“I believe a mother and her two kids are lying on the floor. They were taking cover during the attack.* These denotative meanings focus on the literal depiction of the scene, highlighting the physical actions and emotions of the subjects as they attempt to protect themselves from harm.

In addition to the denotative meanings, the connotative interpretations of Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C provided by the informants suggest deeper symbolic associations and emotional undertones. The informants noted implicit messages conveyed through the framing of the photograph, highlighting themes of vulnerability, fear, love, and protection. ID01 said, *“The image has some level of affection as the mother is holding one of the children inside her left arm while holding the other child in her hands.”* The connotative meanings emphasise the broader implications of the image, suggesting that it serves as a metaphor for societal vulnerability in the face of terrorism and the love of parents for their children. The composition of the photograph, along with the expressions of the subjects, evokes feelings of empathy and concern, eliciting a deeper emotional response from the viewers.

Furthermore, the ideological representations embedded within Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C reflect the informants' perceptions of societal dynamics and power structures. The framing of the photograph symbolises the vulnerability of women and children, who are often seen as soft targets in conflicts and acts of terrorism. The implicit message conveyed through the composition underscores broader societal issues related to security, protection, and the impact of violence on vulnerable populations. For instance, ID06 said:

This is a whole family; a family is a micro or small picture of a nation. This is a nation that is exposed to terror, and I think it's more disturbing than others. It looks cool, but this is a picture of vulnerability.

The ideological representations highlight the photojournalist's intention to provoke reflection on social inequalities and the need for greater attention to the safety and well-being of marginalised groups.

It is noted that the photojournalist's implicit and explicit framing of Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C to depict danger, vulnerability, mothers' affection for their children and dedication to

protect them, and the nation's exposure to danger aligned with the perceptions created by the readers. The viewers agreed that the photojournalist framed the image appropriately to symbolise the impact of terrorism. Photojournalists make deliberate decisions when framing images. Framing in photojournalism is a deliberate choice made by photographers to convey specific messages or emotions (Carter, 2013). Depending on the specific visual cues that images form, they can elicit emotional responses and prompt viewers to contemplate the experiences of the subjects.

Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P1C shows the significance of mother-child bonds. The reason is that the image shows mothers' affection for their children. This way, the image triggers powerful emotions. Based on attachment theory, the photograph emphasises the significance of bonds in human psychology. The portrayal of the bond in the media evokes empathy and emotional resonance. By employing visual framing techniques, the photojournalist skilfully constructs denotative and connotative meanings and embeds ideological representations within the image. Through the strategic composition of the photograph, specific elements are highlighted to convey a narrative that extends beyond the surface level. As viewers engage with the image, the denotative meanings, or the literal elements within the photograph, such as the expressions of grief and devastation, are readily apparent. Additionally, connotative meanings, which encompass the symbolic or implied messages conveyed by the image, may evoke feelings of empathy, fear, or outrage, depending on the viewer's perspective. Furthermore, the ideological representations embedded within the photograph underscore broader themes related to the impact of terrorism and the resilience of affected communities. In this way, visual storytelling in photojournalism emerges as an important tool for conveying complex socio-political issues and fostering understanding and empathy among audiences.

It also emerged that visual framing resulted in the inadvertent glorification of terrorists, although the journalists may have wanted to portray the impacts of violence, as shown in Fig 4.22: DN/24/P2. The photograph was published on the third page of the *Daily Nation* issue on September 24, 2013.



**Fig 4.22: DN/24/P2**

Based on the interpretation of Fig. 4.22: DN/24/P2, the framing of visual media, particularly in the context of terrorist attacks like the Westgate Mall incident, serves as a powerful tool not only to convey immediate information but also to shape broader narratives and perceptions. While visual framing can challenge stereotypes, promote inclusivity, and highlight themes of resilience, it also carries the risk of unintended consequences, such as glorifying terrorists or misrepresenting the intended message. Understanding the complexities and potential misinterpretations of visual framing is crucial for media practitioners to responsibly and accurately depict sensitive events like terrorist attacks.

The denotative meanings of Fig 4.22: DN/24/P2, as perceived by the informants, revolve around the explicit visual elements captured in the photograph. These include the depiction of a group of men engaged in a burial ceremony, carrying a covered casket, which suggests the burial of a deceased individual. ID02 said, *“The first one is of a group of men, young and old, going to bury one of their own who might have been killed by the attackers.”* The informants also noted the sombre expressions on the faces of the men, indicating the solemn nature of the occasion. Additionally, the presence of trees in the background and the absence of women in the image were observed, providing contextual details about the setting and the cultural practices surrounding the burial.

In addition to the denotative meanings, the connotative interpretations of Fig 4.22: DN/24/P2 suggest deeper symbolic associations and emotional implications. ID03 said;

The people in this photograph all look sad because of what has happened. On the far left is a spectacled man looking down, whose face speaks of some level of desperation and anger. He appears to be very disappointed and sad about what has happened. It's a message that is filled with sorrow.

On the other hand, ID04 stated, "*The photograph could communicate a sense of victory to the terrorists because they have achieved their objective, instilling fear and taking the lives of the public.*" Informants noted that the photograph conveyed messages related to religious identity and community solidarity. The image was perceived as challenging stereotypes associated with terrorism and Islam by highlighting the universal experience of grief and mourning. Furthermore, the connotative meanings emphasised themes of resilience and unity in the face of adversity, as evidenced by the collective participation in the burial ritual and the absence of divisive religious narratives.

