This study explored media coverage of maternal health in Kenya, with the specific objectives of determining the extent and depth of maternal health in Kenya. The study was conducted in two media houses in Kenya, The Nation and The Standard. Data were collected using a descriptive research design and analysed using both qualitative and quantitative data research tools. Findings from the quantitative data are presented using tables while those from the qualitative data are presented in narrative form. The major findings indicate that the extent of media coverage of maternal health, in terms of the number of stories that had appeared during the period under review, as well as the range of topics covered, remains significantly low. Maternal health issues are at the bottom of the list of topics that received coverage in both The Nation and The Standard Newspapers. Further, the study reveals that the depth of coverage of maternal health issues is also limited to the minimal space that these stories are allocated. On the basis of these findings, the study concludes that although most maternal deaths are preventable, the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5: Improve Maternal Health, is proving difficult to achieve as thousands of women continue to die in Kenya from pregnancy related causes. But, this issue is still yet to receive substantial media coverage. The absence of media attention towards maternal health denies the public an opportunity to understand the gravity of maternal deaths. Further, this indicates that the media, in relation to maternal health, is absconding from its primary roles which are to inform and educate the public on issues that are important to their well being. By doing so, the media also violates the public's rights to information which is a critical prerequisite to people's ability towards enjoy the highest attainable level of well being, since right to health includes access to information. Based on the conclusion, this study recommends a review of editorial policies and administrative procedures that impede the coverage of maternal health issues, primarily denying the public their right to access information. The study further recommends that a review of the administrative procedures to support journalists seeking to cover maternal health stories by providing a budget to facilitate movement. This would not only expand the space occupied by maternal health stories but it would also increase the range of topics covered.
This study explored media coverage of maternal health in Kenya.