



Career development discourses and the framing of femininities

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ABSTRACT

As discourses around women representation around the world escalate, career development among women and media portrayal of women has attracted a lot of scholarly attention. Femininities are perceived as plural and dynamic, shaped by culture, social expectations, and individual perceptions rather than biological orientation. Limited research has explored how Kenyan Print Media specifically constructs and communicates these multiple femininities, thus creating a knowledge gap that this paper addressed. Further, the paper examined how discourses on career development among women frame femininities, focusing specifically on the Saturday Magazine, a lifestyle pullout of the Kenya's Saturday Nation Newspaper. It was guided by the Framing Theory, which assumes that the way messages are represented in media influences how they are received, interpreted, and understood by audiences. The study employed qualitative research approach, which is particularly effective for exploring human perceptions, experiences, and social phenomena. The paper operates within the relativist and interpretive constructivist ontology and epistemology which acknowledge multiple realities. A content analysis was adopted in analyzing records from Saturday Magazines over three months (October-December 2020), a period when COVID-19 pandemic was reshaping women's paid work and care responsibilities. Using the Framing Theory, the magazine headlines, body text and the accompanying visuals were coded both deductively and inductively. Five sub-themes emerged: selfless service, sexual autonomy, strategic networking, resilience and entrepreneurial reinvention. The paper reveals that the Saturday Magazine is a site where, meaning of womanhood in the contemporary Kenya is actively contested. Women are celebrated as being strong, hardworking and ambitious but it also validates their success mainly when it is tied to care, humility and relational duty. Women who assert sexual autonomy and financial independence are marked as deviant. The result is a hybrid of both empowerment and regulation of women's behaviour. The paper recommends more reflexive gender reporting in Kenyan newsrooms, greater attention to structural barriers that shape women's career, and wider representation of rural and lower-income women. The findings of this study will greatly benefit the women's rights organizations, media organizations, government agencies and policy makers.

Keywords: Career Development, Femininities, Framing Theory, Gender Representation, Kenyan Print Media, Saturday Magazine

I. INTRODUCTION

Kenyan women are increasingly visible in senior management positions, corporate and other professions. The constitution of Kenya (2010) guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination and commits to the state law that not more than two-thirds of elective or appointive bodies are to be of the same gender. With this law in place, women career advancement continues to be negotiated against motherhood, domestic responsibility and social respectability. The media is a site where these negotiations are most visible because they give audiences perceptions on what a successful woman should look like and that includes what her success should cost her.

The media does not only report facts. Journalists and editors carefully select stories which seek to influence how reality is perceived as per Goffman, (1974). According to a study on gender and news by Tuchman (1978), women are underrepresented as news subjects, resulting in a news pattern dubbed "Symbolic annihilation" of women. Additionally, the most recent Global Media Monitoring Project found that women still remain about a quarter of the people seen, heard or read about in the news (Macharia, 2020). In Kenya, Omari (2008) found stereotypical portrayal of women in the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard* and the *Kenya Times*, while Achira (2015) showed how magazine advertising tied women's worth to beauty and domesticity.

Media representations shape how women's career achievements are understood and which forms of femininity are considered socially acceptable. Although women are increasingly celebrated for their ambition and professional success, such portrayals may reinforce expectations that they remain committed to domestic responsibilities and social respectability



(Goffman, 1974; Tuchman, 1978; Mudogo & Muriungi, 2026). This creates a tension between women's professional independence and conventional expectations of womanhood.

These tensions became particularly significant during the COVID-19 pandemic, when changes in employment and domestic responsibilities affected women's career experiences. This paper addressed these gaps by examining how career development discourses among women in the *Saturday Magazine* frame femininities. It questioned the sub-frames that the magazine uses to present women's careers, and what kind of femininity the subframes validate or sanction. The study period, between October and December 2020, was significant because this was a time when COVID-19 pandemic was reshaping women's career life.

1.1 Research Objectives

The objective of the study was to examine how career development discourses in the *Saturday Magazine* framed femininities between October and December 2020.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Goffman (1974) Framing Theory, which explains how the selection and emphasis of particular aspects of reality shape how audiences interpret social issues.