The ideological representations embedded within Fig 4.22: DN/24/P2 reflect broader societal perceptions and attitudes toward terrorism, religion, and cultural identity. The implicit messages conveyed through the framing of the photograph underscored the complex interplay between religious affiliation and acts of violence. Informants noted that the photojournalist aimed to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusivity by depicting Muslims as victims of terrorism rather than perpetrators. For instance, ID05 stated that:

The photojournalist wanted to convey that most of the time, terrorist acts are associated with the Islam faith. Then, we can see where they are burying their own. This one debunks the notion that terrorism is only associated with Islam or Muslims. So I believe that is also one key area that maybe the photojournalist wanted to bring out.

Additionally, the photograph was interpreted as conveying messages of resilience and healing, highlighting the human capacity to endure and rebuild in the aftermath of tragedy. However, subjective elements in the framing were also observed, particularly in how the photograph portrayed the perceived triumph of the terrorists and the resulting devastation to the affected community. Previously, it has been indicated that it is rare for affected

people to demonstrate calmness and resilience during the aftermath of a traumatic occurrence (Bonanno, 2004). Therefore, the findings agree with previous assertions that people can recollect and unite after a terror attack.

From the analysis and responses, it can be seen that although the photojournalist's main aim was to indicate that terrorism is not religion-affiliated, especially Islam, the viewers' perception of the framing of Fig 4.22: DN/24/P2 also entailed aspects of glorifying terrorists, thus giving them a reason to rejoice. The image shows that the impact of violent attacks can be huge because a lot of people were affected. Additionally, the photograph symbolises comfort and resilience, which were witnessed during the period of the attack. According to Juergensmeyer (2017), religion can be used to justify or condemn acts of terrorism. When one understands how people associate religion with terrorism based on their wrong assumptions, they can interpret images published by the media appropriately by contextualising the photographs. By highlighting specific aspects of events, the media shapes the public perception of terrorism. In Fig 4.22: DN/24/P2, the photojournalist framed the image to allow the readers to make their own interpretation. Particularly, the image shows that no religion is immune to violent attacks. Additionally, no particular religion is involved in terrorism.

The unintended consequences of framing were also evident. The main message the journalist sought to convey was that everyone can be negatively affected by terrorism, irrespective of their religion. However, the image was misinterpreted as a way of showing that the terrorists had won against the Kenyan government by managing to kill civilians. For instance, ID03 said, *"I was not pleased with the photograph's portrayal of what appeared as the terrorists' win to cause violence. It means the Kenyan government failed to protect its citizens against terrorists."* Therefore, according to some readers, publishing the image was a confirmation that terrorists are superior and their efforts were successful. Readers' own interpretations can be attributed to cognitive biases. People may see what they expect or want. In Fig 4.22: DN/24/P2, viewers' preconceptions about terrorism and religion influenced their interpretation. Therefore, the disconnect between the photojournalist's primary intent and the audience's interpretation of Fig 4.22: DN/24/P2 shows that framing choices in media are associated with unintended

consequences. There is a need for journalists to understand what to anticipate in order to frame photographs accordingly.

As noted from Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3 and Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1, the theme of mourning and grief was evident in the framing of photographs covering the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. The images were published by *The Standard* and *The New York Times* newspapers on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 2013. Informants were presented with these two photographs in a photo album and asked to comment on the thematic features that the photojournalist used to frame the images. The analysis of these pictures was combined, considering that both newspapers featured the same characters in their respective photographs.



**Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3**



**Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1**

The denotative meanings of Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3 and Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1, as perceived by the informants, revolve around the explicit visual elements captured in the photographs. Both images depict scenes of mourning and grief, with the main subjects visibly distraught and being comforted by others. The facial expressions and body language of the individuals convey a sense of sorrow and emotional pain, indicating that they have experienced a significant loss or tragedy. ID02 confirmed this by saying, *“You can see the pastor holding the young man in Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3 with a touch of reassurance that maybe everything will be ok. The young man appears distraught. He appears to have been crying for a while. But it has some level of hope that despite everything, I am here for you, as you can see from the touch of the two ladies on Stephen.”* Additionally, the physical gestures, such as the pastor comforting the young man in Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3, provide contextual clues about the relationships and interactions depicted in the photographs.

In addition to the denotative meanings, the connotative interpretations of Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3 and Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1 suggest deeper emotional and symbolic associations. Informants noted that the photographs evoke feelings of empathy and compassion towards the grieving individuals, highlighting the universal experience of loss and suffering. The images also convey themes of resilience and solidarity, as seen in the supportive gestures and expressions of care among the depicted individuals. Furthermore, the photographs may evoke a sense of empathy, prompting viewers to contemplate the human toll of terrorism and violence. ID09 stated, *“These pictures also communicate that the terrorists were successful in their mission because terrorists come to inflict terror, and when they see such pictures, they feel they have achieved their objective.”* The images serve as a confirmation of the terrorists' success in instilling fear and disrupting societal harmony. The photographs depict terrorism as a tactic aimed not only at causing physical harm but also at generating widespread psychological distress.

The ideological representations embedded within Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3 and Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1 reflect broader societal attitudes and perceptions towards terrorism and its impact on communities. The implicit messages conveyed through the framing of the photographs underscore the devastating consequences of terrorist attacks, both on a personal and collective level. Informants observed that the images portrayed Kenya as a

nation in mourning, grappling with the aftermath of a tragic event. For instance, ID07 said, “*A country of pain, a country of people who are hurting, a country of people who think we are hopeless. These people have destroyed us.*” Furthermore, the photographs may challenge narratives that seek to glorify or justify acts of terrorism by highlighting the human cost and suffering inflicted upon innocent individuals (Campbell, 2004). However, the subjective nature of the framing suggests that the photojournalists may have aimed to elicit specific emotional responses and convey particular narratives about the impact of terrorism rather than present an objective portrayal of the events.

