

**MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND EDITORIAL CONTENT: AN ANALYSIS OF MEDIA
PERFORMANCE DURING THE JUBILEE REGIME**

OLICK FELIX OLICK

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OCTOBER 2021

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree, diploma or certificate in this or any other university.



5/12/2021

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Signature

Date

OLICK FELIX OLICK

K50/81256/2015

I hereby declare that this research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the appointed university supervisor.



5/12/2021

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Signature

Date

Prof. George Nyabuga (PhD)

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all those who toiled to see me through school in my early years of life. As I write this, the memories of my late grandfathers — Gilbert Olick and Patrick Olick — bring tears, smiles and ignite in me the zeal to relentlessly journey on. Yes, it's these two gallant men who ignited the passion of academic success in me. I can only wish they were here to witness what they started blossom.

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LISTS OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	-	British Broadcasting Corporation
COK	-	Constitution of Kenya
CPIJ	-	Committee to Protect Journalists
CS	-	Cabinet Secretary
DP	-	Deputy President
DCI	-	Director of Criminal Investigations
DW	-	Deutsche Welle
EUEOM	-	European Union Election Observation Mission
GAA	-	Government Advertising Agency
ICC	-	International Criminal Court
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
KPA	-	Kenya Ports Authority
MCK	-	Media Council of Kenya
NMG	-	Nation Media Group
NYS	-	National Youth Service
PR	-	Public Relations
SG	-	Standard Group

SGR - Standard Gauge Railway

ABSTRACT

This study's primary concern was to analyse media performance during the Jubilee era with respect to media ownership and editorial content in Kenya. The study had four objectives. These were: To assess levels of ownership influence on editorial performance during the Jubilee regime; to examine factors informing ownership influence on editorial performance in Kenya; to identify areas of editorial content that are susceptible to media ownership influence in Kenya and to determine the effects of media ownership on professional journalistic practice in Kenya. The study is guided by the propaganda model and the authoritarian theory. It adopted qualitative research approach and a case study research design. One of the study's fundamental findings is that editorial interference remains entrenched in Kenya's print outlets. In fact, even young outlets that could be regarded as "alternative press" are equally under the capture of their owners and by extension politicians and advertisers. The study shows that media owners are close associates of the political elite who are the subjects of media scrutiny. This makes independent practice of journalism impossible. In many instances, there is a deliberate move by the media to manipulate public opinion for vested interests. The Kenyan media is used to cover up embezzlement, malfeasance and clientelism. This study also found out that corruption is deeply entrenched in newsrooms and has become a major threat to editorial sanctity. Senior editors have become gatekeepers for "evildoers". In addition, this study found out that the Jubilee government has used all manner of tactics to have their way in the media. However, it's the introduction of GAA that has dealt the biggest blow to media independence in Kenya.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

The media occupies an important place in society and is considered a cornerstone of democracy (see for example, Curran, 2011; Habermas, 1989; Plattner, 2012; Randall, 1993). Access to information, for instance, ensures that citizens make informed choices instead of acting out of ignorance (McChesney, 1998). The media also acts as watchdog, ensuring that those in authority uphold their oaths of office and implement the wishes of the electorates (Buckley et al, 2011). The mass media also provides a critical platform for public engagement thus serves as a public sphere (Habermas, 1989). Scholars such as Berry (2009) and Simiyu (2003) have in fact concluded that there is a direct relationship between the quality and diversity of media content and the quality of democracy in any country. As Simiyu (2013) contends, “the political temperament of a society is convolutedly interwoven with the diversity and quality of media content to which it is exposed to” (p.1). Because of the critical role of the media, many societies have today given it various privileges including constitutional protection of its work. In Kenya, for instance, the freedom of the media is expressly protected in Article 34 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 (COK, 2010).