2.1.1 Framing Theory

The study was guided by Goffman (1974) Framing Theory, which explains how selected aspects of reality are emphasised to shape audience interpretation. The theory provides a basis for examining how print media represents women's career development and constructs particular forms of femininity. It is relevant to this study because media narratives may celebrate women's professional achievements while simultaneously reinforcing traditional gender expectations. The theory therefore helps explain how headlines, body text and accompanying visuals construct perceptions of successful womanhood.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Media Framing of Women's Career Development and Femininities

There seems to be a pattern where women are stereotyped and framed by the media through gender evaluation. By analysing these frames using Goffman (1974) Framing Theory, it is evident that these patterns occur across Kenyan newspapers, lifestyle magazines such as the *Saturday Magazine*, regional African media, and global coverage of Kenyan female athletes, leaders and professionals. Despite celebrating women's achievements, the media often creates tension between recognition and the reinforcement of stereotypes. Gibbons (2022) asserts that print media maintains and creates new stereotypes about women, including women of colour running for political positions. Gibbons (2022) further critiques female journalists in print media, claiming that they disproportionately write about fellow women candidates compared with their male counterparts. In some cases, images of women candidates are replaced with videos, thereby diminishing their visibility in print media (Gibbons, 2022). These findings suggest that media representation involves not only the visibility of women but also how their professional identities and achievements are framed.

Mwaniki (2011) reveals that Tegla Loroupe, an internationally renowned runner, has been extensively covered locally and globally. While Loroupe was praised as a 'fantastic athlete', Western media framed her success through male-associated traits such as strength and competitiveness. This framing underscores the tension between women's career excellence and societal expectations of femininity. Similarly, Safronova (2016), writing in *The New York Times*, highlights how aspects associated with femininity, such as fashion and beauty, are often dismissed in professional contexts. In an interview with Nigerian award-winning author Chimamanda Adichie, the journalist asked why things associated with femininity, such as fashion and beauty, were not taken seriously. Adichie attributed this marginalisation to a culture that diminishes women. Together, these studies demonstrate how media narratives may privilege masculine-associated qualities in professional success while devaluing attributes culturally associated with femininity.



Okeyo (2016) reveals that the Kenyan press reflects biases in its portrayal of women who achieve career excellence. Such women face challenges as society evaluates them through prevailing expectations of femininity. In sports reporting, for example, Semenya was described as ‘strongly built’ during coverage of the 800-metre race involving South Africa’s Semenya and Kenya’s Nyairera. The emphasis on physicality associated with masculinity frames women athletes’ bodies as deviations from normative femininity. Mwaniki (2011) similarly identifies the “dominant Kenyan” label used by Western media to describe Loroupe. This label framed her accomplishments as representative of national athletic identity rather than solely as individual achievements. Loroupe’s career also intersected with feminist advocacy, as she criticised the treatment of women athletes in Kenya and called for increased opportunities for female athletes through her activism with the Kenya Amateur Athletics Association (KAAA) (Mwaniki, 2011). These examples illustrate how gendered framing can overshadow women’s individual agency and professional accomplishments.

Kian (2007) notes that sports journalism remains male-dominated and that familial socialisation encourages males to pursue sports journalism from a young age. Both male and female journalists often view male sports as superior, creating structural biases in coverage. Female sportswriters face negative treatment from athletes, coaches and male colleagues, while assignments are allocated according to gendered stereotypes. Women are often relegated to domestic, lifestyle or “soft” sports stories. Such occupational inequalities influence which women’s achievements receive attention and how their professional contributions are represented.

Quantitative evidence further supports these patterns. Byerly (2011) found that women in African media occupy predominantly clerical or lower-level positions, with few advancing to editorial or executive roles. Solomon (2006) similarly found that female journalists in Tanzanian newspapers were concentrated in lower-level positions and assigned stories reflecting stereotypical roles, while men covered politics, economics and science. Inter Press Services (IPS, 2008) corroborates that women reporters are more likely to cover health, education and social issues, potentially limiting their professional visibility and advancement. These studies extend the discussion beyond media content to the institutional structures that shape women’s participation in media production.