The photojournalists’ aim of framing a sad ending to the terror attack by publishing Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3 and Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1 is congruent with the viewers’ perspective that the photographs depict pain, misery, and grief. The main story told through the image is that of the loss of lives. Existing literature shows that the visual cues in published images can evoke emotional responses from viewers and tell stories, even when captions are not included. Through photojournalism, images can make viewers develop emotions. Research shows that journalists and editors can tell stories or narratives through published images (Berger, 2013). Therefore, it should be noted that the visual elements in images create a notion among people, especially the viewers. For instance, if photojournalists publish an image showing misery and pain, the readers will form a mental understanding of what might have happened based on the objects surrounding the subjects and the mood in the photograph.

Psychologically, humans can relate to the images published and create a story out of what has been published. For instance, Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3 and Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1 made the readers realise that the subjects portrayed through the image were sad and grieving. In this case, the photojournalist aimed to represent loss as an important theme related to terrorist attacks. However, there is a need to ensure that photojournalists adhere to ethical considerations when they have to depict sensitive subjects and loss (Shields, 2014). Additionally, the human aspects of tragedies such as sorrow and loss should be conveyed appropriately. While taking and publishing the picture, photojournalists and editors may need to know that the readers’ cognitive processes will influence how they process and

interpret the images. Consequently, the way people make sense of the published information will likely be determined in advance to predict the anticipated response.

Photojournalists' framing of images entails symbolism and visual storytelling. In the cases of Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3 and NYT/23/P1, the framing aimed at the broader narrative of loss resulting from the terror attack. It should be noted that journalists and editors face ethical challenges as they try to publish images. For instance, one may want to inform the public about the grave consequences of terrorism. However, at the same time, the editor or photojournalist is supposed to depict the images in such a way that they do not violate the victims' privacy or affect the affected people negatively. Creating a balance between the two requirements is very challenging. The alignment between the photojournalists' intent and the audience's perception of images Fig 4.50: STD/24/P3 and Fig 4.25: NYT/23/P1 demonstrate the power of visual storytelling, which involves creating denotative and connotative meanings while embedding ideological representations. However, to maintain ethical standards, photojournalists must consider the sensitivity of the subjects portrayed and engage in responsible reporting (Shields, 2014). Understanding the intersection of visual framing, emotions, symbolism, and ethics is crucial for readers, photojournalists, and media professionals to effectively convey complex narratives through imagery.

#### **4.4.7 Summary**

The findings affirm the pivotal role of visual framing, which encompasses the creation of denotative meanings, connotative meanings, and ideological representations. In this case, visual framing was used to shape perceptions about the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. Photojournalists captured and conveyed events in real-time by utilising images as a powerful tool for visual storytelling. The authenticity of published images was paramount in this case because visual framing significantly influenced the emotional engagement levels of the audience. However, it should be noted that while photojournalists may strive for objectivity in their compositional techniques, readers' subjective interpretations can sometimes perceive the images as inadvertently sensationalised.

Moreover, the study findings reveal instances where the photojournalists' framing objectives conflicted with the perspectives of readers, influenced by cognitive biases and cultural norms. Negative emotions such as fear, racism, and grief often overshadowed the

intended messages of hope or humanity, exacerbating confirmation bias in the audience's interpretation of the images. Despite the inherent challenges, photojournalists are tasked with striking a delicate balance between reporting events faithfully and mitigating potential psychological harm to the public, especially concerning sensitive subjects like terrorism. Furthermore, the visual elements of images, including colours, composition, and context, exert a profound impact on the audience's interpretation, eliciting specific emotions and reinforcing societal stereotypes. In adherence to ethical guidelines, it is essential that photojournalists exercise caution in framing images, particularly those depicting the aftermath of terrorism. Each photographer bears the responsibility of understanding the potential repercussions of their work and navigating the sensitivities of diverse audiences, underscoring the complexity of visual storytelling and the importance of rigorous review processes prior to publication.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The main aim of this study was to assess how photojournalists framed the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. The evaluation focused on the photographs published by the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times* newspapers. First, the study examined the types of visual frames that were used by the selected newspapers. Secondly, there was an exploration of the compositional elements that photojournalists deployed to frame the incident. Finally, an assessment of the role that framing played in the photographs published was carried out.

### **5.2 Summary of the Findings**

#### **5.2.1 Types of Visual Frames**

In respect to objective one, which focused on the framing of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack by the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times*, 50 photographs were reviewed, with 42% from *The Standard*, 38% from *Daily Nation*, and 20% from *The New York Times*. A total of 11 frames were identified, categorised as either positive, such as heroic rescuers, humanitarianism, and combat prowess, or negative, such as pain and misery, survivors' despair and desperation, destruction of property, victims' deaths, and survivors' vulnerability. The framing theory suggests that the media plays a crucial role in shaping how events are understood by using specific images and frames that influence public interpretation. For instance, the 41% of positive frames from the newspapers, which featured images of heroism and humanitarian efforts, can be seen as aligning with a narrative of resilience, unity, and courage. These frames counteract the terrorists' aim to instil fear, promoting a narrative that strengthens societal solidarity in the face of terror. On the other hand, 59% of the photos displayed negative frames, such as survivors' dread and pain, which, while depicting the harsh realities of terrorism, can also reinforce the emotional and psychological impact that terrorists seek to create.

The heroic rescuers frame, featured in 10 photographs, exemplified bravery and unity during the crisis. Framing the rescuers as heroes undermines the terrorists' goals by highlighting the resilience of those involved in rescue operations. The framing theory suggests that such representations shape societal responses, focusing on collective strength

and heroism, encouraging public admiration for the efforts of security forces and humanitarian workers. The humanitarianism frame, depicted in 12 photos, also communicated a positive message of human compassion and support, portraying the Kenyan people as resilient against adversity. Similarly, the combat prowess frame, which appeared in 18 photographs, highlighted the government's and military's response to the terrorists. While this frame fostered public confidence in the government's security apparatus, it also portrayed the terrorists as a formidable force, underscoring the scale of the attack and the difficulty in neutralising such threats. This kind of framing has a powerful role in shaping public attitudes, showing that while terrorism causes harm, communities respond with empathy and solidarity.

