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Assessing the Effectiveness of the Influence of Media Ownership on Journalism Practice: A Case Study of Print Media in Zambia

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of media ownership on journalism practice in Zambia, focusing on the influence of ownership on editorial policy, journalistic independence, and censorship. The research aims to assess the extent to which media ownership affects the autonomy of journalists, the diversity of information available to the public, and the overall quality of journalism in Zambia. A qualitative research design was employed, combining semi-structured interviews with 30 journalists, focus groups with 10 journalists, and content analysis of 100 news articles. The study found that media ownership has a significant influence on editorial policy, with 91.4% of respondents believing that ownership affects editorial decisions. The research also revealed that journalists face significant pressures, including conflicts of interest between ownership and journalistic integrity, and limitations on investigative freedom. The

analysis highlights the need for greater transparency and accountability in media practices, as well as stronger regulations to prevent concentration of media ownership and protect journalists' rights. The study recommends the development of guidelines for transparency and accountability, implementation of training programs for journalists on ethical reporting and self-censorship, and promotion of diverse ownership structures. Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing discussion on media freedom and transparency, emphasizing the importance of critical examination of ownership structures and self-censorship practices. The findings and recommendations of this study have implications for policymakers, media practitioners, and civil society organizations seeking to promote a free and independent press in Zambia.

Keywords: Media Ownership, Press Freedom, Editorial Independence, Content Diversity

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Zambian print media industry has undergone significant transformations over the past few decades, influenced by technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, and evolving business models (Kabwe, 2019) ^[9]. According to Kabwe (2019) ^[9], the advent of digital media has led to a global decline in print circulation and advertising revenues, a trend that has similarly affected Zambia's print media sector.

However, as Phiri (2019) ^[19] notes, print media still plays an important role in disseminating information, shaping public opinion, and contributing to democratic discourse in the country.

According to the Zambia Media Council (2020), there are 17 registered newspapers and 14 magazines currently operating in Zambia, which reflects the continued importance of print media in the nation, despite its struggles. The rise of mobile phones and internet technologies has sparked increased consumption of digital media, particularly among the youth and urban populations (Sikalumbi, 2017) ^[22]. As Sikalumbi (2017) ^[22] observes, this shift has forced traditional print media outlets to adapt, with many launching online editions and leveraging social media platforms to engage a broader audience.

However, print media remains influential, especially in rural areas, where access to digital platforms is limited (Nkonde, 2016) ^[18]. In these regions, traditional print newspapers and magazines continue to serve as the primary sources of news and information, particularly for older generations and those with limited technological access (Mwewa, 2017) ^[16]. According to Mwewa (2017) ^[16], the industry faces several critical challenges, including financial instability, political interference, limited resources, and an ongoing struggle to maintain profitability.

As MISA Zambia (2020) ^[14] notes, the financial pressures faced by the Zambian media industry have resulted in layoffs, reduced production quality, and, in some cases, the closure of print media outlets. Furthermore, the regulatory environment in Zambia has been criticized for its limited oversight and enforcement (Phiri, 2019) ^[19]. According to Phiri (2019) ^[19], the lack of effective enforcement of media regulations has allowed media owners to wield significant influence without sufficient checks and balances.

Mwenda (2020) ^[17] observes that the concentration of media ownership in Zambia threatens the diversity of information available to the public and undermines the role of the media as a watchdog for government and corporate power. When media outlets are controlled by a select few, they may prioritize the interests of their owners over the public good, leading to editorial bias, a narrowing of perspectives, and compromised journalism (Banda, 2015) ^[2]. As Banda (2015) ^[2] notes, this concentration of ownership can also create conflicts of interest and undermine public trust in the media. Moreover, the lack of transparency in media ownership further exacerbates these issues (Nkonde, 2016) ^[18]. Many media organizations in Zambia do not disclose the identities of their owners, making it difficult for the public and regulatory bodies to assess potential conflicts of interest or undue influence over editorial content (Mwewa, 2017) ^[16]. According to Mwewa (2017) ^[16], MISA Zambia has advocated for stronger regulations that require media owners to disclose their interests, to ensure greater accountability and transparency in the sector.

Without clear ownership transparency, it becomes challenging to enforce media regulations that would promote diversity and journalistic independence (Kabwe, 2019) ^[9]. The regulatory environment in Zambia has also been criticized for its limited oversight and enforcement (Phiri, 2019) ^[19]. According to Phiri (2019) ^[19], the lack of effective enforcement of media regulations has allowed media owners to wield significant influence without sufficient checks and balances.

As MISA Zambia (2020) ^[14] points out, there is a need for new business models that can support the media's viability, including partnerships, digital revenue streams, and diversification. Despite these challenges, the role of the media in Zambia remains crucial (Nkonde, 2016) ^[18]. Print media continues to play an important function, particularly in rural areas where digital access is limited (Mwewa, 2017) ^[16].

The media serves as a key vehicle for information, education, and public discourse, and its role in fostering democratic debate and holding those in power accountable is indispensable (Kabwe, 2019) ^[9]. However, in the current climate of media concentration, political interference, and financial strain, the ability of the media to fulfill these functions is under significant threat (Phiri, 2019) ^[19].

In this context, it is critical to explore the complex relationship between media ownership and the performance of the Zambian print media sector (Mwenda, 2020) ^[17]. Ownership structures have far-reaching implications for editorial independence, the diversity of information available to the public, and the ability of the media to challenge powerful interests (Banda, 2015) ^[2]. By examining how these ownership patterns affect journalistic practices and press freedom, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the Zambian media landscape.

To address these challenges, there is a need for new business

models that can support the media's viability, including partnerships, digital revenue streams, and diversification.

Additionally, stronger regulations are required to ensure greater accountability and transparency in the sector, particularly with regards to media ownership. The Zambian government and regulatory bodies must work to create a more supportive environment for the media, including ensuring the safety and protection of journalists. This can involve implementing policies and laws that promote media freedom, independence, and diversity.

Moreover, media organizations in Zambia must prioritize transparency and accountability, including disclosing the identities of their owners and ensuring editorial independence. This can help to rebuild public trust in the media and promote a more informed and engaged citizenry.