Despite these critical roles that the media ought to play in society, the mass media has often been accused of failing to live up to the expectations (Coronel, 2013; Makohka, 2010; Tiffen, 2014). The media, as Coronel (2013) writes, is hobbled by many factors including meddling by monopolistic owners, draconian laws and sometimes, the threat of brute force. These obstacles eventually affect the journalistic principles of fairness, accuracy, independence, integrity, balance, accountability and objectivity.

Before narrowing down to the press in Kenya, this paper will briefly focus on media ownership and attendant challenges elsewhere in the world. There have been protestations,

for instance in the United Kingdom, of open dalliance between powerful and monolithic news corporations and the political elite. Studies by Doyle (2002) as well as by Seaton and Curran (1997) have demonstrated how media owners have used their outlets in pursuit of their commercial and political interests. They give example such as Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, Time Warner among others (see also Nichols, 2004; Simiyu, 2013; Tiffen, 2014).

According to Tiffen (2014), Murdoch has consistently supported the conservative party in the UK and the Republicans in the US using his vast media empire. However, other authors such as McKnight (2013) claim that Murdoch is driven by business interests and supported Labour in 1997, 2001 and 2005 (See chapter two for details). A close relationship between a section of British politicians and the management at News International, the newspaper wing of Murdoch's News Corp conglomerate was exposed during investigations on the phone hacking scandal in 2011 (Nichols, 2004; Tiffen, 2014). Such findings offer some evidence of possible editorial meddling by forces outside the newsroom.

1.2 The Press in Kenya

The above concerns of editorial interference have equally been raised in Kenya. Mbeke, Ugangu & Okello-Or-lale (2010) as well as Nyabuga (2015) argue that commercialization of the Kenyan media industry driven by obsessive pursuit of profitability is a threat to editorial independence. As such, media often abrogate its role of being independent watchdogs, sometimes deliberately switching off its lenses to government or corporate scrutiny in order to suit their private purpose. This point is reinforced by the Committee to Protect Journalist (2015) which concludes that advertisers in Kenya wield immense powers, including “the ability to plant stories, influence editorial decisions and even ask that stories be spiked” (P. 8).

Nyabuga (2015) concludes that the commercial pressure, coupled with the desire to increase circulation pushes editors to engage in sensational journalism where editorial content is dictated by its possibility to generate advertising revenue.

The other challenge is media concentration where a few politically connected individuals and business organisations control the entire industry (Nyabuga, 2015; Nyanjom, 2012; Makokha, 2010). The three scholars contend that media concentration has obstructed diversity of opinion which is a setback to democracy and an impediment to accountability and integrity. Giving examples of Kenya's five dominant media outlets — The Standard Group, The Nation Media Group, Royal Media Services, Radio Africa Group and Mediamax Network — Nyanjom (2012) regrets the influential media outlets are owned by only a few but well-connected oligarchs. In fact, he notes that leading political families who are subjects of heavy media coverage hold a substantial stake in the media in Kenya. For instance, ex-President Daniel Moi, his family and associates own approximately 85 per cent of the Standard Group, rendering other shareholders inconsequential in terms of key decisions. Recent studies however (see for example, Obuya, 2021; Mwita, 2021) makes no mention of Moi's shareholding ratio but confirms his dominance as the holder of majority stakes.

The situation at Nation is not different. Nyanjom (2012) writes that Ismaili Muslim leader, Aga Khan, is the single largest shareholder of the Nation Media Group. Although Aga Khan is not a politician in Kenya and his hand might be unnoticeable to the average employee at Nation Media Group, Nyamora (2007) argues that his massive shareholding “must be significant in determining editorial policy and practice” (p.20). Nyamora, a former employee of the Nation, claims that Aga Khan has for a long time, always been “conscious” that his paper should not be at loggerheads with the State and as such engineers various editorial

changes.