In the educational sector, Choge (2015) examined challenges facing female leadership in Kenyan primary schools and found that patriarchy significantly inhibited career development. Cultural expectations positioned men as natural leaders, while feminine values such as honesty, commitment and care contributed to the success of some female head teachers. However, the same expectations restricted many women from pursuing leadership roles because of societal and familial obligations. Political leadership also reflects gendered framing. Sanga (2016) reports that only one of the 16 women elected to Kenya’s parliament was from the coastal region. Female politicians cited cultural and religious norms as barriers to contesting political office. These findings demonstrate that women’s professional advancement is negotiated within social environments that may simultaneously value feminine qualities and constrain women’s leadership ambitions.

Women face considerable barriers when contesting political positions in male-dominated societies. Media narratives can reinforce perceptions of political careers as culturally restrictive for women, while giving limited attention to the structural conditions affecting their participation. The Saturday Magazine, as a lifestyle and feature publication, provides a relevant context for examining these representations. Women who excel professionally may be celebrated, but their achievements are often presented alongside their ability to balance family and career responsibilities. Berkman (2005) observes that despite increased participation by women in Turkey’s professional workforce, women remain underrepresented in senior executive positions because of the glass-ceiling phenomenon. This suggests that celebrating individual success does not necessarily challenge the broader social and institutional barriers to women’s career advancement.

The reviewed studies reveal a recurring tension between recognising women’s achievements and evaluating them against established gender expectations. Goffman’s (1974) Framing Theory helps explain how media selectively highlights women’s strength, resilience, physical appearance and caregiving responsibilities while giving less attention to other dimensions of their professional identities. The print media in Kenya therefore presents women’s career success in contradictory ways: celebrating their achievements while subjecting them to gendered scrutiny.



However, the reviewed literature provides limited specific attention to how lifestyle magazines construct multiple femininities through women's career development narratives. This study addresses that gap by examining how the *Saturday Magazine* framed women's career development between October and December 2020, focusing on the sub-frames used to represent professional achievement and the forms of femininity that these representations validate or challenge.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This paper adopted a qualitative research design, which is suitable for exploring meaning and interpretation in social texts (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative content analysis was used to examine how career-related articles constructed women and their work.

3.2 Study Area

The study focused on *Saturday Magazine*, a lifestyle pullout of Kenya's *Saturday Nation*. The magazine was selected because its lifestyle content provided a relevant context for examining representations of women's career development and femininities. The study covered issues published between October and December 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The target population comprised all issues of *Saturday Magazine* published between October and December 2020, from which 11 issues were selected. This period was significant because the COVID-19 pandemic was reshaping women's work and care responsibilities. In line with Oladipo et al. (2015), eight columns that regularly addressed gender issues were purposively identified: *Main Feature*, *Girl Talk*, *Body and Soul*, *Feedback*, *Male Perspective*, *Personal Finance*, *Health Matters*, and *Relationships*. These yielded a total of 88 articles. The individual article was the unit of analysis.

3.4 Data Collection

Data were collected through document analysis using a content analysis guide. The analysis focused on headlines, leads, descriptions of women, and selected phrases. The guide was piloted using four issues of the magazine published in June and July 2020.

3.5 Data Analysis

Headlines and article body texts were coded manually using content analysis. Coding combined a directed approach, in which initial codes were derived deductively from framing theory. Related codes were then grouped into sub-frames. Coding continued until no new themes emerged. The findings were subsequently organised and reported according to the emerging themes.

III. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Representation of Women's Career Development in *Saturday Magazine*

The findings revealed that women were celebrated as hardworking, strong, and resilient, yet their representation often drew them back to expectations of selflessness, relational duty, and moral restraint. Five sub-frames emerged from the analysis, as summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Sub-frames in the Representation of Women's Career Development in Saturday Magazine

Sub-frame	femininity	Framing emphasis	illustration
Selfless service	Emphasized	Validated success through giving back to society, humility and Nurturing	Executives were described as "Nurturers" and mentors
Sexual freedom	Outsider	Sexual and financial autonomy acknowledged but morally questioned	A self-employed creative labelled as "unapologetic" and "reckless"
Strategic networking	Adaptive	Career progress attributed to relational capital and sponsorship	Writer advises every woman to have a "godfather"
Resilience	Empowered	Glorifying hardship	A film professional recounts her 21 years of sexism and racism
Reinvention	Entrepreneurial	Abandoning secure jobs to follow passion while balancing home and work	Entrepreneurs praised for balancing home and hustle