Ultimately, the future of the Zambian print media industry depends on its ability to adapt to changing circumstances, while remaining committed to the principles of journalistic integrity, independence, and public service.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The concentration of media ownership in Zambia poses a significant threat to press freedom, as owners' political, economic, and social interests can influence editorial content and decision-making, leading to censorship, self-censorship, and a lack of diverse perspectives. Despite Zambia's democratic constitution and media laws, the country's media

landscape is characterized by a lack of transparency in ownership structures, inadequate media regulation, and limited journalistic independence. This situation undermines the role of the media as a watchdog, hindering its ability to hold those in power accountable and facilitate informed public discourse. Furthermore, the ownership structure of print media in Zambia has raised concerns about the concentration of ownership and its impact on media diversity and editorial independence (Banda, 2018). The government's ownership of the Zambia Daily Mail and Times of Zambia, for example, has led to allegations of bias and propaganda (Mwewa, 2017) ^[16].

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of media ownership on press freedom in Zambia, examining the extent to which ownership structures and interests impact editorial autonomy, content diversity, and journalistic independence.

1.3 Research Objectives

Main

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of the influence of media ownership on journalism practice.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the influence of media ownership in shaping editorial policy.
2. To investigate the effects of media ownership on journalistic independence.
3. To examine the influence of media ownership on censorship

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The Zambian print media industry faces numerous challenges, including financial instability, political interference, and limited resources (Phiri, 2019) ^[19]. The concentration of media ownership, lack of transparency, and

regulatory gaps exacerbate these issues. Several media theories, including the Propaganda Model (Herman & Chomsky, 1988) ^[7], Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) ^[13], and Social Responsibility Theory (Hutchins Commission, 1947), provide insights into the impact of media ownership and control on the production of news.

To address these challenges, it is essential to promote media pluralism, transparency, and accountability in Zambia. This can be achieved through stronger regulations, increased transparency in media ownership, and support for independent media outlets. Additionally, exploring alternative funding sources, such as non-profit funding or crowdfunding, and developing innovative digital products and services can help ensure the financial sustainability of the media industry (McChesney, 1999) ^[11].

Ultimately, a free and independent media is essential for promoting democratic governance, holding those in power accountable, and serving the public interest in Zambia. By promoting media pluralism, transparency, and accountability, Zambia can foster a vibrant and diverse media landscape that supports democratic participation and promotes the public interest.

To achieve this goal, it is crucial to strengthen the regulatory framework governing the media industry in Zambia. This can be done by establishing an independent media regulator, implementing robust regulations to prevent media concentration, and promoting transparency in media ownership (Habermas, 1962) ^[5]. Additionally, media literacy programs can be implemented to educate the public on the importance of media independence and the potential biases in media reporting.

Promoting media pluralism, transparency, and accountability is essential for fostering a vibrant and diverse media landscape in Zambia. By strengthening the regulatory framework, promoting media literacy, and supporting independent media outlets, Zambia can promote democratic governance, hold those in power accountable, and serve the public interest.

2. Literature Review

The literature review examines the impact of media ownership on press freedom in Zambia, highlighting the complex relationships between ownership, censorship, and journalistic independence. Concentrated media ownership can lead to a homogenization of ideas, limiting diverse perspectives and representation for underrepresented groups. This can result in a lack of scrutiny and accountability, as owners prioritize content that aligns with their interests and values.

The review notes that concentrated ownership can also limit access to information, suppressing investigative journalism and prioritizing profit over public interest. This can have serious consequences for democracy, eroding trust in institutions and exacerbating social and economic inequalities. Moreover, concentrated ownership can limit access to information during times of crisis, when accurate and timely information is crucial.

To promote press freedom and democracy, the review highlights the need for a more robust support system for journalists, a stronger culture of transparency and accountability, and increased media literacy and critical thinking. Protecting press freedom and promoting transparency and accountability in the media industry are

essential for ensuring a functioning democracy and holding those in power accountable.

2.1 Editorial decision- making

Media ownership can significantly influence editorial autonomy, leading to a lack of independence in editorial decision-making (Banda, 2007) ^[3]. Owners may exert pressure on editors to align content with their interests, resulting in self-censorship and a lack of diverse perspectives (Manda, 2013). This can have serious implications for press freedom, democracy, and the ability of media outlets to serve the public interest (Kasoma, 1997) ^[8].

Biased reporting can manifest in various ways, including selective reporting, slanted language, and omission of important facts (Waisbord, 2013) ^[29]. The representation of diverse perspectives and viewpoints is essential for a healthy media landscape (Simwaba, 2018) ^[24]. However, media ownership can suppress these diverse voices, leading to a narrow and biased range of viewpoints (Phiri, 2011).

Editorial guidelines or policies are crucial to ensure editorial autonomy and prevent owner influence (Sims, 2018) ^[25]. When these guidelines are in place, they provide a safeguard against owner influence and establish a culture of editorial independence (McChesney, 2015) ^[12]. However, when they are absent or inadequate, owner influence can prevail, leading to biased or compromised content (Mwewa, 2009).

Furthermore, the concentration of media ownership can also lead to a lack of local programming and content, as owners may prioritize national or international content over local issues (Simwaba, 2018) ^[24]. This can result in a lack of representation for local communities and issues, further eroding the diversity of viewpoints and perspectives (Manda, 2013). To promote media diversity and prevent the negative impacts of concentrated media ownership, policymakers and regulators must take steps to encourage diversity in media ownership and promote editorial independence (Kasoma, 1997) ^[8].

2.2 Media ownership on journalistic autonomy

Media ownership can significantly impact journalistic autonomy, with different ownership structures and models presenting unique challenges and concerns (Banda, 2007) ^[3]. Corporate media ownership, for instance, can lead to a focus on sensationalism and ratings-driven content, while family-owned media outlets may reflect the personal biases and interests of the owning family (Manda, 2013). State-owned media outlets, on the other hand, often serve as propaganda tools for the government, compromising journalistic autonomy (Kasoma, 1997) ^[8].

The concentration of media ownership can lead to a reduction in the diversity of viewpoints and perspectives in the media landscape (Simwaba, 2018) ^[24]. A small number of owners can impose their own views and values on the content, limiting the range of perspectives presented (Phiri, 2011). This can result in a lack of critical reporting and scrutiny of those in power, as well as a lack of representation for marginalized or minority groups (Mwewa, 2009).

Media ownership influence can have severe consequences on journalistic independence, including self-censorship and biased reporting (Manda, 2013). Journalists may feel pressured to self-censor, avoiding topics or perspectives that might offend or alienate owners or advertisers (Sims, 2018)

[25]. Biased reporting can result from owners' attempts to shape public opinion or promote their own interests (Waisbord, 2013) [29]. This can lead to a lack of trust in the media and a misinformed public (McChesney, 2015) [12].