Apart from meddling by owners, the other challenge facing the media is the government's intolerance of media freedom, and a strong desire to curtail it (Gathigi, 2017; Mbeke, 2008; Ugangu, 2015). In 1993, State agencies vandalised the Fotoform printing press, the then publisher of the opposition leaning newspaper, the People (Mbeke, 2008). As Mbeke writes, in 2006, a different administration under Mwai Kibaki staged a daring raid on the Standard Group: The Standard newspaper and its television subsidiary, KTN. Security officers involved in the raid roughed up staff, dismantled the press, burnt thousands of newspaper copies and switched off KTN for 24 hours.

1.3 The Jubilee administration

The Jubilee administration was formed after Kenya's 2013 general election in which Uhuru Kenyatta was elected president and William Ruto his deputy (Cheeseman, Lynch & Willis, 2013). The victory of the duo had a global interest because at the time of their election, both were facing crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court (Kendall, 2014). The election was also marred with several controversies, including the results being challenged at the country's apex court (Cheeseman, Lynch & Willis, 2013). The three scholars argue that although the results were upheld, the Supreme Court decision triggered political disquiet in opposition strongholds that left the country badly divided.

So with the ICC cases hanging over their necks and a questionable electoral victory, the issue of legitimacy of the Jubilee administration started lingering right from day one (Cheeseman, Lynch & Willis, 2013). Some scholars (see for example, Simiyu, 2013) have suggested that the ICC trial and the legitimacy question largely influenced the relationship between the Jubilee administration and the media. As they started their rule, Uhuru invited top editors to

State House to strike a friendly rapport. However, some critics have said this is where the rain started beating the Kenyan media as it amounted to going to bed with the government (Onyando, 2018). But the friendly demeanour was not to continue for long before the government embarked on various strategies to cripple the media. These strategies included enactment of draconian laws hardly a year after they took power (Nyabuga, 2015).

Throughout their first term in office, the Jubilee administration was rocked by claims of major corruption scandals (Onyando, 2018). According to Onyando (2018), a vibrant opposition and unyielding civil society kept the government on its toes. However, he regrets media coverage was uninspiring, dogged by coercion, co-option and brown envelope journalism.

After a protracted electioneering process in 2017, Uhuru and Ruto were re-elected for a another five-year term. This divisive, long fought election also put media coverage into sharp focus (Mwita, 2021; Onyando, 2018). In compliance with the Constitution 2010, Jubilee's ten-year rule ends in August 2022.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

In its 2016 edition, African Media Barometer claims that over the preceding three years, there were noticeable challenges on the media landscape, which pointed to increasing self-censorship in newsrooms, both by reporters and editors. Mwita (2021) equally notes that trust in the Kenyan media as an institution has deteriorated in recent years. He cites a 2020 GeoPoll survey conducted for Internews which showed that 64 per cent of Kenyans “don't completely” trust the media. Despite these reports, there has been no cogent study to explain why there is increased self-censorship in the newsrooms. Equally, there is no clear answer as to why trust in the media is deteriorating. Although some studies have suggested that there is increased editorial interference, they have not elaborated on the impact this is having on

journalistic practice in Kenya. These studies have also not explored in details the role of media owners and the government of the day on the said editorial interference.

The argument of increased self-censorship in newsrooms is reinforced by David Ohito, a veteran journalist whose views are contained in a report by the Committee to Protect Journalists (2015). Ohito talks of unprecedented meddling of editorial content never witnessed a decade ago in the newsrooms. The irony, however, is that Kenya enacted a new Constitution in 2010 with a robust provision for fundamental human rights and freedoms (Ugangu, 2015). Article 33 and 34 of Kenya's 2010 Constitution provides for the exercise of the freedom of expression and of the media. However, despite this powerful constitutional provision, there has been allegation of serious editorial interference in Kenya since Jubilee administration took over in 2013. This is buttressed by, for example, the sanctioning of journalists critical of government. For instance, Nation's ex-Special Project's Editor Denis Galava was fired for allegedly penning a stinging editorial against the State. His sacking and that of celebrated cartoonist Godfrey Mwapembwa, popularly known as Gado, stirred an international outcry on press freedom. The Independent, one of the largest newspapers in the United Kingdom carried a detailed story: Aga Khan accused of squeezing Kenya press freedom after newspaper sacks cartoonist and journalist (Stewart, 2016). Gathara (2017) and Warah (2021) have also alluded to owner induced sackings at the Nation. Mwita (2021) quoting Galava, a former editor at both the Nation and the Standard says "the Jubilee government has destroyed the news ecosystem making it impossible for good journalism to pay." (P. 22)