4.1.1 Selfless Service and Emphasized Femininity

Emphasized femininity is a form of femininity constructed around compliance with women's subordination and oriented towards serving men's interests (Connell, 2005). Profiles of high-achieving women repeatedly foregrounded service to others as the moral Centre of female success. praised women who "*give back to society*," "*lift others as they rise*," and "*remain humble despite success*." Even when describing top executives or award-winning professionals, the magazine stressed their roles as "*nurturers*," "*community mothers*," and "*mentors of the girl-child*." The persistent refrain of "*selfless service*" suggests that a woman's career is fully validated only when it is tethered to care work.

The positive connotation about women and career development in today's society is that most women have converted their careers into selfless works that help the less privileged in the society. This can be pointed to the deductions made through Njeru, in her article "COVID has wreaked havoc in the Lives of Breast Cancer Sufferers" Saturday October, 17, 2020.

This article presents four women; Veronica Mwangi, Carole Njagi, Waithaka Kabiru and Jane Frances, who have turned their careers around to help cancer patients by founding institutions that support these patients through Counseling, accommodation and food and means of transportation as they seek treatment in Nairobi. Veronica Mwangi in an interview with Lylis says that she quit her 12-year career in Meteorology and joined hands with her husband and a medical doctor to set up a laboratory. She states her duties as administrative which led to her frequent interaction with female patients. This she says led to a discovery that the patients were afraid to talk about cancer to both their families and doctors. This she says was her main source of inspiration to start up her foundation which she called 'Lady Hope Wellness Institute, Nairobi'.

The Saturday Magazine reinforces the dominant idea by O'Connor et al. (2018) who stated that there are four significant types of femininities: careerist, individualized, vocational and family oriented.

Such depictions of praise associate women's success as being tied to the traditional hegemonic expectation of them. Such frame can be misleading and limiting to the women when choosing their career paths.

4.1.2 Sexual Autonomy and Pariah Femininity

While most career narratives reinforced respectability, a few boldly asserted sexual autonomy in ways that disrupted hegemonic femininity. One Saturday feature quoted Donna (28), a self-employed creative, declaring: "*For now, I am getting my physical needs met without the drama*." Such candid acknowledgment of pleasure outside marriage directly contests the moral frame of the self-sacrificing career woman. However, the editorial voice subtly marked Donna as exceptional "unapologetic," "unsettled," even "reckless" placing her within the category of *pariah femininity*. The tension between celebrating entrepreneurial independence and policing sexual freedom illustrates how the magazine negotiates the limits of modern womanhood.

In contrast to Donna, the magazine celebrated another woman who transitioned from a full-time job with the desire of having a relationship and becoming a mother. However, the society filled her with thoughts of self-doubt if she was making the right decision by wanting to have another child in an already blended family.

The Rise of Single Blended families (Saturday, 3, October, 2020) draw our focus to the story of Winnie Atieno's. In Winnie's tone we get a feeling that she has 'fear of judgment' by her friends and the society at large looking at her as an irresponsible woman. To the end of the article Winnie remains conflicted on whether she should have third baby or not but away from her friend's advice she feels ready.



I transitioned from a full-time job to flexi working hours and also got into a relationship. That came with another push. For the last six months I have had fierce baby fevers. I asked myself is it crazy?

What overwhelmed the 34-year-old Winnie is not the financial implication but the prospect of raising another child in an already blended family... She opened up to a friend and she was quick to advice Winnie to wait to have a regular baby. A casual remark that carries a weight judgment and has stayed with her since. "Now that I am desiring another child her words keep replaying on my mind," Winnie says.

This might look like a scenario of a woman looking out for a fellow woman but at the same time it highlights the harsh judgment and expectations placed upon women not only by the society but also fellow women hence juxtaposition of praises and criticism in equal measure.