The impact of media ownership and control on the ability of journalists to hold those in power accountable has significant implications for democracy (Banda, 2007) [3]. When journalists are unable to investigate and report freely, corruption and abuse of power can go unchecked (Kasoma, 1997) [8]. A free and independent media is essential for democracy, and promoting diverse and independent media ownership is crucial for ensuring that journalists can maintain their independence and integrity (Simwaba, 2018) [24].

2.3 The level of censorship on media content

Different types of media ownership, including corporate, government, and private ownership, can influence the level of censorship in media content (Banda, 2007) [3]. Corporate media ownership can lead to increased censorship, as corporate owners may prioritize profits over journalistic integrity (Manda, 2013). Government media ownership can also lead to censorship, as governments may use media outlets to promote their own interests and suppress dissenting voices (Kasoma, 1997) [8]. Private media ownership can also lead to censorship, as private owners may prioritize their own interests over journalistic integrity (Mwewa, 2009).

Concentrated media ownership can have a profound impact on the diversity of viewpoints and perspectives in the media landscape (Simwaba, 2018) [24]. When a small number of owners control a large number of media outlets, it can lead to a homogenization of content, resulting in a lack of diverse viewpoints and perspectives (Manda, 2013). This can limit the public's access to information and stifle democratic discourse (Banda, 2007) [3]. Concentrated ownership can also lead to the suppression of dissenting voices and alternative viewpoints, as owners may prioritize their own interests over diverse perspectives (Kasoma, 1997) [8].

The impact of concentrated media ownership on the diversity of viewpoints and perspectives is closely related to censorship (Banda, 2007) [3]. When owners control a large number of outlets, they can suppress content that challenges their interests or viewpoints, leading to censorship (Kasoma, 1997) [8]. This can result in a lack of accountability and transparency, as owners may use their control to suppress content that challenges their interests (Phiri, 2011). Concentrated media ownership can also lead to self-censorship, as journalists may avoid producing content that challenges the interests of media owners (Manda, 2013).

Journalists may experience censorship pressures from media owners through various means, including direct editorial interference, which can compromise their independence and lead to self-censorship (Sims, 2018) [25]. Censorship can have serious implications for democracy, including a lack of trust in media outlets and a chilling effect on speech (Waisbord, 2013) [29]. Journalists must be aware of the consequences of censorship and be vigilant in protecting their independence to ensure that they can report freely and hold those in power accountable (McChesney, 2015) [12].

3. Research Methodology

This qualitative study aims to explore the impact of censorship pressures on journalists in Zambia. The research

design involves semi-structured interviews with 30 journalists, focus groups with 10 journalists, and content analysis of 100 news articles. The study employs thematic analysis, triangulation, and purposive sampling to ensure rigor and validity. The study's objectives are to assess the influence of media ownership on editorial policy, investigate the effects of media ownership on journalistic independence, and examine the influence of media ownership on censorship.

The study's sample design involves a purposive sample of 30 journalists who have experienced censorship pressures in their work. The sample will be stratified to ensure representation from diverse media types, geographic locations, beats or topics, and levels of experience. The study's data collection methods include semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and content analysis. The interviews and focus groups will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and detail. The content analysis will involve quantitative coding and analysis to identify patterns and trends related to censorship. The study adheres to ethical principles, including informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and avoidance of harm. The study's limitations include a small sample size, reliance on self-reported data, and focus on journalists who have experienced censorship pressures. Despite these limitations, the study aims to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the experiences and perceptions of journalists who have faced censorship pressures, and to contribute to the broader literature on press freedom and censorship.

4. Findings

The demographic and background characteristics of the respondents provide context for understanding the diversity of the sample. Key demographic factors including age, gender, education level, experience and occupation of the respondents.

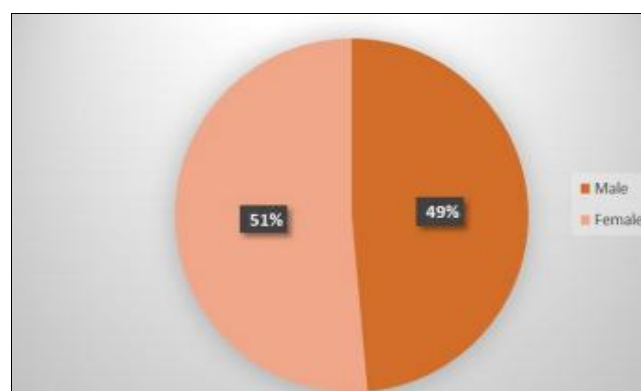


Fig 1: Demographic Characteristics of the respondents according to gender

The Zambian media industry exhibits a notable gender disparity, with females comprising 51% of the sample, potentially influencing content and editorial decisions. However, this significant female presence also indicates progress toward greater diversity, and increased female representation can lead to more inclusive storytelling, breaking down traditional stereotypes and challenging societal norms.

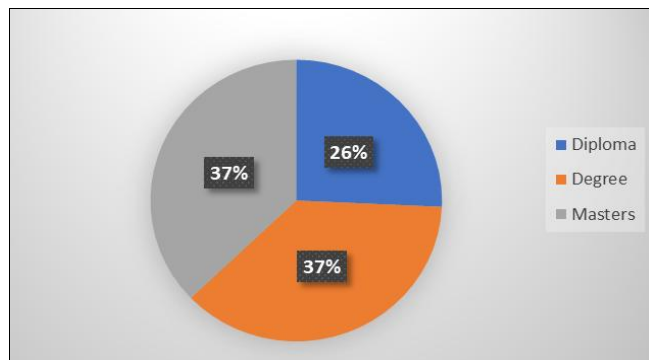


Fig 2: Distribution of respondents according to level of education

Zambia's media professionals boast high education levels, with many holding degrees and Master's degrees, indicating specialized knowledge, critical thinking, and analytical skills. This expertise enables innovative storytelling, in-depth analysis, and nuanced perspectives, enriching Zambia's media landscape. The educated workforce also highlights the industry's competitiveness and potential for global recognition, making Zambia a hub for quality journalism and media production.