Conversely, negative frames, like pain and misery, featured in 11 photographs, evoked deep emotional responses by showing victims' suffering. Such images, while intended to raise awareness and elicit sympathy, can also inadvertently support terrorists' objectives by amplifying the sense of fear and grief. The survivors' dread frame, evident in 11 photos, further demonstrated how terror impacts victims, creating a heightened sense of fear for the audience. According to framing theory, these images can profoundly influence public perception. Consequently, this can lead to a complex balance between informing the public and contributing to the objectives of terrorists.

The study also found that images of victims' deaths and survivors' grief were prominent, appearing in 3 and 4 photographs, respectively. The depictions of grief and loss, while intended to evoke empathy, often elevated the terrorists' portrayal as victors, reinforcing their capacity to inflict harm. This underlines the fine line photojournalists walk in representing the reality of terrorism without sensationalising it. The destruction of property frame, also featured in two photographs, illustrating the widespread devastation caused by the attack. According to framing theory, such imagery not only depicts physical damage but also suggests a failure on the part of the state to protect its citizens, which can lead to a loss of public confidence. The power of images in constructing a particular narrative is explained through the framing theory. In the case of Westgate, the media's coverage often presented a narrative of vulnerability, particularly concerning women and children, who were frequently depicted in the vulnerability frame. This was seen in 16 photos, with *The*

*Standard* alone publishing nine such images. By portraying women and children as the most vulnerable, the media may have inadvertently reinforced gender stereotypes and the terrorists' portrayal of targeting the defenceless. Finally, the survivors' despair frame was presented in 4 photographs, predominantly in the *Daily Nation*, reflecting the emotional toll of the attack. These images not only documented the aftermath but also underscored the long-lasting psychological impact on survivors. Framing theory posits that such representations can foster public empathy and solidarity but can also heighten public fear and anxiety.

The media undoubtedly plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding and awareness of terrorism. However, the challenge lies in achieving a delicate balance between providing truthful representation of the horrors of terrorism and avoiding the inadvertent amplification of terrorists' objectives. Through the lens of framing theory, it becomes evident that the way media constructs narratives around terrorism can significantly influence public perception, societal memory, and collective responses to such events. Framing theory suggests that the media's selection of certain aspects of an event, and the emphasis or exclusion of others, can shape the audience's interpretation of that event. Positive frames, such as those emphasizing humanitarianism, heroism, and national resilience, serve as vital tools in fostering unity, solidarity, and strength in the aftermath of terrorist attacks. These frames serve to reassure the public, reduce fear, and encourage communal healing by shifting the focus from the terror inflicted to the resilience demonstrated by survivors and communities.

Conversely, negative frames that focus on survivors' grief, trauma, and the devastation caused by terrorism are equally essential, yet pose certain risks. While these frames provide a necessary acknowledgment of the human cost of terrorism, they can also perpetuate feelings of fear, helplessness, and vulnerability. Additionally, such narratives may unwittingly provide terrorists with the visibility and attention they seek, as the emphasis on destruction and suffering aligns with their objectives of instilling fear and gaining widespread recognition. These negative frames, if not carefully managed, can lead to the amplification of terrorist ideologies and messages, furthering their reach and impact. In the context of events such as the Westgate Mall attack, media framing has broader implications

for societal memory and collective trauma. The ways in which media outlets choose to report on these attacks can shape how such events are remembered and integrated into the social fabric. The framing of the Westgate Mall attack, for example, not only contributed to how the event was understood at the time but also influences ongoing narratives about terrorism, national security, and public fear. The media's role in constructing a societal memory of traumatic events is, therefore, a double-edged sword. It can either help build resilience by highlighting stories of courage and recovery, or it can entrench fear and anxiety by overemphasising the brutality and destruction of the attack.

Therefore, the study of media framing around terrorism provides critical insights into the power dynamics at play in the representation of terrorist attacks. It highlights the responsibility of media outlets to balance the truthful reporting of terror's realities with a measured approach that avoids amplifying terrorists' messages. By carefully selecting frames that emphasize resilience and recovery while not neglecting the gravity of the violence and loss, the media can play a pivotal role in promoting a narrative of collective strength rather than one of fear and defeat. Through this balanced approach, the media can help foster a more informed, resilient, and united public response to the ongoing threat of terrorism.

### **5.2.2 Compositional Elements**

In regards to objective two, it was found that different compositional elements were used in the publication of photographs covering the Westgate Mall terrorist attack by the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *The New York Times*. Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) found that the second (stylistic-semiotic) and third (connotative approach) levels of visual assessment were adopted to visually frame the terrorist attack based on the components of the photographs circulated by print media. The findings revealed critical insights into visual journalism through the lens of multimodality theory. This theory emphasises how various modes of communication, such as images, text, and layout, interact to create meaning. In total, 50 images were examined, and out of these, 18 were from the *Daily Nation*, 23 from *The Standard*, and 9 from *The New York Times*. Different compositional elements were assessed based on image size, camera angles, and shot proximity. At the core of this

analysis was how these factors shape public perception and emotional response, particularly concerning trauma and the implications of terrorism in media representation.

The study identified that the *Daily Nation* featured 12 large images, 5 medium-sized images, and 1 small image. Similarly, *The Standard* published 12 large, 9 medium-sized, and 2 small images. *The New York Times* contributed 5 large and 4 medium-sized images. The prominent use of large images, especially those depicting violence and suffering, plays a crucial role in framing terrorism as a crime against humanity. Such graphic portrayals can induce fear and trauma among viewers, potentially leading to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This relationship between large images and emotional response aligns with multimodal communication, suggesting that visual framing can profoundly affect public sentiment and understanding of terror events.

