

# Analysis of Frames Used by Namibian Newspapers in their Reportage of The San Community

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## Abstract

*This study involves an analysis of the representation of San people of Namibia in news stories published in The Namibian, New Era, Informanté, The Southern Times, The Villager, The Windhoek Observer and Namibian Sun newspapers over a two-year period – January 2012 to December 2013. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the stories. Content analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) were used to analyse data and point out binaries and dichotomies inherent in selected articles. The study found that balanced reportage of issues that affect San people is conspicuously absent. Much of the reportage is event-driven, lacking analysis and balance. The study recommends new media discourses that shift from stereotyping to a discourse that restores and upholds the identity of San people.*

**Key words:** *Framing, Namibia, San people, Newspapers*

## Résumé

*Cette étude comprend une analyse de la représentation du peuple San de Namibie dans des articles publiés dans les journaux The Namibian, New Era, Informanté, The Southern Times, The Villager, The Windhoek Observer et Namibian Sun sur une période de deux ans – janvier 2012 à Décembre 2013. Une technique d'échantillonnage ciblé a été utilisée pour sélectionner les histoires. L'analyse de contenu et l'analyse du discours critique (CDA) ont été utilisées pour analyser les données et souligner les binaires et les dichotomies inhérents à certains articles. L'étude a révélé que le reportage équilibré des problèmes qui affectent les San est manifestement absent. Une grande partie du*

*reportage est événementielle, manque d'analyse et d'équilibre. L'étude recommande de nouveaux discours médiatiques qui passent des stéréotypes à un discours qui restaure et défend l'identité des San.*

**Mots-clés:** *Encadrement, Namibie, San, Journaux*

## Introduction

Studies conducted by Avison and Meadows (2000) in Australia show that non-indigenous voices outnumber those of indigenous people in the mass media. In Namibia, various scholars (Dan, Mchombu & Mosimane, 2010; Dieckmann 2007; Gordon, 1992; Biesele & Hitchcock, 2008; Suzman, 2001; Sylvain, 2002) have written extensively about San people. They generally seem to agree that the condition of San people in Namibia is dire, marked as it is by marginalisation, alterity and poverty.

Gordon (1992) argues that the identity of the San in Namibia has been interfered with through alterity, which basically means that the identity that the San have is one that was created and imposed from outside; firstly by colonialism which characterised them as primitive and untamable; secondly, by apartheid in which they were stereotyped as two-legged bloodhounds or trackers; and thirdly, by postcolonial discourses.

Biesele & Hitchcock (2008) note that the San people, who are referred to by different names depending on who is writing or speaking about them, have for many years been portrayed in contradictory ways. They estimate that there are approximately 100 000 San people in various countries of southern Africa, Namibia included. This implies that the San people form a significant part of the populations of the countries in which they live.

Biesele & Hitchcock (2008) observe that while some of the San people have continued with their trademark lifestyle of hunting and gathering, many have been absorbed into capitalist structures in which they have taken up menial jobs, usually as farm labourers. There are, however, scattered success stories of some San people in different parts of southern Africa engaging in entrepreneurial ventures that include small-scale agriculture and livestock production (Biesele & Hitchcock, 2008). There are also some instances in which some governments that include Namibia and Botswana have developed policies ostensibly to support the San people (Sylvain, 2002).

But which frames, out of these contending ones, do the Namibian print media use in their reportage on the situation of the San people and do they parrot the stereotypical depictions or employ fresh, new frames?

## Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study was to generate information on how the print media in Namibia frames the San people in the country and issues affecting them. Specifically, this study sought to:

- Investigate how the Namibian print media frames the San people of Namibia;
- Establish the frequency and manner in which the print media covered Namibia-based San-related issues; and
- Undertake a critical analyses of the news frames.
- Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

## Media and Framing

The media plays various roles. According to McCombs, Shaw and Weaver (1997), some of the roles include keeping the public entertained and informed. But Pushparaj (2012) argues that the media should probe events and point out the shortcomings of society. Happer and Philo (2013) state that the media, which include television, the print and online publications, play an important role in informing people about what happens in their immediate surroundings and the entire world. These authors acknowledge the fact that the consumers of media messages do not sheepishly and uncritically take in media messages because they are thinking beings with agency. These authors, nevertheless, acknowledge that the media can influence public discourse on various issues through the manner in which they portray those issues.

Kitzinger (2007) posits that, apart from informing, educating and entertaining the public, the media can influence the way people see events or issues through a process known as framing. The author describes framing as a process in which reality is organised and events are categorised in certain ways while paying attention to some aspects rather than others. According McCombs et al. (1997), when the media concentrate on an issue, people get the impression that such an issue is important.