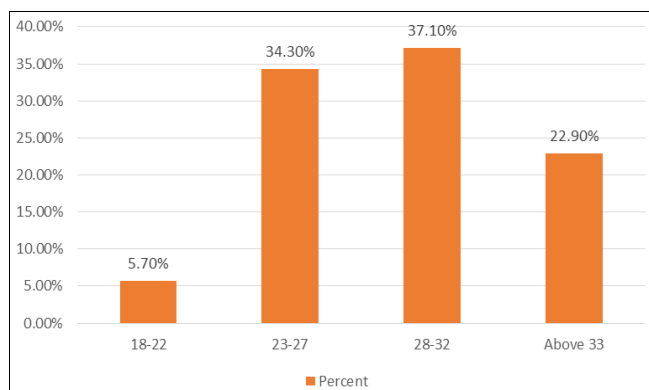


Fig 3: Distribution of respondents according to age

Zambia's media professionals are predominantly young, with 76.5% aged 23-32, indicating a tech-savvy and socially aware workforce. This age demographic is well-positioned to drive innovation and adaptability in the industry. The smaller proportion of older professionals adds valuable experience, creating a balanced blend of youthful energy and seasoned perspective, enabling media outlets to cater to diverse audiences and drive growth in Zambia's media landscape.

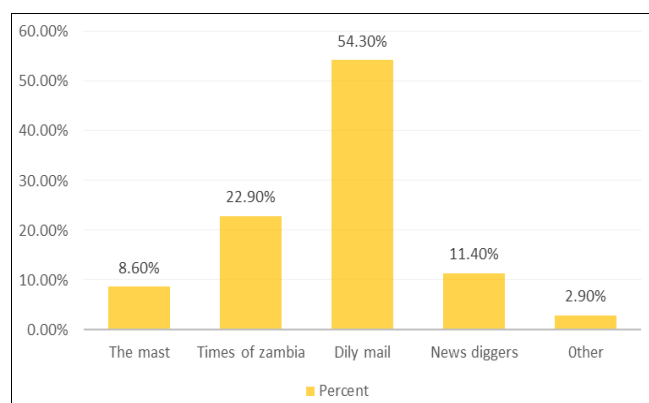


Fig 4: Distribution of respondents according to media organizations

A chart analyzing Zambia's media landscape shows News Diggers leading with 50% representation, followed by Daily Mail at 29.4%. Other notable outlets include Times of Zambia (11.8%), The Mast (5.9%), and Crown TV (2.9%). This distribution highlights the dominance of News Diggers and Daily Mail in shaping public discourse, while also showcasing the diversity of Zambia's media ecosystem.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to departments

	Frequency	Percent
Publication	7	20.0
Circulation	2	5.7
Editorial	18	51.4
Advertising	8	22.9
Total	35	100.0

Zambia's media landscape reveals a dynamic industry with a strong online presence, youthful workforce, and balance between content creation and commercial operations. The Editorial department dominates (51.4%), indicating a focus on quality journalism, while Publication and Advertising departments play crucial roles in revenue generation. The industry faces challenges, including gender disparities and the need for continuous training, but is well-positioned for innovative storytelling and diverse viewpoints.

Findings from objective one

Table 1.1: Diversity of viewpoints and perspectives

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	3	8.6
Somewhat disagree	11	31.4
Neither nor	14	40.0
Somewhat agree	5	14.3
Strongly agree	2	5.7
Total	35	100.0

A survey on diversity of viewpoints revealed that 71.4% of respondents perceive moderate inclusivity, with 40% rating it as average and 31.4% somewhat disagreeing with the diversity of perspectives, highlighting an opportunity to improve inclusivity and incorporate a wider range of viewpoints.

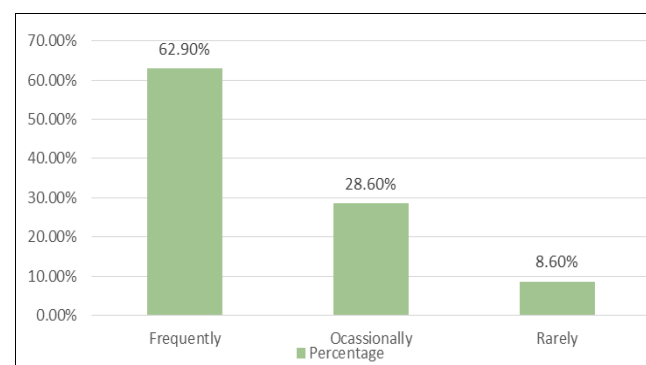


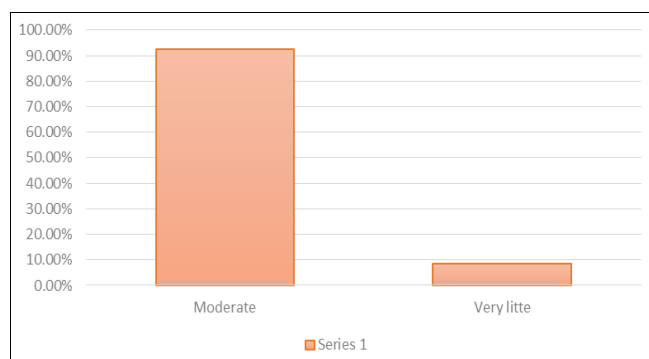
Fig 1.1: Intervention in story selection or content decisions

A survey revealed that 62.9% of respondents chose the "frequently" option, 28.6% chose "occasionally", and 8.6% chose "rarely", indicating a strong inclination towards the "frequently" option and suggesting a widespread preference or behavior among respondents that can inform future research and decision-making.

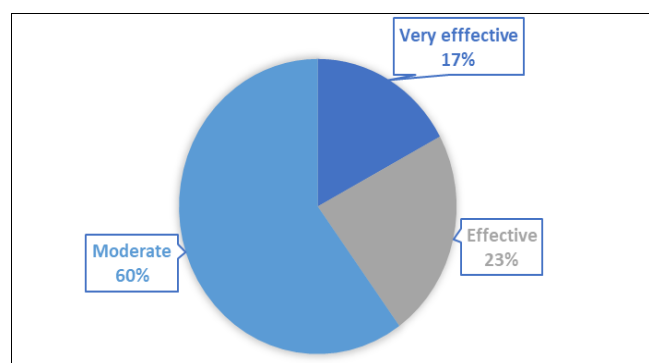
Table 1.2: Content removal

	Frequency	Percent
Government pressure	4	11.4
Management pressure	27	77.1
Other (colleagues)	3	8.6
Never	1	2.9
Total	35	100.0

A survey revealed that 77.1% of respondents face management pressure to alter or remove content, highlighting internal hierarchical influences as a dominant force in shaping content. Government and colleague pressures are relatively less prevalent. The findings raise concerns about censorship's impact on content quality and diversity, emphasizing the need for strategies to mitigate pressures and promote content integrity, ultimately fostering an environment that values freedom of expression.

