

**Title: Conflict or Harmony? Unravelling How Media Shape Public Perception of Wildlife  
in Uganda**

**Candidate: GESSA SIMPLICIOUS JOHN, BA. Mass Com (Mak), MA.JC (Mak)**

**Supervisors: Dr. William Tayeebwa; Assoc. Prof. Vincent Muwanika**

**Abstract**

Globally, media outlets are key sources of information that influence public opinions, perceptions and attitudes. These ultimately impact conservation outcomes and wildlife protection. It is therefore imperative to understand how media conveys wildlife information to meaningfully conserve it. In this study, media contribution in dissemination of wildlife information as well as its influence in shaping public opinion were assessed. To achieve this, a mixed method approach that employed a survey, in-depth interviews and content analysis for data collection was used. A survey of 320 people was carried out in two urban (Kampala, Fort Portal) areas and two adjacent communities to protected areas (Kibale, Queen Elizabeth) in Uganda. This survey assessed the media's (radio and print) contribution to the dissemination of wildlife-related information as well as its public perception. In the findings, almost all respondents (n=306; 97%) had access to or/ listened to radio compared to 57% (n=182) that read newspapers. Of those that listened to radio, 76% (n=237) acknowledged to have listened to wildlife information. Overall, radio broadcasts negatively affected respondents' perception of wildlife related issues with 88% (n=209). Further, 82% (n=251) of respondents that received wildlife information through the media said they had seen human wildlife conflict reported and believe it can happen to them. In-depth interviews of 24 radio journalists from the four research sites were purposively sampled. Results showed that 83% or 20 radio broadcasts negatively portrayed wildlife. Additionally, content analysis of two national daily newspapers in Uganda: *The New Vision* and *Daily Monitor* was performed. These examined how wildlife information is depicted to the public. Analysis was completed for articles in *New Vision* (n=258) and *Daily Monitor* (n=267) published each year in 2010, 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2019. About half of the wildlife articles published in both newspapers were negatively framed. Almost all respondents (94%; n=301) believed that the media provides fact-based information. This research therefore concludes that media disseminates negative wildlife information that adversely impacts public opinion towards wildlife protection. The study recommends media awareness and sensitization of the positive attributes of wildlife to the media for better reporting.

Government and conservation partners should increase media engagements particularly radio, to improve wildlife information dissemination and its conservation.