Vreese (2005) notes that framing of events and issues in specific ways is one of the avenues through which the media may succeed in influencing and shaping public opinion. Similarly, Entman (2007) has defined framing as a way of arranging elements of perceived reality to promote a particular view. Framing, therefore, can also be defined as the process of defining issues that merit public or official attention. Entman (2007) suggests that agenda setting can be seen as the first successful step towards framing.

According to McCombs and Ghanem (2001), framing normally does three things: It highlights the causes of problems, it encourages moral judgments and associated responses, and it promotes favoured policies. They posit that although the media can present information and facts to the public, the same public can immediately determine

which of the information being presented to them is relevant and of significance. The media can, therefore, set the agenda only when members of the public consider the news that they provide as relevant.

But not doubt, framing can also lead to criminalisation through labelling and attribution of certain negative traits to certain people (Akpabio, 2009) which is the focus of this study with specific reference to the San of Namibia.

## **The San people of Namibia.**

Like the vast majority of Africans, colonial contact had its pernicious and debilitating effects on the San people. Wallace (2014) points out that one of the immediate consequences of colonial rule was the disruption of San society and the loss of both economic independence and cultural affinity to their rock art tradition.

Essentially, many writers (Gordon, 1992; Suzman, 2000; Wallace, 2014)) argue that the San people of Namibia are victims of the way that colonialism and apartheid shaped their identity. The above authors, for example, seem to agree that as a consequence of this colonial framing and characterisation, the San people are generally regarded as primitive and untameable. This is perhaps because the San people were never any good at working under the contract labour system in Namibia (Winterfeldt, Fox & Mufune, 2002).

Small wonder, therefore, that the apartheid system seemingly denied the San people development and let them practise their 'traditional culture' in remote areas that included Tsumkwe. Suzman (2000) and Gordon (1992) contend that this created a picture of the San people as primitive, traditional or even possibly stupid which became widespread even after independence among some Namibians – White and Black. These authors argue that because this picture has persisted, the San people have, to a very large extent, been denied development and continue to trudge through life with a host of social problems.

Suzman (2002) notes that as a community, the San people in Namibia are in a terrible state. Perhaps one of the reasons why the San people in Namibia appear to have been generally neglected is that they were used as trackers by the South African Defence Force during the war of liberation (Gordon 1992). It is safe to say that it is possible that there are sections of contemporary Namibian society that have never forgiven the San people for their association with a vicious, near genocidal military unit at whose hands many Namibians died.

As alluded to earlier, Gordon (1982) and Suzman (2000) maintain that the San people in Namibia suffer from alterity or an identity crisis. In other words, the image of the San people of Namibia has been interfered with and negatively altered. Dan et al. (2010) posit that the San people are among the most marginalised in Namibia. Dan et al. adds that many San people feel alienated because they are under-represented in government structures as well as in local and regional bodies.

Available literature clearly shows that the San people in Namibia are not a homogenous community (Dieckman, 2007). Some of these unique San groups include the Hai//om, Khwe, !Kung, Ju/'hoansi, Naro and N/u. This puts paid to the seemingly simplistic view that the San people of Namibia are a homogenous group with the same history, challenges and needs.

Dan et al. (2010) concur that the San people are among the most marginalised in Namibia and, because of their limited access to modern services such as health facilities and others, the San have relied on indigenous knowledge for survival. With respect to education, Suzman (2000) reports that an estimated 20% of the San people are illiterate and that the San people were for a long time the sole occupants of pre-colonial Namibia until Bantu-speaking people thronged the country and dominated them, employing some of them as slaves. By 1990, an overwhelming number of San people had neither access nor rights to land and were very poor. Their condition has not improved (Anaya, 2005).

Data provided by the Emergency Management Unit (EMU) indicates that between 17 000 and 22 000 San currently depend on Namibian government food aid and the government has directed that the San should be supported indefinitely by food-for-work programmes and other welfare schemes (Suzman, 2001, p. 7). According to Dieckmann (2007), the living conditions of the San people in Namibia has continued to deteriorate over the years and, with little access to formal employment, most San people rely heavily on social networks to re-distribute scarce resources to survive.

Suzman (2001) notes that although the Government of the Republic of Namibia and non-governmental organisations have tried to get San children into school, few remain enrolled. The author identifies a variety of reasons for this state of affairs. One of them is cultural. The San do not have a culture of formal education and so when a San child drops out of school, the parents do not interfere. In addition, many San children find it culturally traumatic to leave their lifestyle to join the formal education system. Distances from where the San people stay to school have also been cited as a deterrent. The initiative of building San boarding schools have generally not succeeded as few of the San parents are prepared to let their children leave home and go to such facilities.