**Fig 1.2:** Influence on editorial decisions

A survey revealed that 91.4% of respondents believe media ownership has a moderate to significant influence on editorial decisions, raising concerns about media independence and objectivity. This highlights the need for strategies to promote media independence, such as editorial boards, fact-checking, transparency policies, and alternative media models. Addressing ownership's influence requires a multifaceted approach, including regulatory frameworks, industry standards, and public awareness campaigns to reclaim journalism's integrity and serve the public interest.

**Fig 1.3:** Ownership and structural control

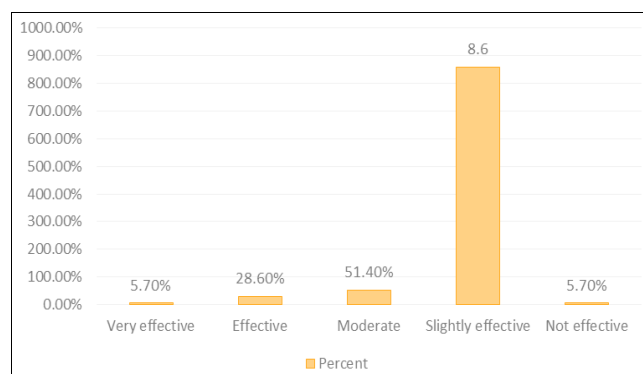
A survey on ownership and structural control revealed that 60% of respondents consider it moderately effective, while 17.1% see it as very effective and 22.9% as effective, indicating cautious optimism and a need for improvement,

highlighting the importance of reconsidering ownership structures and exploring complementary indicators to strengthen control and balance ownership interests with broader objectives.

Table 1.3: Editorial independence

	Frequency	Percent
Very effective	2	5.7
Effective	2	5.7
Moderate	20	57.1
Slightly effective	9	25.7
Not effective	2	5.7
Total	35	100.0

A survey on editorial independence revealed that 57.1% of respondents consider it moderately effective, while 5.7% see it as very effective, 5.7% as effective, 25.7% as slightly effective, and 5.7% as not effective, highlighting diverse opinions and the need for media outlets to prioritize editorial independence, enhance transparency, and safeguard against external influences to maintain credibility and public trust.

**Fig 1.4:** Content diversity representation

51.4% of respondents rate content diversity representation as moderately effective, while 28.6% see it as effective, and 5.7% as not effective, highlighting diverse opinions and the need for media outlets to prioritize diversity, seek broader perspectives, and address overlooked issues to create a more inclusive platform and foster a diverse media landscape.

Table 1.4: Journalistic autonomy

	Frequency	Percent
Effective	5	14.3
Moderate	26	74.3
Slightly effective	1	2.9
Not effective	3	8.6
Total	35	100.0

74.3% of respondents view journalistic autonomy as moderately effective in ensuring independence, while 14.3% see it as effective, and 11.4% as slightly or highly effective, suggesting that autonomy is valuable but often insufficient to guarantee fully independent journalism, highlighting the need for media organizations to reinforce protections and prioritize autonomy to foster unbiased reporting.

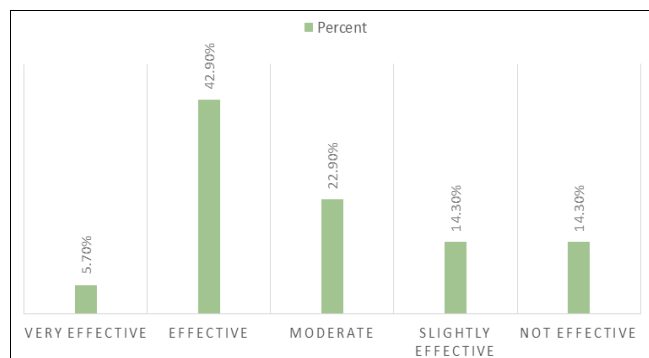


Fig 1.5: Commercial and political pressures

Commercial and political pressures in journalism show that 42.9% of respondents believe these pressures significantly impact editorial independence, 22.9% see a moderate impact, and 34.3% consider them slightly or not effective, highlighting concerns about external influences on journalism and the need for media organizations to reinforce autonomy through transparent policies and ethical guidelines.

Findings from objective 2

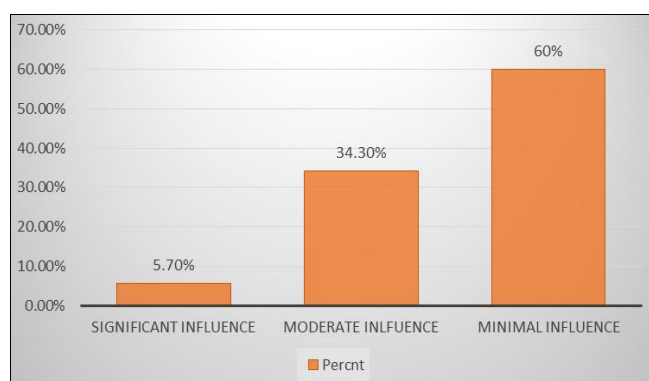


Fig 2.1: Media ownership in editorial independence

Media ownership's influence on editorial independence reveals that 5.7% of respondents believe ownership has a significant impact, 34.3% see a moderate influence, and 60% perceive minimal influence, indicating a range of opinions with the majority believing ownership does not heavily dictate editorial content, but also highlighting concerns about potential interference with independent reporting.

Table 2.1: Censorship or self-censorship experiences

	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	14	40.0
Occasionally	5	14.3
Rarely	16	45.7
Total	35	100.0

Studies on experiences with censorship or self-censorship revealed that 40% of respondents face it frequently, 14.3% occasionally, and 45.7% rarely, highlighting a mixed experience where nearly half face regular censorship, while the other half experiences it infrequently, reflecting differences in workplace cultures, industry norms, and personal attitudes toward sensitive topics.