In contrast to the self-sacrificing woman, *Saturday Magazine* also presents career women who assert their sexual autonomy, often drawing implicit or explicit moral scrutiny. In Thoithi's article, "*Why Young Men Choose to Be Toyboys*", financially independent women are described as turning to younger men for companionship or sexual satisfaction. The narrative centers on men who are simultaneously empowered and emasculated by this arrangement:

Don't they have any dignity? All of that moral grandstanding softened day by day as I started paying bills. When I got electricity bills that started looking like lottery numbers, now I understood why...

"It does after all seem like a logic idea, offering something that you would offer anyway on an ordinary day but at a financial profit for you. I don't think I would do it because of my ego (or maybe I would) but I know many young men doing it. Women have shown them how to do it..."

The magazine expects women to have shame *The shame is dropping by the day. Yes...the lads are realizing that there is no pride in being broke...*

Toithi furthers the profile of these women that provides the market for the young men as shown below...*The profile of sugar mummies available is pretty similar. They're either in their 40's or above. Their careers and marriages have progressed but in different directions. Women having money is celebrated but also seen as an enabler of moral question. They have the money but finally, they get tired of that husband who has cheated for the 9th time or they finally realize that while he was the proper husband societally and on paper, he just needed to get married because he was 30, they have good careers and need time and attention and strokes and whipping but not on a cross.* The sarcasm is used to criticize the morals and decisions women make.

This discourse positions financially successful women as reversing traditional gender roles, yet also frames their choices as excessive, transactional, or morally questionable. Such women represent Pariah Femininity a form that disrupts hegemonic gender expectations by asserting sexual independence outside of conventional romantic and reproductive frameworks (Darwin, 2017). The portrayal both acknowledges women's power and punishes them symbolically by questioning their respectability. This double bind reflects a broader cultural anxiety over women who possess both financial and sexual agency. The "*toyboy*" discourse, therefore, functions not simply as a story about shifting relationships but as a framing device that disciplines women who defy the expectation that femininity should be modest, emotionally dependent, and morally restrained.

4.1.3 Strategic Networking and Relational Capital

The data revealed another recurring as strategic networking. Strategic networking was highlighted as a key to female success. Career narratives praised women who "built supportive circles," "natured mentors," and invested in relationships that open significant doors in their careers. While some accounts were seemingly ostensibly empowering these narratives often linked career and professional advancement to a relational capital.

In an article, dated 28th November, the magazine praises the adaptive femininity as the writer advises women who want to grow career wise 'to know people' through networking. In this article, she points out that many women lose opportunities in their career not because they are not qualified but because they do not network. In her introduction she draws the reader's attention with the statement; *Career success is as much about whom you know as what you know-and that's exactly why being a powerful networker is so important.*

She further exemplifies a female friend of hers, who had just come from an interview with a local television station, two weeks prior. Her friends are angry at the final selection at the interview and even questions why there is need for an advertisement when institutions already know the candidate they want to give the position. She says; *Why were they even advertising if they already knew who they were going to give the job eventually?*

In as much as the friend feels that she was the most suitable candidate for the job, the writer, however, tells us that is not her kind of belief system in today's job-hunting world. She says the most qualified people only get the jobs in a perfect world, but then she undercuts by saying that the world is far from being perfect and if one has to survive, they need to know someone in a higher rank and who knows more in their field of specialization.



According to Joan Thatiah, so many people have gone to school and there are so many qualified people for the job hence she concludes by saying that the only thing that will distinguish a corporate woman who wants to progress in her career is having a godfather (an influential man or woman who know the company well and who has first-hand information) at her work place.

...after a series of interviews, the person who gets the job these days isn't necessarily the one with the most degrees and diplomas or the one who has been working the longest but the one who has networked the most. This is our reality.