According to Suzman (2001), the San people seldom discipline their children even as part of socialisation. However, corporal punishment is still widely practised in some Namibian rural schools. This discourages some San learners from attending school. The attitude of fellow learners such as bullying, he argues, has also discouraged some San learners from attending school.

According to Suzman (2001), the Government of the Republic of Namibia has tried to develop policies to enable some San people to benefit meaningfully from the resources found in the areas in which they live. Yet, Anaya (2013) contends that ethnic groups that are officially recognised as disadvantaged, including the San people, have expressed disquiet over apparent exclusion from decision-making at local and national levels because they are regarded as lesser mortals.

Given that the San people constitute a significant percentage of the Namibian population (Suzman, 2001) and are found in different parts of the country including the NyaeNyae conservancy in Tsumkwe, Gobabis, the Zambezi and Kavango regions as well as around Etosha National Park. And going by the narratives about the San people of Namibia, especially during colonialism, one cannot help but come to the sad realisation that a significant number of writers and powerful members of the community at the time succeeded in projecting a single story of the San people which depicted them as “lazy,” “dishonest,” “unreliable,” “stupid,” and even “sub-human species.”

In light of the foregoing, this study, which looks critically at the manner in which the print media in Namibia reports about the San people and issues surrounding the San people in contemporary Namibia, becomes necessary to determine whether the media are helping change the perception and identity of the San people, or maintaining the situation that prevailed during colonialism through the way they report.

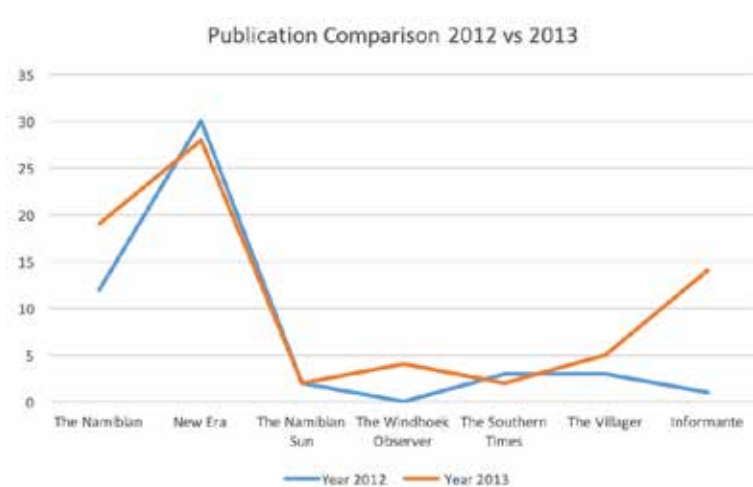
## Research Design

This study used a mixed-method design involving content and critical discourse analyses (CDA) of newspaper articles on the San people over a period of two years (January 2012 to December 2013). The population of this study consisted of the thirteen newspapers in Namibia and the sample was the 150 San-related print media articles published from January 2012 to December 2013 in *The Namibian*, *The Villager*, *New Era*, *The Namibian Sun*, *The Observer*, *Informanté* and *Southern Times*. Various factors influenced the choice of these newspapers. Among them is the fact that all of them are published in English, which is the official language in Namibia and the language in which this study is conducted. In terms of circulation and reach, all of them have relatively high print runs and are influential, reaching almost all parts of the Republic of Namibia. Additionally, all of these newspapers have well managed online archives. To yield articles relevant to this study, a range of search terms were applied. The words ‘San’, ‘Bushmen’, ‘marginalisation’, ‘education’, ‘culture’, ‘ecotourism’, ‘land’, ‘representation’, ‘identity’ and ‘health’ were used to search the online portals of the selected newspapers. To eliminate articles that were irrelevant and those that were not published during the period covered by this research, the researchers manually filtered the articles. This process yielded 125 articles in all from the selected newspapers. Given that some merely mentioned San people in passing, the researchers manually selected articles that reported about San people beyond just mentioning them. Such articles were selected for deeper and broader analysis through critical discourse analysis. The coding schedule made room for priori (from the literature) and emergent codes. Inter-coder agreement for the pilot study involving 10% of the 125 identified articles was 83%. Disagreements were resolved by mutual agreement and this resulted in removing ambiguous categories. The result was a 100% inter-coder agreement for the main study.