Conversely, the use of medium-sized images was recognised as a more balanced journalistic approach. By employing medium-sized visuals, the newspapers effectively communicated essential information. The approach also mitigated emotional distress for readers. This strategy aligns with multimodality theory by demonstrating how different image sizes can frame narratives in ways that highlight certain aspects of reality while minimising others, such as fear and panic. The strategic choice of medium-sized images allowed editors to convey themes of terrorism without overwhelming the audience with graphic content, thus enhancing credibility and trustworthiness.

Small-sized images were predominantly used by the three newspapers. The reason is that although small-sized photographs are less impactful in terms of emotional response, when used in large numbers, they effectively communicate the photojournalists' narrative. The publication of smaller images aimed to inform without eliciting strong emotional reactions. However, numerous small-sized images are useful in laying emphasis on an incident or particular narrative. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of multimodal communication. The reason is that the model suggests that the combination of visuals and text can effectively relay information while minimising trauma for the audience.

It was established that camera angles further influenced viewers' perceptions. In total, there were 10 high-angle, 31 eye-level, and 9 low-angle shots utilised across the publications. The *Daily Nation* published 5 high-angle images, which served to depict the surroundings rather than demean the subjects, highlighting the emotional context of the tragedy. The eye-level shots were predominant, which fosters a sense of immediacy and intimacy with the viewer. This deliberate application of camera angles demonstrates the importance of perspective in visual storytelling. The reason is that it reinforces the significance of multimodality in shaping narratives.

As per the results, shot proximity also varied. Particularly, there were 5 extremely wide shots, 12 medium-wide shots, 11 wide shots, 16 medium shots, 5 medium close-ups, and 1 close-up shot, as published by the three dailies. The careful selection of medium-close-up and eye-level shots provided a closer connection to the events without resorting to graphic representations that could invoke despair or fear. The strategy highlights the ethical responsibilities of photojournalists. The tactic aligns with the multimodality approach by showing how various photographic techniques can evoke different emotional responses while conveying complex narratives.

The findings highlight the pivotal role of visual composition in media reporting, especially when dealing with sensitive topics like terrorism. In today's media landscape, images are not merely supplementary to text but serve as powerful tools that frame narratives and shape public perception. The strategic use of visual elements—such as image size, camera angles, and proximity—in news publications reflects deliberate choices that influence how audiences interpret and emotionally respond to real-world events. Among the key insights from these findings is how media outlets navigate the tension between informing the public and adhering to ethical journalism standards. This balancing act becomes especially pronounced in reporting on terrorism, where misrepresentation or sensationalism could exacerbate fear, bias, or misinformation. The intentional deployment of visual cues allows journalists to guide viewers through complex or emotionally charged content while maintaining a sense of objectivity and responsibility.

These practices align closely with multimodality theory, which emphasizes the interaction of multiple communicative modes, such as text, images, and layout, in constructing meaning. According to multimodality, each mode contributes to the overall communicative effect, meaning that visuals do not merely repeat or support textual content but offer a unique semiotic resource for conveying meaning. In the context of terrorism reporting, the integration of visual and verbal modes shapes not only the audience's cognitive understanding of the event but also their affective response. For instance, the choice to use a close-up shot of victims or rescue workers can evoke empathy, while wider shots of destruction might reinforce the gravity of the event. These nuanced compositional choices create layers of meaning that resonate with audiences on intellectual and emotional levels.

Additionally, the ethical implications of these choices cannot be overstated. Given the highly charged nature of terrorism reporting, the media's compositional strategies, whether through emphasising certain angles, manipulating colour saturation, or selecting particular images, can either uphold journalistic integrity or subtly promote sensationalism. Publications must, therefore, employ visual elements in ways that respect the dignity of those affected while providing the public with a truthful representation of events. In summary, the compositional elements in media reporting are far from neutral. They are active participants in shaping public discourse and understanding. By recognising the interaction between visual and textual modes, media professionals can harness the power of multimodality to report on sensitive issues with precision, care, and responsibility. As such, visual composition becomes a crucial determinant in not only the delivery of information but also in the construction of social realities that emerge from news coverage, particularly on complex and sensitive topics like terrorism.

### **5.2.3 The Role of Visual Framing**

The third objective of this study was to examine the role that visual framing played in the photographs that the selected newspapers published after the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. It was established that visual framing concurrently created denotative, connotative, and ideological representations within the images published by the media. Regarding denotative meanings, the photographs published during the Westgate Mall terrorist attack provided a clear view of the location, layout, and immediate surroundings, allowing

newspaper readers to visualise the context of the incident. Viewers constructed denotative representations based on these images, as they captured the physical scene, people involved, and aftermath of the attack. The images were framed to present the happenings and create a stronger comprehension of the event, evoking emotional reactions and conveying information that words alone cannot capture. Visual framing in news photography plays a crucial role in shaping readers' understanding of events, as it adds a human dimension to tragedies and provides a powerful narrative of the incident's aftermath. Overall, visual framing through photojournalism informs society about day-to-day happenings and enhances the effectiveness of news communication.

As for the infusion of connotative meanings, it was found that the images related to the Westgate Mall attack evoked emotions, symbols, and cultural references. This way, the photographs created a raw and unedited portrayal of the incident to preserve authenticity. Visual framing aimed to invoke emotions among viewers, showcasing fear, anguish, and resilience and highlighting the human aspect of the tragedy. While presenting factual information, the images also conveyed symbolic meanings, influenced by the readers' culture and societal biases. For example, images of damaged property symbolised an attack on the nation's unity and resilience. Visual framing, through camera angles and image sizes, influenced readers' perceptions and connotative meanings of the incident, shaping discourses of fear, crime, and justice in society. Overall, visual framing in photojournalism played a crucial role in depicting reality and shaping public understanding of events, although it can sometimes be interpreted as stereotyping crime.