The writer argues that women's success is tied to how well they can play office politics as opposed to how qualified they are. This is a negative portrayal *...you decide that you are too good for the office politics. Who has time for all that gossip and boot licking, right? The woman who wants to get ahead has time.*

The negative portrayal does not stop there, she further the argument that a man has to be involved in the success of every woman. This contradicts the empowerment narrative and take the woman back to conforming to traditional standards. *Every corporate woman should have a godfather. No, I am not talking about the dirty old man with the corner office who you give sexual favors to keep your job. I am talking about the experienced man or woman who mentors you and looks out for you.* These narratives reinforce the dependency of women and demean women as empowered. The Standard Magazine emphasizes the need for women to depend on networking and seeking favoritism as opposed to working hard and being equally competitive. Such narratives discourage women from being diligent to focusing on whom they know. *A man or woman you can learn from, look up to and who will mention your name when opportunities pop up.* She then concludes this article by asserting that, *Having the right people know you, on the other hand, is everything.*

Taken together, these findings frames professional advancement relational as opposed to merit-based this is especially for women navigating male-dominated spaces. Women are portrayed as having to engage in strategic performance, often employing charm, diplomacy, and relationship management to succeed. This suggests a version of femininity that is simultaneously empowered and constrained. It reinforces the notion that, for women, competence alone is insufficient; success also depends on how well they can negotiate social hierarchies and gendered expectations. This framing could be interpreted as a manifestation of Adaptive Femininity, where women must skillfully adapt to gendered institutional norms rather than dismantle them. Unlike traditional Emphasized Femininity, which valorizes passivity and submission, this frame acknowledges that women can be assertive but only within socially acceptable bounds.

4.1.4 Resilience and Empowered Femininity

The magazine frequently celebrated women who “rose from nothing,” “defied all odds,” or “turned pain into purpose.” Phrases like “she soldiered on,” “she refused to give up,” and “her tears became her fuel” constructed a frame of resilient empowerment.

These stories foreground agency and perseverance, positioning women as active architects of their destinies. However, the constant invocation of suffering as a prerequisite for success risks romanticizing hardship and normalizing structural inequalities. In “*Woman of Passion, Girl Talk*” (Saturday, October 31, 2020), Mercy Kavutha (2020) profiles Nimo Mathenge, a Kenyan woman who navigated racism, sexism, and misogyny in the U.S. over 21 years. Nimo recounts her struggle: “*You have to have lived there and experienced the limitations present as a Black woman.*” Nimo's story exemplifies Empowered or Assertive Femininity a form that rejects passivity and embraces active resistance against intersectional oppression. Framed as a woman who overcame structural barriers through resilience, her narrative aligns with feminist ideals of autonomy, competence, and social defiance.

...at five I was standing in front of audiences, performing, writing scripts and bossing people around on 'stage'... I could talk your head off describing my entire film career, but on things for certain, I was meant to be here and I have known that since I was a child.

The framing presents her not as a victim but as an agent of her own success, challenging narratives that portray women primarily as emotionally fragile or dependent. Moreover, her identity as a Black Kenyan woman in the Diaspora expands the lens of this thesis by incorporating intersectionality, showing how race and gender intersect to produce unique challenges and opportunities in career development.

The resilience depicted is not framed as exceptionalism but as necessary, given the systemic nature of the obstacles faced emphasizing the adaptive yet resilient femininity. *That is how I have always lived my life...I was later hired by a TV film production company as an assistant to two executive producers and through a tough journey of persistence and resilience, I found myself managing five TV films...*

Additionally, the magazine revealed women who face discrimination at work place and how celebrate how they emerge successful through their resilience. Discrimination at work place can be a trajectory for women who are struggling to make it equally in men dominated work environment. Women have admitted that it is so difficult to see a male counterpart



with the same qualifications doing the same duties as a woman being paid more and standing a higher chance of promotion as opposed to women. In *Woman of Passion*, Girl Talk, (Saturday 28th) also suggests that women do not just go through the huddles of sexism in their career but racism as well. Still on Nimo's story, she brings out the issue of being a black Kenyan woman working in a white dominated field and environment. She speaks of her experience highlighting resilience as being her most substantial quality that enabled her to survive these experiences for a period of 21 years.

Mercy Kavutha writes; *As a black woman who lived in the US for 21 years, she weighs in on the ongoing issue on racism and sexism debate in the Diaspora saying it's 'deeper than you know. You have to have lived there and experienced the limitations present as a black woman. Before the, it's simply a matter of opinion and tale'*

Nimo's story also underlines the fact that she has had to endure insults at work and being stereotyped with the 'Angry Black Woman' stereotype. She has also watched her white male counterparts get promotions faster than her despite her being hardworking and best at her job. This has made her embrace challenges which propelled her career further.