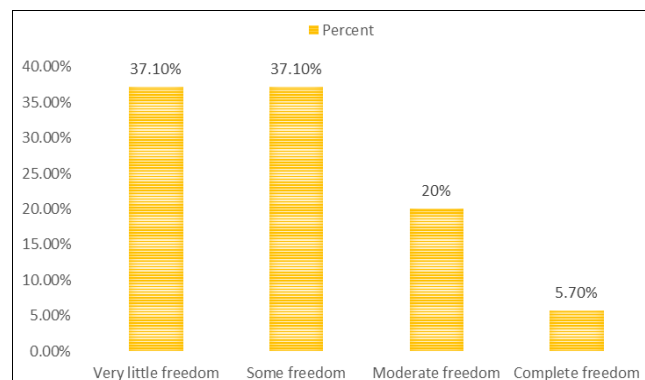


Fig 2.2: Freedom to investigate/ report sensitive topics.

On freedom to investigate sensitive topics, a survey revealed that 37.1% of respondents feel they have very little freedom, 37.1% have some freedom with limitations, 20% have autonomy with some restrictions, and only 5.7% feel fully supported and unrestricted, highlighting significant restrictions and organizational constraints that may impact transparency and investigative journalism.

Table 2.2: Owner's interest conflict with journalistic integrity

	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	8	22.9
Occasionally	11	31.4
Rarely	16	45.7
Total	35	100.0

Conflicts between ownership interests and journalistic integrity revealed that 22.9% of respondents experience frequent conflicts, 31.4% occasional conflicts, and 45.7% rare conflicts, highlighting a divide in perceptions about ownership influence on journalism and underscoring the ongoing tension between commercial interests and journalistic values, with implications for editorial independence, credibility, and public trust.

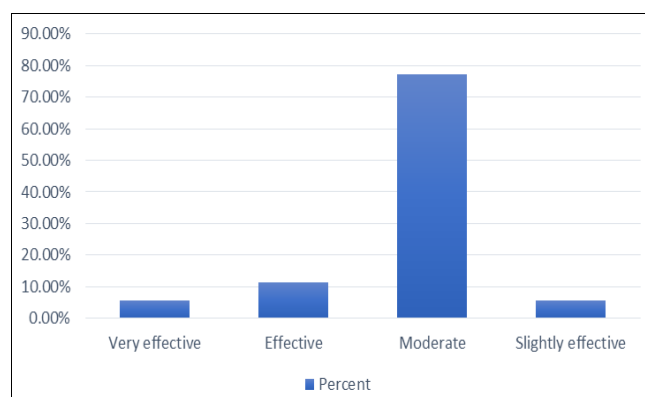


Fig 2.3: Editorial interface scale

The effectiveness of an editorial interface revealed that 5.7% of respondents found it very effective, 11.4% effective, 77.1% moderately effective, and 5.7% slightly effective, indicating that while some users are satisfied, the majority see room for improvement, highlighting the need for enhanced usability, functionality, and features to better meet users' needs and expectations.

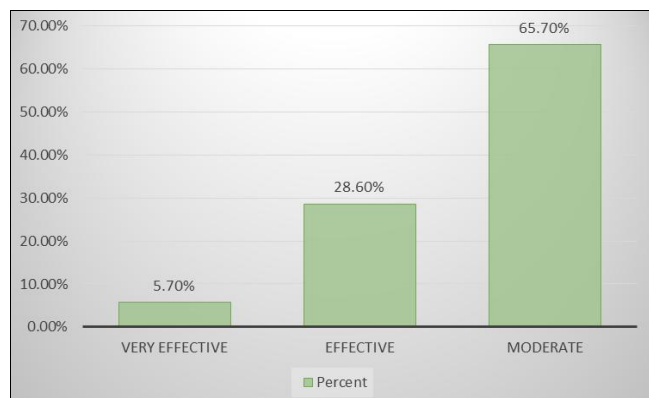


Fig 2.5: Journalistic autonomy scale

Regarding journalistic autonomy, it was revealed that 5.7% of respondents experience high autonomy, 28.6% good autonomy with minor limitations, and 65.7% moderate autonomy with noticeable restrictions. The data suggests that while some journalists enjoy independence, many face limitations, highlighting the need to enhance autonomy through policies, training, and a culture that values independence and transparency to promote high-quality, unbiased reporting.

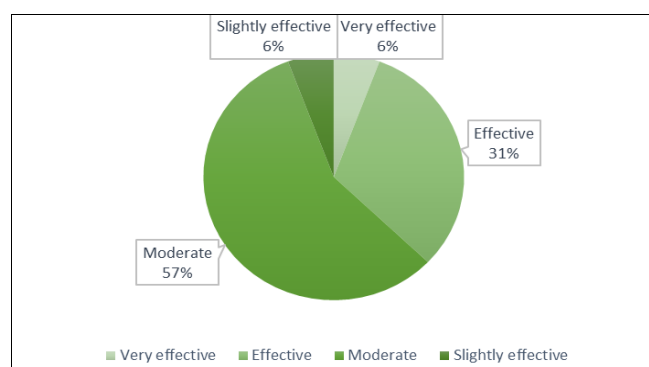


Fig 2.6: Censorship incident rate

On handling censorship incidents, a survey revealed that 5.7% of respondents rate it as highly effective, 31.4% as generally effective, 57.1% as moderate, and 5.7% as minimally effective, indicating inconsistent management of censorship incidents and a need for improvement, potentially impacting trust in organizations' commitment to freedom of expression.

Table 2.3: Self-censorship prevalence

	Frequency	Percent
Very effective	2	5.7
Effective	8	22.9
Moderate	8	22.9
Slightly effective	9	25.7
Not effective	8	22.9
Total	35	100.0

Self-censorship in professional environments revealed that only 5.7% of respondents believe their organization's measures are highly effective, while the majority experience moderate to ineffective support, with 25.7% feeling efforts are limited and 22.9% stating their organization does not effectively manage self-censorship, highlighting a need for more robust initiatives to promote journalistic integrity.