The study also established that the images published by the three newspapers during the Westgate Mall terrorist attack infused ideological representations into the readers' perceptions of the incident. Visual framing highlighted themes of resilience, unity, and societal vulnerabilities. Therefore, the images showcased the strength of the community and the nation's vulnerability to extremist violence. The images effectively conveyed political and social contexts, promoting themes of solidarity and emphasising the need for change. Visual framing can influence people's perceptions of political and social dynamics by shedding light on injustices and challenges, thus advocating for social change. However, the study showed that some images may have unintentionally perpetuated stereotypes,

especially regarding religious affiliation and terrorism. The study established that despite individual biases, photojournalists strive to adhere to a code of ethics that demands impartiality, aiming to report events as they occur without altering any aspects, even if some readers may prefer alterations. Through visual framing, photojournalists engage in truth-telling, exposing the realities of events such as the Westgate Mall attack.

It was established that visual framing of photographs from the Westgate Mall terrorist attack extended beyond narrative creation and influenced the readers' perceptions by enabling them to derive connotative and denotative meanings, as well as infuse ideological representations related to political issues and religious affiliations with terrorism. Images like Fig 4.1: DN/22/P1 and Fig 4.29: STD/22/P1 evoked denotative meanings of distress and heroism but also raised ethical concerns about the exploitation of suffering for sensationalism. Fig 4.23: NYT/22/P1 depicted death and chaos, prompting debates about objectivity in photojournalism. Fig 4.2: DN/22/P2B portrayed despair, leading viewers to question Kenya's preparedness for terrorism. Through images like DN/22/P2E, Fig 4.47: STD/22/P2B, Fig 4.48: STD/22/P2C, STD/22/P2D, and Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P2, the photojournalists conveyed explicit messages of fear, desperation, and vulnerability, prompting viewers to reflect on broader societal narratives of resilience and survival.

The composition of the reviewed images, coupled with the inclusion of diverse cultural backgrounds, highlighted the universal impact of terrorism, transcending ethnic or racial divides. Furthermore, the implicit messages within the images emphasised themes of solidarity, compassion, and the human capacity to overcome adversity. Fig 4.7: NYT/23/P2's depiction of a mother and her children seeking cover during an attack conveys themes of vulnerability and the love of parents for their children, while Fig 4.22: DN/24/P2's portrayal of a burial ceremony challenges stereotypes associated with terrorism and Islam by highlighting the universal experience of grief and mourning. However, the results showed that the unintended consequences of framing, such as the misinterpretation of the message or the glorification of terrorists, highlight the importance of ethical considerations in photojournalism.

The findings underscore that visual imagery is not merely a passive reflection of reality but an active agent in constructing meaning. By selectively emphasising certain aspects of the event, such as images of victims, security forces, or community responses, these frames can evoke powerful emotional responses that resonate with viewers' existing beliefs, ideologies, and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, media representations can both reflect and reinforce societal narratives surrounding resilience, unity, and vulnerability in the face of terrorism. In addition, this emotional resonance also brings inherent risks. The potential for perpetuating stereotypes, particularly about marginalised or ethnic groups, or for misrepresenting the complex realities of such incidents, raises ethical concerns. For instance, framing certain ethnicities or religious groups as perpetual victims or perpetrators can feed into harmful prejudices and deepen societal divisions. This potential for bias emphasises the critical responsibility that photojournalists and media outlets have in maintaining objectivity and avoiding sensationalism.

In summary, the tension between evoking emotional responses and ensuring factual accuracy complicates the role of visual media in reporting traumatic events. While emotionally charged images can foster solidarity and a sense of shared grief or resilience, they can also distort the complexity of the issues at hand if not properly contextualized. For example, a focus on heroic narratives may obscure underlying political, social, or security failures, while images of chaos and violence might overstate the sense of threat, stoking fear rather than fostering understanding. This duality highlights the need for media practitioners to engage in careful, ethical representation. Balancing emotional impact with factual integrity is not only crucial for maintaining public trust but also essential for shaping a more informed and nuanced public discourse on terrorism and violence. In this context, media representations play a significant role in shaping collective memory and societal responses, thus wielding considerable influence over both immediate public reactions and longer-term policy discussions on national security, human rights, and civil liberties. Therefore, the media's responsibility extends beyond mere reporting; it must contribute constructively to the dialogue around traumatic events by promoting empathy without compromising accuracy. This requires ongoing critical reflection by journalists and editors on the power dynamics embedded in their representations and a commitment

to avoiding simplistic, sensationalist narratives that may hinder rather than help public understanding of terrorism and its aftermath.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Following the conclusions and implications of the study discussed, the research recommends that it is essential for photojournalists to assess the context of every photograph before they publish it. This way, they will likely present images in the right context where viewers will correctly interpret such visual representations. Therefore, other than news values, photojournalists may have to consider both the subject and audience of their work. Such an approach would facilitate a deeper understanding of visual framing in media coverage of terrorism. This will be beneficial, particularly in the context of the shift from text-based to visually dominated media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Secondly, while reporting, photojournalists need to consider the technical aspects of visual framing and its emotional and psychological impact on the audience during times of crisis. Therefore, it would be important to portray images in a manner that balances professional ethical requirements and media's right to inform the public the truth about occurrences. Seeking knowledge on framing in news, sensationalism, and the relationship between media and terrorism would be beneficial in achieving this endeavour. Consequently, objective photojournalism, especially during tragedies such as terrorism, would be embraced.