Whichever way you look at it, our journalism is under assault — from loss of talent to financial pressures and a listless government whose instinctive reaction to critical journalism is 'stop advertising with this company,' 'sack this writer/editor' or 'we'll

cancel your licence.’ There’s literally no room to do critical journalism anymore (Mwita, 2021, p. 22)

Allegations of the State’s hidden hand in editorial decisions, including the powers to hire and fire came back to the limelight in early 2018 – exactly three months after Jubilee rode back to power for a second term. Deputy President’s Spokesman threatened a Nation journalist for unspecified consequences, including getting him sacked (Nation Reporter, 2018, Onyando, 2018). In the same month, the government shut-down Kenya’s three leading private TV stations –KTN, NTV and Citizen for rebuffing a government directive to give a blackout to an opposition meeting (Mwita, 2021; Cherono, 2018, Onyando, 2018)

Peace Pen Communication (2018), a media monitoring report on the coverage of Kenya’s 2017 polls concluded that majority of media owners, editors and journalists took sides in the political contest. By doing so, they failed to provide correct information to the voters for whom the knowledge was key to the choices they made. The report states that the inability to stay true to the journalistic code of conduct jeopardised the lives of journalists who are seen by the public as a representation of their firms. As such, many journalists were attacked in the campaign arena for allegedly being propaganda machines (PPC, 2018). The monitoring report also says that the bias claims led NASA to call for a temporary boycott of Nation Media Group products. But perhaps the biggest criticism on the Kenyan Media – Nation Media Group, Standard Group and Royal Media Services – was their inability to declare poll tallies after committing significant resources for the exercise as part of enhancing accountability and transparency (PPC, 2018).

As the biggest advertisers in Kenya, there are also concerns that the national as well as the 47 county governments are increasingly using their advertising power to influence media content (Mwita, 2021; African Media Barometer, 2016; Nyabuga, 2015). In fact, the national

government has set up a centralised Government Advertising Agency (GAA) which according to African Media Barometer (2016) is an avenue to influence editorial content as media houses perceived to be anti-government are starved of advertising revenue. GAA was established in 2015 but was given more teeth to bite in early 2017 by the introduction of a State-owned publication called MyGov (PPC, 2018). The publication carries government ads which are circulated by inserting in major daily newspapers on fortnight or sometimes on a weekly basis. The challenge, however, as Peace Pen Communication (2018) points out, is that the editorial content in MyGov cannot be edited by media houses because of the contractual nature of the deal. “This obviously violates the cardinal rule of fact-checking, accuracy and balance in any news article published by a newspaper that is worth its salt” (p.14). In summary, newspapers are compelled to carry content whose accuracy they cannot vouch for. In this way also, the gate-keeping role of editors is donated to third parties outside the newsroom to satisfy commercial needs.

1.5 Objectives

The main objective is to examine the effects of media ownership on editorial performance during the Jubilee regime.

The specific objectives are:

1. To assess levels of ownership influence on editorial performance during the Jubilee regime.
2. To examine factors informing ownership influence on editorial performance in Kenya.
3. To identify areas of editorial content that are susceptible to media ownership influence in Kenya

4. To determine the effects of media ownership on professional journalistic practice in Kenya.

1.6 Research Questions

- i. What is the level of ownership influence on editorial performance during the Jubilee regime?
- ii. What are the factors informing ownership influence on journalistic performance in Kenya?
- iii. What areas of editorial content are susceptible to media ownership influence in Kenya?
- iv. What are the effects of media ownership on professional journalistic practice in Kenya?