In terms of the discourse analysis component, the study examined the hidden agenda in language use (Fairclough, 1991) as discourse, becomes in this sense, a place where relations of power are actually exercised and enacted with powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants. CDA thus goes beyond discourse to examine the motive behind any form of communication. Fairclough (2003) advances the thesis that discourse can be used to bring about social and political subjugation and that the manner in which discourse is used to create meaning is not apparent to the casual reader and so the task of the competent critical discourse analyst is to go beyond the surface of text which includes pictures and headlines to appreciate how discourses work, and explain hidden meanings and constructions. Indeed, as McCarthy (1994) argues, discourse can convey a lot; much more than what is immediately visible in a sentence or paragraph within a text. It can be argued, therefore, that CDA is a theory of emancipation; it plants the seeds of critical consciousness to the analyst. Armed with this theory, one can see that certain types of discourses can aggravate the plight of the weak and defenceless members of society; those who find themselves pitted against more dominant social and historical forces and are unable to either define or defend their cause. It is for this reason that CDA was selected and used to examine the media reporting on the San people of Namibia.

## Findings

In total, 125 articles were published across all the newspapers selected for this study over a two-year period from January 2012 to December 2013. *New Era* published the highest number of San-related articles (58) during the period under study. *The Namibian*, also a daily but privately-run newspaper, published the second highest number of articles (32). The third highest number of articles (15) appeared in the *Informanté*. This is a privately-run weekly newspaper distributed free of charge. *The Villager* published eight articles followed by *The Southern Times* which published five articles. *The Windhoek Observer*, a weekly publication and *The Namibian Sun* had four articles each; the lowest number of articles.



**Figure 1:** Comparison of Namibian Newspaper Reports on The San 2012 vs 2013

*New Era* peaked in the number of articles published in 2012 and 2013 with 30 and 28 articles respectively. The lowest articles published appeared in *The Windhoek Observer* which did not publish San related articles in 2012, although it published four articles in 2013 representing an average of two publications across the two years of the study (see figure 1 above).

Through fixed and emergent coding the following frames were identified in all stories involving The San people:



Table 1  
*Frames Employed in Namibian newspapers on the San People*

Ecotourism
Socio-Economic Issues
Cultural Issues
Marginalisation
Identity
Educational Advancement
Health
Social Mobility
Justice and Law
Political Issues
Representation
Land
Socio-Economic Empowerment
Exploitation
Unemployment
Gender Equity
Poverty

*The Namibian* newspaper covers in the main poverty, cultural issues, marginalisation and socio-economic issues. The issues covered in 2012 and 2013 portray a largely negative picture of the San people. There is observably a complete negation of health, exploitation, representation, gender equity, identity, social mobility and political issues in the coverage. Also, the voice of the San people is seemingly muted.

The government-owned and controlled newspaper, *New Era*, was preoccupied with marginalisation, education and socio-economic issues which were essentially negative. Mentioning of empowerment initiatives in specific areas of driving schools, employment and the debushing programmes, however, seems to provide balance. A consistent pattern is the subdued or missing voice of the San people which raises the fundamental question: Are these initiatives what the San want given the fact that there is mere mention and not involvement? The coverage appears to be largely event-driven as opposed to that initiated by the publication itself which would be richer in scope and analysis.

*The Namibian Sun* confines itself to very few themes. This raises a lot of questions with respect to the extent to which the publication deems San people and issues that affect them to be news worthy. *The Southern Times* focused on cultural issues, educational advancement, representation, land and socio-economic empowerment.

*The Villager* is a relatively new weekly publication which is privately owned. While its coverage of issues by themes is low, it mentions issues that have been raised by non-journalist sources and which do not feature prominently in the coverage provided by the

other publications. These themes are related to social mobility, educational advancement, socioeconomic issues, eco-tourism and cultural issues.