I have had experiences where I walk into a meeting and find that I am the only black woman present, and everybody is looking at me like 'do you really have a brain? Or your boss, telling you not to write emails because they are 'intimidating', or even worse watching your white 'just-as-talented' male counterparts climbing the Hollywood ladder much quicker than you do...

Due to her passion for African culture, which she tells Mercy that it was ignited back then in Howard University by her professor, she decided to come back to Kenya and pursue this dream and she says so far it has been fulfilling.

Furthermore, a self-aware femininity typology is exemplified through women who dare to get into leadership roles. It is however attached to the traditional role of care-giving. Career and studies are associated with learning environment of the specific individual and the inner motivation or passion towards a specific field of interest. This typology was exploited by Kavutha (2020), in *Woman of passion*, (Saturday November, 14, 2020). Kavutha presents Yvette, the founder of Ukongwe Bora Welfare Society. She was inspired while in high school to take care of the elderly. Having been a leader in her school she thought of extending her experience to the community. Having looked around Yvette states that so many foundations, were interested in taking care of children and the sick but nobody seemed to lay their focus on the elderly. *Towards the end of High school my friend suggested that I start my own welfare society that would allow me to continue my service towards the elderly...*

Yvette is also being portrayed in leadership capacity as a very young woman, which shows a confident typology in negotiating spaces traditionally dominated by masculine norm. Despite the challenges of being young and having to go to parliament and argue her proposal, she manages to convince a number of people. Her proposal emerges to be a critical issue in the modern society where everybody else is busy looking for money and ways to survive the hard economic times and little is remembered about taking care of the elderly.

4.1.5 Reinvention and Entrepreneurial Femininity

Finally, the career pages glorified reinvention women who left secure jobs to start businesses, "followed their passion," or "turned a hobby into a thriving brand."

Entrepreneurial femininity was portrayed as stylish and liberating, accompanied by glossy images of women "owning their space" in fashion, agribusiness, and tech.

However, even here, the narratives often circled back to domestic fulfillment, with successful entrepreneurs praised for "balancing the demands of home and hustle," subtly re-inscribing the double burden of paid and unpaid labor.

The magazine exemplified the reinvention femininity typology through the story of Charity. After training as and briefly working as an engineer in a small firm, Charity felt that she needed a career that would make her more money and happy. The realization that she was soul provider of her family in addition to taking care of herself makes her feel that her current job is not giving her that which she desired. This, she says, propelled her decision of venturing into tours and travel industry and dropped her career in Engineering. The woman character in this article strikes the reader as an ambitious and very optimistic about life and financial empowerment.

On the contrary the attitude of the person in question gives us the idea that women are not necessarily shunning some career fields, rather they go for what they deem important to them at a time of need and in this case financial empowerment seems to have been what charity was looking for. According to this story, success comes with passion, determination and some resilience. As for Charity, she was portrayed as having all these qualities by the writer of this article. She says that it took her being patient with potential clients for her success to be realized. Charity further affirms that she does not regret shelving the idea of working as a biometrical engineer.

I try to meet most of my clients in person because one of the things that I have learned over the years is that the best marketing tool is word of mouth. I built a network and rapport with my guests and they intern tell others...



Charity's presentation in this article creates a feeling of encouragement to the female reader that their perspective matters and a woman can grow from one career to another and confidently thrive in whichever field they choose to venture.

Equally important, is the story of Anna whom the magazine celebrated for being hard working and reinventing herself despite the knowledge that women have little opportunities available to them, in a patriarchal society such as Kenya. Njeru in *Woman of passion, Girl talk*, narrates the story of a 32 years old woman Anna who started working at the Kenya Power and Lighting Company as a tea girl and after eight years she became opened to an endless string of opportunities.

Anna in this article is set forth as a woman who grew up in Mbeere County unexposed to career information. She draws her inspiration from a fellow woman who happens to be her sister. During work at KPLC as a tea girl she enrolled for a diploma in supply chain management at a management Institute. She reveals that it was the toughest time in her life trying to juggle between work and school. She acknowledges that she faced embarrassing moments at work from colleagues who thought due to the nature of her job she was illiterate and unable to cope with the techno-world. She recalls a day one of her colleague came to help her with a printer which she says motivated her to prove her self-worth through furthering her studies.