1.7 Significance of the study

This study will add to the corpus on state interference in editorial independence and what effects that intrusion has on journalism in Kenya. This will contribute to the knowledge on what has happened in Kenya under the Jubilee administration. The study will also be an important reference on the relationship between media ownership and editorial content.

1.8 Rationale and Justification

Free media is a critical contributor to good governance and empowerment of the citizenry. Moreover, a pluralistic, free and vibrant media is a catalyst for accountability, respect to the rule of law and justice. Lack of transparency through easy access to information creates a loophole for corruption which is a major threat to developing countries. As such, press freedom and good governance are not mutually exclusive. Consequently, the mass media must not only be seen to be champions of good governance, but must also be dedicated in

spearheading public interest journalism. Accordingly, claims of editorial interference are a rich area for scholarly research.

1.9 Scope

This is a case study of Kenya's three leading newspapers – the Nation, Standard and the Star. The study would however be limited to a period of nine years during which the Jubilee administration has been in power. This therefore means that the focus of the study would be between the years 2013 and 2021.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to media ownership and editorial independence. It begins by first defining editorial independence and explains why freedom of the press is critical. It then looks at media independence from a global and regional perspective before narrowing down to the Kenyan case. It takes a detailed review of the changes that have taken place in the Kenyan media landscape from the time of independence to date, delving deep into how the various administrations related with the media and media entrepreneurs.

2.1 Editorial Independence vis-à-vis editorial influence

Editorial independence is broadly seen as the freedom by editors to choose what to publish, guided by their own logic, without undue external influence or pressure (see for example, Gade, 2008; Griffiths, 2010; Harber, 2004). Lapena (2009) defines editorial independence as the concept where editors as the gatekeepers practice total authority over editorial content. Other scholars (for example Walulya, 2008) contend that editorial independence must also involve the freedom to select the journalists to hire and fire. The concept of editorial independence is always linked to Habermasian ideal on the autonomy of the public sphere. Habermas (2006) argues that the autonomy of the media as a public sphere should be guarded from political and economic forces. He contends that this can only happen if a self-regulating media guards its autonomy from undue influence from its environment. This concept of media independence is closely interwoven with other ideals of understanding the role of the media, particularly in liberal-democratic societies. These include press freedom, media as the fourth estate, watchdog role of the media, critique of power and investigative journalism (Karppinen and Moe, 2016). The two scholars say the positive connotations make media independence an attractive concept for those assessing the functioning of the media and for

media organisations themselves to gain credibility.

2.2 A global perspective of editorial interference

The desire by journalists to have an independent media was boldly expressed when African journalists and practitioners met in Windhoek, Namibia in 1991 and unanimously endorsed having a vibrant, free and pluralistic media. The concept that has come to be known as the Windhoek declaration states among others, that maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation and economic development (Windhoek Declaration, 1991). However, despite the concept being endorsed by UNESCO's General Conference, editorial independence is still under threat even in the most developed democracies.

In the United Kingdom, for instance, media owners have used their newspaper titles to advance their commercial and political interests (Curan & Seaton, 1997; Doyle, 2002). They cite examples such as the late Robert Maxwell (The Mirror), Victor Mathews (Daily Express) and Rupert Murdoch and their sweeping control of the strategic, political and commercial direction of their outfits.