Thirdly, understanding the role of visual components and their impact on news photography would lead to a more responsible approach for editors. It is expected that when photojournalists are well-versed about the implications of framing, they will present images in a manner that does not overly sensationalise an incident such as terrorism. This would align with established journalism standards and guidelines, particularly when dealing with sensitive topics such as terror attacks. However, it is important to acknowledge that framing images related to terror attacks is a complex issue, as it requires striking a delicate balance between the freedom of the press and responsible reporting. There is a fine line between respecting journalistic freedom and safeguarding the public interest, making it an important ethical consideration.

Fourthly, photojournalists should undergo regular training on the ethical challenges and implications of visual framing, especially in the context of sensitive issues like terrorism. These programs should emphasise not only technical skills but also the psychological and societal effects of the images they produce. By integrating continuous professional development, journalists can remain updated on best practices, ensuring that their work aligns with ethical standards and minimises harm while still fulfilling their responsibility to inform the public.

Last but not least, news organisations should encourage collaboration between photojournalists and experts in psychology, trauma, and crisis communication. By consulting with these professionals, photojournalists can better understand how images of traumatic events, like terrorism, affect different segments of the audience. This collaboration can guide them in selecting images that inform without triggering unnecessary distress or perpetuating fear, thereby fostering a more thoughtful and humane approach to covering crises.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Future Studies**

While the newspaper offered a suitable avenue through which this study analysed the visual framing of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack, future studies could consider alternative media outlets such as radio, television, and online media, given the current high prevalence of reliance on digital media. It would be fascinating to read the outcomes of those studies and compare the findings with those of this study while relating the results to the current status of information transmission.

This study was limited to examining photographs that were published in the aftermath of the Westgate Mall terrorist attack. Future studies could compare how the media framed terrorism in various incidents, such as the 1998 US Embassy bombing, the Garissa University terror attack, and the Mpeketoni attack, among others. It would be interesting to see how visual framing is compared in the various incidents and differences in time.

The research also pointed out that the lack of engagement with the victims featured in the photographs published was a key limitation of the study. Future studies could examine how featured victims perceived the photographs that were published by various print media. It

would be interesting to read the findings of such studies and compare them with the findings of this study.

Even though the research mentioned a few of the factors that lead to framing in newspapers, these factors were not analysed. Future studies need to focus on specific factors that influence print media to frame news. Such factors may range from social, political, and media ownership. Other factors to be considered include the relationship between governments and media, economic factors that influence advertising, and factors that influence the source of income for mass media. Finally, cultural factors that influence how the public understands and interprets published photographs need to be assessed.

Visual perception is an intuitive process. Therefore, comprehension of visual images varies from one observer to another. The implication is that image interpretations are not necessarily made homogeneously. There is a need for a study to seek the interpretation of frames by the public.

This study also mentioned a little bit about sensationalism in print media. Future studies could examine how sensational photographs published in newspapers influence acts of terrorism and how the sensational pictures affect audience perceptions and opinions about acts of terrorism. Research geared to such goals would further scholarship relating to the relationship between framing, terrorism, and sensationalism.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: In-Depth Interview Guide for Photojournalists

#### Introduction

My name is Benjamin Mbatia. I am a graduate student at Laikipia University pursuing Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Communication and Media. I am conducting a study which seeks to examine visual framing of the Westgate terrorist attack. The findings of this study will inform photojournalists on prudent ways of visually reporting terrorism and other acts violence.

I am inviting you to participate in this study by being an informant to an In-depth interview exercise. Kindly spare approximately one hour to answer questions that we shall discuss. Please base your answers on your experience as a professional photojournalist.

#### SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

**i) Gender**

Male [ ]      Female [ ]

**ii) Age distribution**

18 – 25 years [ ]      26 – 35 years [ ]      36 – 45 years [ ]      46 years and above [ ]

**iii) Academic qualifications**

PhD [ ]      Masters [ ]      Degree [ ]      Diploma [ ]      Certificate [ ]

**iv) Training as a photojournalist**

College [ ]      Seminars and workshops [ ]      Self [ ]

**v) Experience**

0 – 5 years [ ]      6 – 10 years [ ]      11 – 15 years [ ]      15 years and above [ ]

#### SECTION B: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Below are questions which will guide the researcher during each of the In-depth interviews. Follow-up questions will prompt from the responses given by each interviewee.

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself and how you became a photojournalist

2. Tell me about your experience in the coverage of hard news such as crime, accident and terrorism.
3. What do you think was the role of visual framing in reporting the Westgate Mall terrorist attack?
4. As a photojournalist explain the circumstances (Physical and emotional) you think surrounded the photojournalist while they captured the following pictures
  - a. Picture 1
  - b. Picture 2
  - c. Picture 3
  - d. Picture 4
  - e. Picture 5
5. In figure X, what do you think prompted the photographer to choose this shot type/camera angle/composition?
6. What type of Camera do you think the photojournalist might have used to achieve this composition?
7. What technical aspects have been considered when composing each of the pictures captured?
8. What information do you think the photojournalist intended to pass in each of the photograph captured?
9. Do you think that the audience interpreted the photographs as intended by the photojournalist?
10. As a photojournalist do you think it is appropriate to reveal all that you see in a scene of crime? Explain
11. How do you conceive the concept of objectivity and subjectivity in photojournalism?