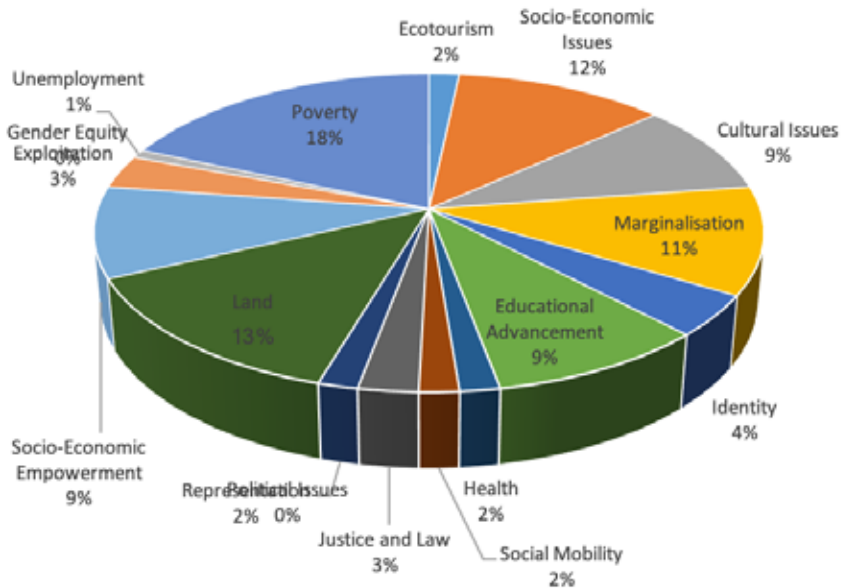


Figure 2: Summary of Thematic Coverage for all Publications (2012-2013)

The *Windhoek Observer* which is a privately run weekly newspaper did not carry San-related articles in 2012. The few articles that mention San people published in 2013 nevertheless touch on some of the critical issues identified by non-journalistic sources as some of those affecting San people which are identity, exploitation and socio-economic issues.

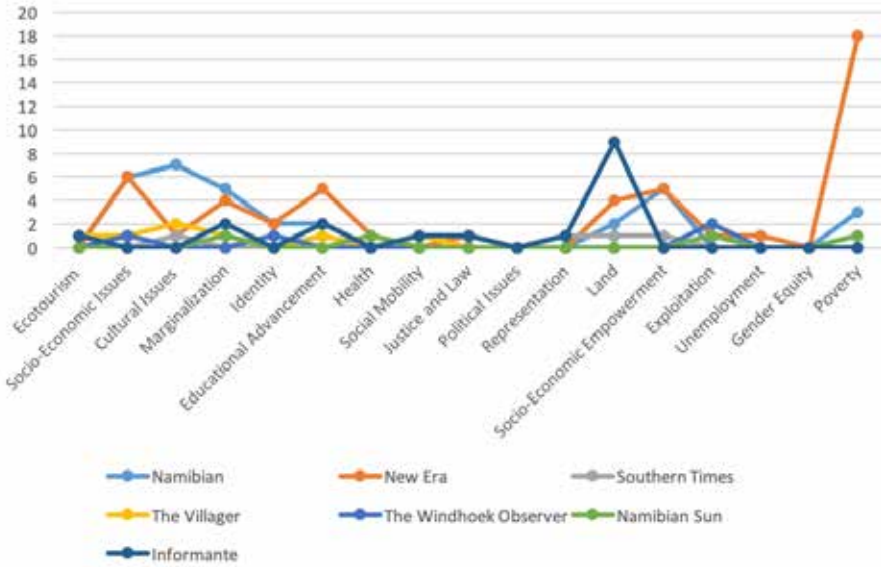


Figure 3: Frequency Count of Thematic Coverage by Namibian Newspapers (2012-2013)

*Informanté* newspaper published only one article mentioning San people in 2012. However, there appears to have been a huge number of articles seemingly focusing on pertinent issues of land, education and social mobility in 2013.

## Discussion

This discussion is informed by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It also adopts Akpabio’s (2009) position that selecting and organising stories in the framing tradition gives a one-dimensional interpretation of the people and that negative frames are always a precursor to something evil.

In the story entitled “Namibia’s Bushmen Profit from Nature” (The Namibian, 2012), the headline blatantly refers to the San as “Bushman”, a direct confirmation of the presupposed “otherness” of the San people. That title presupposes that there exists, in a country called Namibia, a distinct, separate and seemingly incompatible group of people who belong to the bush. Taken seriously, the term “Bushman” connotes half-human, perhaps barbaric, perhaps animalistic, irrational, primitive beings who are content to stay in the bush because they belong to the bush like animals.

The whole meaning could be different if the headline, for example, were: “Namibians profit from nature” or, “Poor Namibians profit from nature” or “Namibian families profit

from nature”. “Namibians profit from nature” would have nationalised the problem and “poor Namibians profit from nature” would have achieved the effect of universalising the problem. It is a truism that there are other tribes apart from the San who also thrive from nature. “Namibian families profit from nature” would have given the problem a humanitarian outlook since the word ‘family’ conveys to readers a respectable unit of people that deserves proper recognition.

Clearly, social actors are often evaluated not on the basis of who really they are, or what they do but through representational strategies (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The headline of the story has some important ideological consequences. Such derogatory terms have adverse effects on the identity of the San people. This is what Akpabio (2009) quoting Aday (2006) terms the effects of framing on public consciousness; whereby repetition and reinforcements of certain frames as opposed to others make them more salient while those not so emphasised become invisible.