As a tea girl some thought I didn't go to school. On time I was at the printer somebody came hurriedly to help. This partly became my motivation... why tell them when I can show them?

Having to work and serve hundreds of people while studying at the same time became increasingly tedious. She dropped her job and asked the boss for a chance as an intern in the supply chain management department. She worked so hard and even got a degree in the same. Anna prides herself in the endless opportunities that came her way when she chose to go back to school and further her studies.

On the other hand, she reveals that her work and studies cost her a social life. She did not have time for socializing and going on dates like the women of her age would. In her interview with Njeru, she draws our attention to the notion that struggling with career development deprives women of experiencing their fullness as a human.

I missed out on socializing with my peers and especially on the dating life. I had several suitors asking me out but I did not have the time and the energy it takes to nurture a relationship.

In as much as this woman has a positive portrayal as a hardworking and patient woman, there is the flip side of the struggles that career women encounter such as missing out on marriages and which seem to impact negatively relationship commitment among career women in Kenya.

Her ability to go through the struggles and still succeed highly depicts a woman of reliance and determination too. This is also a positive portrayal of women struggling with career development.

The analysis of *Saturday Magazine* reveals that discourses on women and career development construct femininity in diverse, sometimes contradictory, ways. Women are framed as self-sacrificing caregivers (Emphasized Femininity), strategic social actors navigating power structures (Adaptive/Strategic Femininity), morally contested agents of sexual autonomy (Pariah Femininity), and empowered resisters of systemic oppression (Empowered Femininity). The intersection of career and femininity is not linear but layered, shaped by broader societal values and gendered expectations. Framing Theory reveals that these portrayals do not merely describe reality but help constitute the social meaning of womanhood in the context of professional life. They contribute to the ideological project of defining what kinds of femininity are acceptable, celebrated, condemned, or ignored in public discourse. While some narratives affirm women's agency and capacity for transformation, others subtly re-inscribe traditional expectations under the guise of praise or moral concern. Ultimately, the magazine constructs femininity as fluid, negotiated, and deeply contextual shaped not only by individual aspiration but by relational, moral, and structural dynamics that continue to influence how women are perceived and how they perceive themselves in professional settings.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Profiles of women in high-status professions law, media, and business reveal conditional celebration of career success. While the newspaper applauds professional achievement, it consistently highlights the importance of maintaining familial responsibilities or displaying humility. Success is framed as admirable only when accompanied by evidence of care for children, spouses, or extended family. This framing mirrors Kenya's socio-economic landscape, where women's labour-force participation is essential yet cultural ideals of motherhood and domestic service remain powerful. By insisting that accomplished women remain "grounded" in domestic roles, the *Saturday Magazine* offers readers a hybrid femininity one that is modern and ambitious, yet still tethered to traditional care ethics. Such framing both validates women's professional aspirations and limits their transformative potential. This finding challenges claims that print media under represents women while on the other hand ignoring some women completely. Women in the *Saturday Magazine* are given enough coverage.



However, the portrayal depicts a contradiction: empowerment with moral regulation of women. While this framing gave women visibility as empowered, it simultaneously sets moral boundaries on acceptable womanhood, thereby reproducing the very patriarchal expectations it seeks to challenge.

5.2 Recommendations

Editors and journalists should critically examine how their narratives that seem to celebrate women can be subtly reinforcing patriarchal norms. There is need to balance the individual success stories with coverage of barriers such as sexism, pay gap, childcare deficits and legal inequalities.

Comparative Media Studies should be carried out by future researchers on the other Kenyan newspapers, television programs, or digital platforms which will reveal whether similar framing patterns occur across media forms.

Audience Reception Studies is recommended. Ethnographic or survey-based research could examine how diverse audiences negotiate the competing frames of femininity, providing a fuller understanding of media influence.

Longitudinal Research Tracking portrayals of femininity over time could illuminate how socio-political changes, such as evolving gender policies or economic shifts, shape media framing. Future work should incorporate class, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation to capture a more inclusive picture of Kenyan womanhood.

Declaration of Interest

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