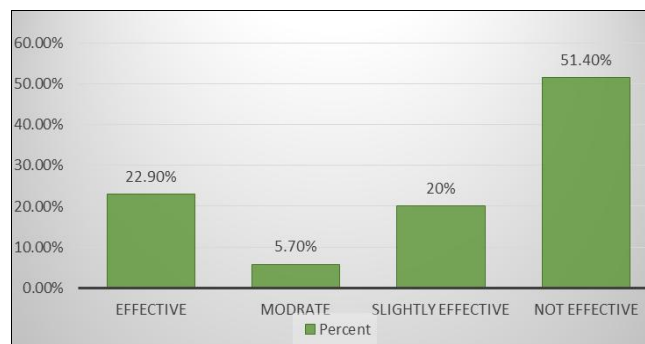


Fig 2.7: Conflict of interest disclosure

Conflict of interest disclosure ratings revealed varied perspectives, with 22.9% rating it as "very effective", while the majority, 51.4%, considered it "not effective", suggesting that over half of the respondents question the practice's impact, and highlighting a need for improvement in its implementation or accompanying measures to adequately address conflicts of interest.

Findings from objective 3

Table 3.1: Ownership interface on editorial decisions

	Frequency	Percent
Frequently	25	71.4
Occasionally	8	22.9
Rarely	2	5.7
Total	35	100.0

Ownership interference in editorial decisions revealed that 71.4% of respondents experience interference frequently, suggesting a substantial impact on journalistic independence and objectivity, while 22.9% report occasional interference, indicating moderate ownership involvement, and 5.7% experience rare interference, implying a high level of editorial autonomy and prioritization of journalistic integrity.

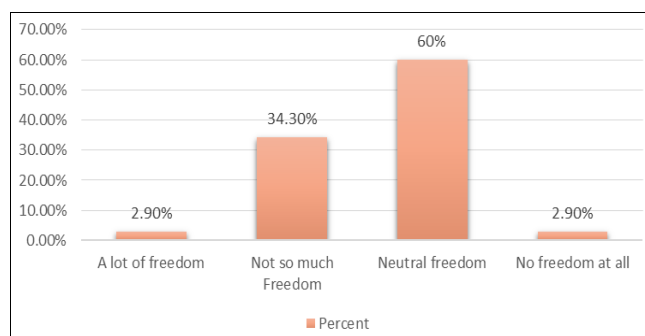


Fig 3.1: Freedom to investigate sensitive topics

The freedom to investigate sensitive topics revealed varying concerns, with 2.9% citing fear of management, 34.3% pressure from sponsors, and a majority 60.0% government or regulatory influence, as the primary factors limiting their investigative freedom, indicating that external political and legal sources have the most significant perceived impact, while financial pressures and management concerns also play a role in shaping the boundaries of sensitive investigative work.

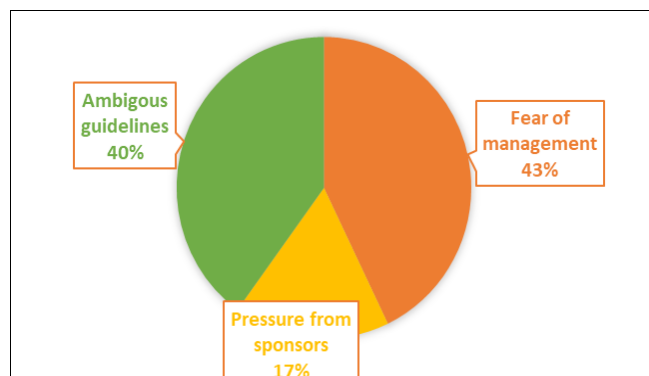


Fig 3.2: Self-censorship among journalists

Self-censorship among journalists revealed that 42.9% feared management repercussions, 17.1% felt pressure from sponsors, and 40% cited ambiguous editorial guidelines as reasons for self-censorship, leading to omissions in reporting. The level of omission varied, with 11.4% experiencing minimal influence, 37.1% moderate influence, 45.7% noticeable impact, and 5.7% high ownership pressure, indicating a range of experiences with self-censorship and editorial independence among journalists.

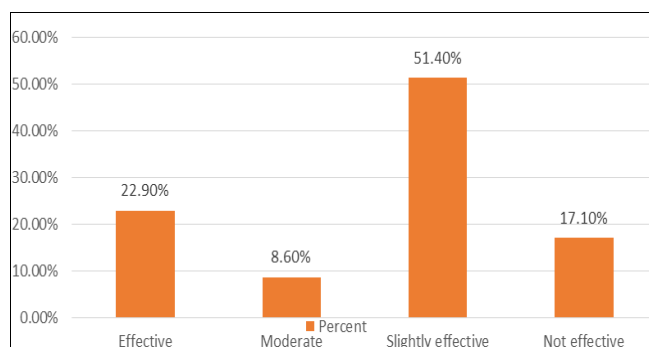


Fig 3.3: Frequency of media interference

Ownership interference in editorial decisions revealed varying levels of influence, with 22.9% of respondents rating it as effective, 8.6% as moderate, 51.4% as slightly effective, and 17.1% as not effective, indicating a range of experiences, from noticeable impact to minimal influence, highlighting differences in editorial control and independence among journalists.

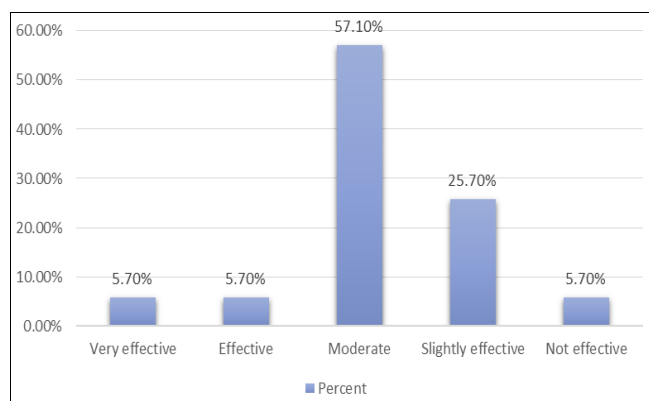


Fig 3.4: Review of media content

A survey on media content review effectiveness revealed varying opinions, with 5.7% considering it very effective, 5.7% effective, 57.1% moderately effective, 25.7% slightly

effective, and 5.7% not effective, indicating a range of perceptions on the review process's impact on content quality, from rigorous maintenance of standards to minimal influence, reflecting differences in editorial flexibility and enforcement.