Reese (2007) argues that frames are organising principles that are socially shared and persistent over time and that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world. It follows that the coverage of the San people of Namibia falls under the framed category and the public view of the San, and unfortunately, the way the San people view themselves is/may be tragically altered by this framing tradition. Such mental barricades constitute the existing ideology defined by Richardson (2007) not only as a system of ideas or beliefs, but ways of thinking in which historically transient (dehumanising) forms of social organisation are represented as eternal, natural, inevitable or, worse still, rational. Thus any kind of mistreatment meted out to such people is already innately justified by the frames in which the people are put.

Constant repetition of the word ‘San’ itself seems to emphasise the purported “otherness” of these community groups. The crucial questions that remain hanging are: Are these people San before they become people? Are they San before they become Namibians? Are they second class citizens or somewhat subhuman? The Namibian print media have done little to either trace or recognise these binaries. They have failed to instil a sense of belonging among the San both as equal Namibians and as able people. Neither does the media dare to allow the San a chance to define themselves apart from few instances when San people are depicted demonstrating self-defeat and self-rejection and endless awe at the circumstances circumscribing their deplorable condition.

The story “UNAM Donates Mattresses to Community Hostel” (New Era, 2013) is an event-driven story on the ‘handover ceremony’. Prominent devices are speech acts as people of power make pledges and promises. This story is more of a parade of the goodwill and noble acts of the government ministers than an expression of the grave situation of the San people. Another device used is the one of naming, not of the benefiting San children but of the ministers and other government officials with their eloquent and grand titles, giving the whole article an air of grandeur and vividness:

The handover ceremony was attended by Deputy Prime Minister, Marco Hausiku,

Kavango East and West Governor, Ambassador Samuel Mbambo, Regional Education Director, Alfons Dikua, Councillor of the Kahenge constituency, Joseph Sikongo, and members of the community... Unam's Rundu campus Director, Dr Gilbert Likando, Unam Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lazarus Hangula ... (par. 1)

It is significant to note how strategically the device of naming is used here. The ministers, directors and other influential names are always mentioned first and "members of the community" coming at the very end. The devices of nomination and functionalisation are also used here, confirming Machin's (2007) view that participants can be nominated in terms of who they are or functionalized by being depicted in terms of what they do. The paragraph quoted above is a clear example of a case where nomination brings us closer to the individual while functionalisation allows the presence of the person to be more official and to add legitimacy.

The article becomes some kind of a eulogy; ceremonially praising the big names that are present at the event. Arguably, the device of functionalisation is also accompanied with the use of honorifics and these suggest a degree of seniority that requires a degree of respect. A great chasm is however created between the San people who are simply referred to as "members of the community" by the use of such devices. According to earlier arguments in this study, this would have been a commendable mainstreaming strategy: calling the San "members of the community", just like any other community, instead of a special case. The so-called big names are thus conclusively represented in news frames that safeguard their seniority while the San community members are represented in news frames that naturalise their inferiority and exclusion.

The ultimate intention of the above is to advertise the ministers and ostensibly show "the caring spirit of national leaders" through press coverage. This is done to show that the leaders are doing their job relentlessly. In turn this gives hope to the reader and the audience community because it has been shown that they have effective representation. The presence and name dropping of such big names will create the impression that the people's problems are over. This psychological solace to material problems is another form of manipulation. One may argue that the leaders' presence and the grandiloquence with which they are presented ironically add weight to the marginalisation of the poor San people whose concerns the stories remain oblivious of.

Fairclough (1991) argues that newspaper reporting does not represent equally all social groupings in a population. Government ministers, like in this case, feature far more than the San people. It is also important to note that journalists work under editorial control. For Fairclough (1991), rather more nebulously, the responsibility is on the newspaper itself as a sort of institutional collective. This is why powerful social actors feature more and control and constrain the contributions of non-powerful social actors. Media producers have the sole producing rights and can therefore determine what is included and excluded, who to interview and how events are represented. Such a scenario, one may argue, is the prime cause of the media's indulgence in event-driven

stories which become another deviation from crucial details and issues. A similar event-driven story is entitled “Pohamba joins Mourners At !Kung San Chief’s Burial”. (New Era, 2012) The story by and large covers His Excellency who features more than the other attendants who are generally referred to as “hundreds of people.”