**Appendix II: Images Analysed**

**Image**

**Code**



Fig 4.1:  
DN/22/P1



Fig 4.2:  
DN/22/P2B

*DN 22 P2*



Fig 4.3:  
DN/22/P2G



Fig 4.4:  
DN/24/P1



Fig 4.5:  
DN/24/P2B



Fig 4.6:  
NYT/22/P2



Fig 4.7:  
NYT/23/P1C

*NYT 23 P1*



Fig 4.8:  
NYT/23/P1E



Fig 4.9:  
STD/24/P1

*STD 24 P1*



Fig 4.10:  
STD/24/P1B



*DN 22 p2*

Fig 4.11:  
DN/22/P2



*DN 22 P2*

Fig 4.12:  
DN/22/P2A



Fig 4.13:  
DN/22/P2E



Fig 4.14:  
DN/22/P2F



Fig 4.15:  
DN/22/P3A



Fig 4.16:  
DN/22/P3C



Fig 4.17:  
DN/23/P1B

*DN 23 P1*



Fig 4.18:  
DN/23/P1C



Fig 4.19:  
DN/23/P2



Fig 4.20:  
DN/24/P1B



Fig 4.21:  
DN/24/P2

*DN 24 P2*



Fig 4.22:  
DN/24/P3

*DN 24 P3*



Fig 4.23:  
NYT/22/P1



Fig 4.24:  
NYT/23/P3

*NYT 22 p3*



Fig 4.25:  
NYT/23/P1

*NYT 23 p1*



Fig 4.26:  
NYT/23/P1B

*NYT 23 p1*



Fig 4.27:  
NYT/23/P1D

*NYT 23 P1*



Fig 4.28:  
NYT/23/P2



Fig 4.29:  
STD/22/P1



Fig 4.30:  
STD/22/P2A



Fig 4.31:  
STD/22/P3

*STD 22 p3*



Fig 4.32:  
STD/22/P3B

Fig 4.33:  
STD/22/P3D



Fig 4.34:  
STD/22/P3E





Fig 4.35:  
STD/22/P3F

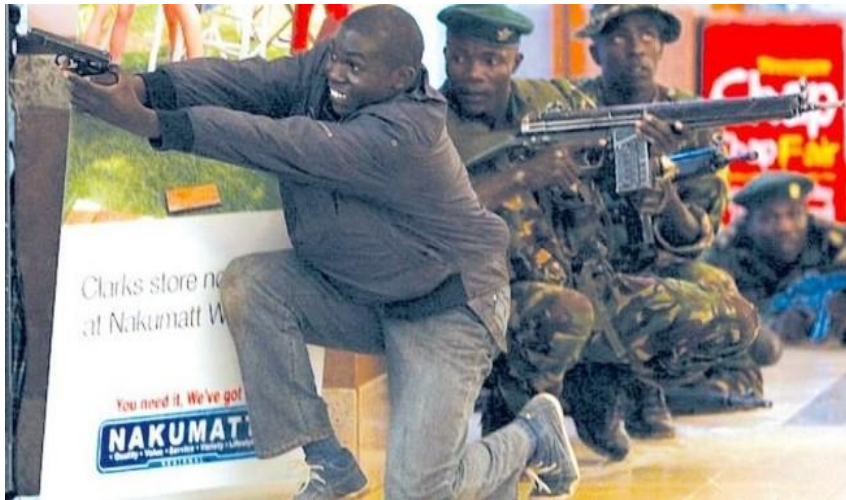


Fig 4.36:  
STD/23/P1



Fig 4.37:  
STD/23/P2



Fig 4.38:  
STD/23/P2B



Fig 4.39:  
STD/23/P2C

*STD 23 p2*



*STD 23 p2*

Fig 4.40:  
STD/23/P2D



Fig 4.41:  
STD/24/P2C



Fig 4.42:  
DN/22/P2C



Fig 4.43:  
DN/22/P3



Fig 4.44:  
DN/24/P1C



Fig 4.45:  
DN/24/P1D



Fig 4.46:  
NYT/23/P1E



Fig 4.47:  
STD/22/P2B



Fig 4.48:  
STD/22/P2C



Fig 4.49:  
STD/23/P2F



Fig 4.50:  
STD/24/P3

*STD 24 P3*

## Appendix III: Ethics Clearance Certificate

**LAIKIPIA UNIVERSITY**  
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Cell: +254 713-552761/  
lu-ierc@laikipia.ac.ke; www.laikipia.ac.ke

**INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC ETHICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE**

REF: LU/APP/09/2022 Date: 07/06/2022

Benjamin Mbatia Kinyanjui,  
P.O. Box 17403- 20100  
NAKURU

Dear Mr. Mbatia,


**Re: Visual Framing of the Nairobi Westgate Mall Terrorist Attack by the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and the *New York Times***


This is to inform you that Laikipia University Institutional Scientific Ethical Review Committee (LU-ISERC) has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **LU/APP/09/2022**. The approval period is **7<sup>th</sup> June, 2022- 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2023**

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used;
- All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by Laikipia University Institutional Scientific Ethical Review Committee;
- Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to Laikipia University Institutional Scientific Ethical Review Committee within 72 hours of notification;
- Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to Laikipia University Institutional Scientific Ethical Review Committee within 72 hours;
- Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions;
- Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal and
- Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to Laikipia University Institutional Scientific Ethical Review Committee.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely  
  
Prof. Charles M. Nguta  
Chairman - Laikipia Institutional Scientific Ethical Review Committee



Appendix IV: Research Permit - NACOSTI

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology  
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation  
Date of Issue: 22/June/2022

**RESEARCH LICENSE**



**This is to Certify that Mr. BENJAMIN MBATIA KINYANJUI of Laikipia University, has been licensed to conduct research in Nakuru on the topic: VISUAL FRAMING OF THE NAIROBI WESTGATE MALL TERRORIST ATTACK BY THE DAILY NATION, THE STANDARD AND THE NEW YORK TIMES for the period ending : 22/June/2023.**

**License No: NACOSTI/P/22/18420**

**Applicant Identification Number**  
627131

**Director General**  
**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR**  
**SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &**  
**INNOVATION**

**Verification QR Code**



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