Rupert Murdoch's media conglomerate, for instance, has often been used by scholars to illustrate how ownership influences editorial content (Doyle, 2002; Nichols, 2004; Tiffen, 2014). This is mainly because of his monopolistic control as the largest media entrepreneur in both Australia and in Britain. In Australia, his publications include about two thirds of daily urbanite circulation, a concentration of control not matched by any proprietor in any other democratic country (Nichols, 2004). Tiffen (2014) contends that Murdoch supported the Conservative Party and then Prime Minister Margret Thatcher in 1979 polls against the Labour Party mainly through the Sun, one of the country's most selling newspapers. He says

as an astute entrepreneur, Murdoch has consistently supported the Conservative Party. However, unlike other media entrepreneurs, Murdoch is flexible and is ready to switch sides and align himself with the winning team. For example, in 1997, the Sun supported Labour, and in 2001 and 2005 Murdoch's British papers supported Blair (McKnight, 2013). Bagehot (2003) says: "For Mr Murdoch, while politics is important, it is business that drives him. To an extent, politics is only a means to an end. The idea of deploying his vast media outlets in partisan political campaign is driven by selfish interest."

For example, McKnight (2014) says Murdoch set for himself three goals after using his media empire to help Tony Blair ascend to power. The goals were: protect his media business, get unrestricted personal access to Blair and be able to influence foreign policy. As McKnight notes, he achieved all of them. Reflecting on Blair's criticism of aggressive media during his tenure at 10 Downing Street, Steven Glover (2007) wrote in the Daily Mail: "For most of his 10 years as Prime Minister [Blair received] a more approving and docile press than any British leader in living memory,"

But Murdoch's interference goes beyond Britain as Tiffen (2014) explains. In the US, Murdoch's media conglomerates have often supported Republicans. In 1980, his paper, the New York Post, endorsed Jimmy Carter as President (Nichols, 2004). When Murdoch acquired the New York Post, the paper changed its editorial policy from liberal stance to a conservative and populist one (Tiffen, 2014). Murdoch's Fox News is seen as the most partisan and right wing TV Station ever established in the US (McCormick, 2004). Kurtz (2005) concludes that Fox's commercial success has been based on very opinionated journalism.

To signal the dalliance between political elite and media managers, in 2007 David Cameron hired Andy Coulson, a top editor of the Rupert Murdoch's News of the World, to be the Communication Director of the Conservative Party (Braw, 2014). Coulson was later to be confirmed in a similar position in government when Cameron became Prime Minister. The phone hacking scandal in Britain, the subsequent cover-up and the support News of the World received from the politician in 2011 is also a classical demonstration of the friendship that exist between political elite and the media (Braw, 2014).

2.2 Regional Perspective on Media interference

Some scholars (for example Nwanko, 2000; White, 2012) have documented cases of repressive African States that have never been at ease with a vibrant free press. The factors impeding free press in most of these countries include inhibiting legislation, self-censorship from fearful journalists, bribery in newsrooms and the insidious tactic of journalism for development (White, 2012). However, the biggest obstacle to both free speech and freedom of the media in Africa is a hostile legal regime (Ogbondah, 2002). But the new subtle tactic of control, away from ruthless crackdown on journalist that was prevalent in the 1980's and the 1900's, is using advertising as a weapon to influence media content (White, 2012). This means that independent media that are unwilling to conform are starved of advertising revenue which is the biggest source of income for media in Africa. Another scheme used to influence content and strangle opposition views is the allocation of Radio frequencies and TV licenses. This point is better argued by White (2012) who says that in many African countries, the frequencies and licenses have been allocated to individuals pliant to the State. This therefore means the role of the media as a public watchdog of government excesses is thoroughly compromised. But still in many cases, existing relations amongst the ruling governments and private media in Africa have always been defined by tension and conflict. Ogandimu (2007) writes that in cases where the press operated without tension, there was