A strikingly interesting story by Sanzila (2012), titled “*HuntAfrica Hosts a Successful Tournament for the San*” does not depict the event for the event’s sake, but the event for the business’ sake. The so-called successful tournament for San hosted by HuntAfrica is a good development since sport and recreation help reduce the feeling of discrimination. It, however, unfortunately, falls under the event-driven stories. Reportage still follows big names and business people and not the marginalised groups. Not many details are given on San problems, save the boast that “Kyaramacan Association... generates about 4-million per year from hunting concessions” (par. 2); a substantial amount that could do a lot in alleviating San poverty:

The Bwabwata community extends from Masambo in western Caprivi to the Divundu area in the Kavango Region. HuntAfrica, which has a five-year trophy hunting concession with the Kyaramacan Association, a Community Based Natural Resource Management initiative (CBNRM), which runs the Bwabwata National Park in conjunction with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism [sic] also sponsored sewing machines and other supplies to the community, which consists predominantly of San people (par. 2).

No profound details of what the San need, save the detailed explanation of HuntAfrica’s exploitations and hunting are provided. The above-quoted paragraph is more of a business map for interested tourist adventurers with details not of the San’s plight (save for the few sewing machines and other unnamed supplies given as a consolation to the community). This becomes the preoccupation of the paper: to cover the noble acts of the company as described by the company chairman and not by the San community. No evidence of these donations, no details of their social and educational upliftment is present in the story. The tendency is to speak *about* the San and do what anyone feels is best for them.

The story entitled “The failure of law and politics” (Graig, 2013) vividly depicts the vagueness and contempt with which the print media treat San land rights. Firstly, the headline is too broad and general for this kind of story. Secondly, the title is ambiguous. Causality and agency are not only vague but seemingly absent. Failure is attributed to institutions not to people who work or control these institutions. Who is behind law and politics? We are not told. Neither are we told what is law and politics in this context. Several other questions remain unanswered here: Are there sections of the law which promote injustice? Is it the people failing the law – that is, to uphold the norms and values adjudicated by the law?

The topic sentence informs us of “scores of illegal farmers” (par. 1). The origin of the settling farmers is left out completely. Their number is also not included. They are just “scores”. The journalist dilutes the impact of a gross act of invasion by camouflaging even

the origin of the invaders. One wonders if it is due to sheer lack of concrete evidence that the writer chooses to gloss over facts and naming people by simply alluding to them as “scores”. This obfuscation of agency is, as Fairclough (1991) argues, always ideologically motivated. Thus the story proceeds: “Desperate san community members, cut off from their hunter-gather lifestyle by the encroaching fences, this week told *Informanté* that they feel neglected and betrayed by the authorities” (par. 1). It is also paramount to note that, according to the article, the San are neither neglected nor betrayed. Rather, they merely ‘feel neglected and betrayed’. This kind of writing can conclusively be considered to be a surreptitious piece of ideological framing under the veil of semantics.

The ultimate intention of the story “Police act in Tsumkwe” (Kazondovi, 2013) is to align the paper to the authorities and, in this case, the police force. This is explained by the headline’s explicit portrayal of the subject of the action in the sentence which makes it different from other headlines like “land invasion” that have no elements of causality. The headline thus depicts the police in action, but it does not tell us the type or nature of the action in the process.

The way the police are represented in this news discourse is different from the way other people are represented. The predominant device used here is transitivity. Transitivity describes the relationship between participants and the role they play in the process described in reporting. How actions are presented, what kind of actions appear in the text and who does them and to whom (Mills 1995). This means that journalists have the choice to determine who does what to whom and can change the participants involved in the process; the process itself expressed in the verb phrase or the circumstances associated with the process. All these have effect on agency and deliberate transformations remove a sense of specificity and precision from the clauses.

The first paragraph which is written in bold font states that “force was finally brought to bear by the Namibian police who stopped the entry of more cattle into the protected and vulnerable Nꞛa Jaqna Conservancy of the! Kung community of indigenous San people”. The police action so emphasised in the story headline can however be shown to be mere exaggeration when the second paragraph unveils that they have stopped only 48 head of cattle for the whole week whilst an estimated number of more than 1000 head of cattle have entered thus avoiding the checkpoints.

It is fascinating to note that in almost all of the land-related stories, there is the absence of the invaders. The invaders are constantly referred to as “illegal cattle herders”, “illegal cattle farmers”, “cattle herders”, “land invaders”, et cetera. The question is: Are these people not known, or are they foreigners to be referred to in such distant terms? It is clear that this is partly because the invaders belong to some more powerful ethnic groups or are affiliated to dominant political blocks and mentioning them would do more harm than good. Thus, mentioning them in a bizarre and enigmatic way is enough justice for the San and they have to accept this lot. Their right to land is constantly glossed over and they are in a way framed as a people whose right to land is neither a

priority nor legitimate.