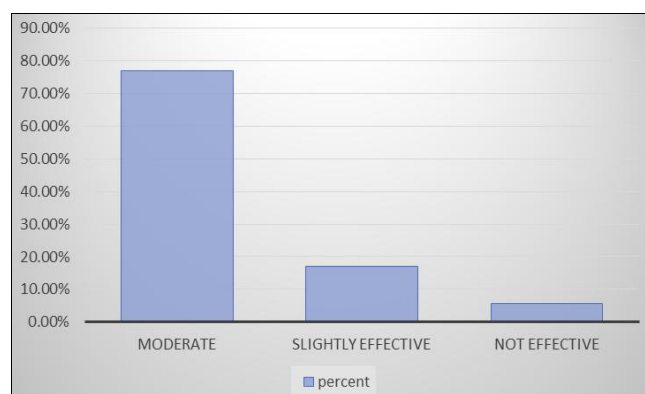


Fig 3.5: Cross ownership

A survey on cross-ownership effectiveness revealed that 77.1% of respondents perceive it as moderately effective, while 17.1% see it as slightly effective and only 5.7% consider it not effective, indicating a general recognition of cross-ownership's value, albeit with varying degrees of effectiveness.

Table 3.2: Measure of transparency

	Frequency	Percent
Very effective	2	5.7
Moderate	22	62.9
Slightly effective	8	22.9
Not effective	3	8.6
Total	35	100.0

A survey on ownership transparency revealed mixed opinions, with 62.9% of respondents rating transparency measures as moderately effective, while 22.9% and 8.6% considered them slightly effective or not effective at all, respectively, highlighting the need for further improvement in promoting clear and accessible ownership structures.

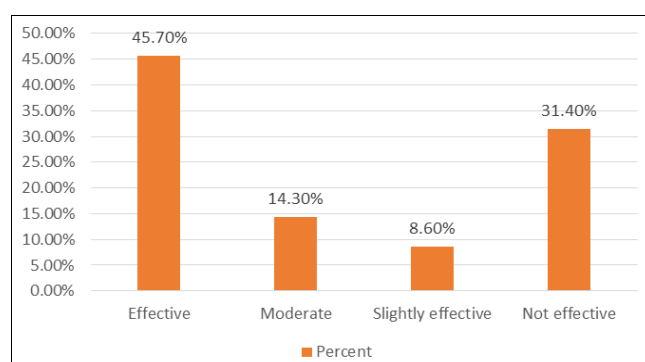


Fig 3.6: Journalists practicing self-censorship

A survey of journalists revealed varied perceptions of self-censorship's effectiveness, ranging from 45.7% who believe it is an effective means of limiting reporting, to 31.4% who think it has no impact on their work, highlighting a diverse range of experiences with self-censorship among journalists.

5. Discussion of Findings

The issue of media ownership and its impact on editorial independence has been extensively studied. Research by Baker (2007) ^[1], McChesney (2013), and others highlights how concentrated ownership can undermine journalistic independence and lead to censorship. This can result in a lack of diverse perspectives, biased reporting, and a narrowing of the public agenda.

Studies by Vaughan (2019) ^[28], Pinter and Kirsch (2019), and others examine the role of censorship, self-censorship, and digital media in shaping journalistic practices. These studies show that censorship can take many forms, including government censorship, corporate censorship, and self-censorship. Research on journalistic autonomy by Bennett and Livingston (2003), Deuze (2005), and others explores the impact of organizational and technological constraints on journalists' ability to work independently. These studies highlight the importance of editorial independence, access to resources, and technological support in enabling journalists to produce high-quality, independent reporting.

The issue of conflicts of interest between ownership and journalistic integrity is also well-documented, with studies by Lichtenberg (2013) ^[10], Harcup (2015) ^[6], and others highlighting the ethical dilemmas faced by journalists. These studies show that conflicts of interest can arise from a range of sources, including ownership interests, advertising pressures, and political influences.

Finally, research on investigative freedom by Reporters Without Borders (2023) ^[21], Tuchman (1978) ^[27], and others emphasizes the importance of external factors, such as government censorship and corporate control, in limiting journalists' ability to investigate freely. These studies highlight the need for a free and independent press to hold those in power accountable and to promote democratic governance.

These studies provide context for the findings in Chapter 4, which highlight the challenges faced by journalists in maintaining editorial independence, navigating censorship and self-censorship, and balancing ownership interests with journalistic standards.

6. Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the complex dynamics of media ownership, self-censorship, and journalistic freedom, shedding light on the intricate relationships between these factors. The findings reveal varying perceptions among journalists regarding ownership interference, self-censorship practices, and the effectiveness of transparency measures. Notably, the study highlights the significant impact of ownership structures and self-censorship on media content, underscoring the need for enhanced transparency and accountability. The research demonstrates that ownership interference and self-censorship can compromise journalistic autonomy, potentially undermining the integrity of media reporting.

Furthermore, the study shows that government regulations and sponsorship pressures contribute to self-censorship practices, emphasizing the importance of promoting media freedom and transparency. The findings also suggest that journalists' perceptions of ownership interference and self-censorship vary,

indicating a range of experiences and perspectives within the media industry. Overall, this research contributes to the ongoing discussion on media freedom and transparency,

highlighting the need for critical examination of ownership structures and self-censorship practices.

By exploring the intersections of media ownership, self-censorship, and journalistic freedom, this thesis provides valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and media practitioners. The study's conclusions underscore the importance of promoting media transparency and accountability, ensuring the integrity of media reporting, and safeguarding democratic participation. As the media landscape continues to evolve, understanding the complex dynamics of ownership, self-censorship, and journalistic freedom remains crucial for maintaining a free and independent press.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations merged.

Transparency and accountability

There is need for greater transparency and accountability in media practices. To promote a more transparent and accountable media landscape, several recommendations are presented. These include developing guidelines for transparency and accountability, implementing training programs for journalists on ethical reporting and self-censorship, and promoting diverse ownership structures to reduce the influence of external pressures.

Supporting media freedom

To further support journalistic freedom and democratic participation, policymakers and regulatory bodies should prioritize the development of policies and regulations that support media freedom and transparency. This may include measures to prevent concentration of media ownership, protect journalists' rights, and ensure access to information. Additionally, collaboration between media outlets, regulatory bodies, and civil society is essential for promoting media freedom and transparency.

By implementing these recommendations, media practitioners, policymakers, and civil society can work together to promote a more transparent, accountable, and independent media landscape. This, in turn, can support journalistic freedom, democratic participation, and the overall health of democratic societies. Ultimately, a free and independent media is essential for holding those in power accountable and promoting a well-informed and engaged citizenry.

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