The *New Era* published a news story entitled “Schools receive computers, solar panels” (Shidhudhu, 2013). In the story, the seven schools that received the donations are not named. Neither are their locations given, nor are we told whether those who received the donation are the ones who need it the most. All we are told is that the donation comes from the Namibia San Development Organisation (NSDO). It becomes a spontaneous story that lacks the most desired information.

The same paper published another story entitled “San kindergarten in desperate need of help” (Shaanika, 2013a). The story details the “dilapidated”, “rotting walls”, and broken windows of Coblenz kindergarten where “there are simply no toilets” (par. 1). Here, 14 children are struggling “with barely any learning materials and equipment to use for learning” (par. 1).

One wonders if computers are the most needed items given that most San-populated schools do not have electricity or even school blocks. These are schools where even pencils, books, shoes and classrooms are still a luxury to the San children, especially in the inaccessible rural areas. The media’s mode of coverage can thus be shown to be majoring on minor things and minoring on major issues or ‘Afghanistanism’ [concentrating on far useless issues while ignoring pressing local issues] (Akpabio, 2009). In this case, computer donation is good but it is totally divorced from the actual and basic needs for the survival of San education.

The glaring weakness of most articles on education is their context or situation. The articles tend to dwell on San children in Windhoek and other accessible places; choosing to pick single successful stories of individual San children and leaving behind a preponderant majority in remote areas to whom education itself remains a luxury. This shows a great lack of serious and detailed research because real problems are faced by children in remote and largely inaccessible areas where poverty is hampering implementation of the people’s right to education.

The headline “San at Ombili settlement in dire need of water” (Shaanika, 2013b) only introduces us to the water problems while the first paragraph reveals that the San are deprived of all basic necessities. This shows omission whereby a reader can ignore the story after looking at the headline, thinking that the story is based only on water problems. But there is more: “At least 200 people of the marginalised San community in the Ombili location of Eenhana are said to be living in abject poverty without housing, water, sanitation. Moreover, over 90 percent of them have identification documents” (par. 1).

It remains unclear why the writer narrows all these problems to water. The story also unveils that “most parents are abusing alcohol, with children suffering the most as their parents or guardians allegedly sell drought relief food to buy alcohol” (par. 1). Like other news stories discussed above, the causes or the solutions are not given. Rather, the story levels the blame on the San themselves for selling the donated food. What the story fails



to question is the reason behind this behaviour.

Such lexical choices have become common in most news headlines reporting the San people. Fairclough's (1991) insight is instructive when he notes that these choices may be consistent, automatic and in most cases commonsensical and therefore consequently ideological. This ultimately shows the existence of a process of hedging.

## **Conclusion**

This study has shown that the depiction of the San people of Namibia through the print media tends to be generally negative. Haphazard reportage (usually event-driven) or Afghanistanism, as shown through reports on little but valueless acts of charity. While this study did not investigate if these frames have priming effects, the reportage seem to have not only augmented San misery, but also fostered a perennial dependency syndrome among the San and tampered with their identity and self-determination.

Both content and critical analysis of the Namibian print media have demonstrated that a certain language has been and is still being used in the media to legitimise the existing negative perception of the San people of Namibia as second class citizens. This study found that the local media has failed to resist the ideologies embedded in particular conventions. The main thrust and methods employed by this study has shown that the Namibian print media continue to view the San from the point of view of the old and derogatory stereotypes. The same media ultimately continue to value and uphold their own institutional values and do not seek to uphold and support San identity.

Like any other study, this also has limitations. The effects of these frames on the San themselves and other Namibians is one area requiring further investigation. Another angle that can be explored is what has informed the framing of the San. Could this be traced to journalists' biases, ownership of the print media, and the social structure of the Namibian society or all of the above reasons? The near invisibility of the San in news stories based on our findings is also an angle other scholars may wish to take a critical look at vis-à-vis the level of coverage given to other ethnic groups. Be that as it may, no other scholarly work known to these researchers has employed content analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) in such depth to unveil the manner in which San people living in Namibia and issues related to them have been covered by the Namibian print media. Consequently, this study might go a long way in offering a background to upcoming scholars endeavouring to critically examine the language of the media and their manipulative power vis-à-vis the weak members of society.

## Recommendations

The Namibian print media must go out of their way to cultivate a consciousness of the San through positive representational strategies and reportage and not dwell on portraying them as perennial victims who will never stand without government aid and charity. If the prevailing discourse has the power to govern and condition people, under the veil of naturalised ideologies, denaturalisation of such discourse must be the primary role of the media, not only the critical discourse analyst. Stereotypical labels like ‘San girl’, ‘San chief’, ‘San community’, ‘San farmer’ must be removed from news discourses for they carry with them negative attributes.

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