always the likelihood that it could have been intimidated or has been compelled to play the media role of the ruling government. Ogbondah (2007) evaluated the media laws across different African states which were undergoing transition. He established that the major pitfalls to the realisation of free press and independent media was the lack of goodwill from the new leaders to enforce constitutionalism, more so backing all the provisions of media laws. The culture of curtailing media freedom is traced to dictatorial political parties which had constitutions that limited party members from expression of their personal opinions (Ogbondah, 2007). Writing about the state of media independence in Uganda for instance, Odongo (2012) concludes that journalists were highly reserved and cautious when it came to presenting opinion on critical issues relating to government obligations. He writes that fear and lack of job security greatly curtailed their freedoms of expression and objectivity. The finding was corroborated by Amnesty International (2011) report which found that journalists in Uganda censored themselves by avoiding discussion of sensitive political topics that touched on government operations. Walulya (2008) in a study on the role of Uganda media in reporting corruption found that the media ability to report corruption was systematically curtailed by unfriendly press laws and apathetic desire among the media practitioners to consolidate capacity that is capable of objectively critiquing the governing regime. Similarly, the media environment in South Africa, initially thought to be one of the freest in Africa, seriously deteriorated under President Jacob Zuma (Freedom House, 2017). The leadership of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), sought to limit coverage of violent protests in the run-up to local elections, and fired journalists who protested the directive (Freedom House, 2017).

2.3 Historical perspective of media independence in Kenya

2.3.1 Post-Colonial Kenya

According to Abuoga and Mutere (1988) both the Kenyatta and Moi regimes ensured a strict control of the media for their strategic political reasons. However, the control was disguised as a question of national interest, necessary to focus the energies of a young nation on development while at the same time ensuring national unity and peace (Abuoga & Mutere, 1988). During these days, KBC, initially called the Voice of Kenya, was simply a government mouthpiece (Mbeke, Ugungu & Okello-Orlale, 2010). The three scholars write that dissenting voices were locked out from the airwaves while conformers were given time on both radio and TV stations. Kenya's post-colonial media was in fact seen by the government bureaucrats as part of the state, a partner in development but not as an independent watchdog (Nyabuga, 2015). In 1968, for instance, the government enacted the Official Secrets Act in a bid to stem leakage of critical information that was exposing it to political and public pressure (Mak'Ochieng, 2000). Over the years, the tight control gradually became the unofficial government policy. Ironically however, government bureaucrats maintained that Kenya cherished freedom of speech and that the State was not interested in media censorship (Mak'Ochieng, 2000; Odero, 2000).

As has been documented by several scholars (Abuoga & Mutere, 1988; Mbeke, Ugungu & Okello-Or-lale, 2010; Odero, 2000) the absurdity of both the Kenyatta and the Moi administrations is that they expected the media to adopt the official government position all the time. This was demonstrated in 1975 after the assassination of prominent politician, J.M. Kariuki and the media reporting that followed, particularly by the Nation whose policy then was to support the government (Odero, 2000). According to Odero (2000), despite widespread speculation that J.M. Kariuki had been assassinated, the Nation chose to report the government position that the politician had fled the country to Zambia where his plane

appeared to have crashed. During that time, an independent publication, known as the Target which was at the forefront, investigating the J.M. Kariuki disappearance itself became a target of the State for its stand. The editor of the publication, a Mr Okite, was kicked out from his job and detained soon after. He was latter jailed without trial and by the time of his release, he had turned blind (Odero, 2000). Meanwhile, the State broadcaster, the Voice of Kenya, remained under a tight grip during both the Moi and the Kenyatta administrations (Abuoga & Mutere, 1988).

According to Odero (2000), the dalliance between media owners and the political elite in Kenya started way back in the 1970's and the 1980s. But Bougalt (1995) and Winsbury (2000) say it began even before independence. For instance, the Standard, then known as the East African Standard was hostile to Kenya's self-rule and became the voice of the colonialists. After Kenya attained self-rule, Lornho Group, the then publishers of the Standard, adopted a surprising tendency of appointing individuals with close links with the president as the company's chairmen (Odero, 2000). Such appointments were necessary for the media house to carry favour with State House. For instance, during the Kenyatta administration, Udi Gecaga, the President's son in law, was Lorho's chairman. During the Moi era, Mark Too, a close Moi ally served as the chairman of the media outlet (see also, Nyanjom, 2012). Because of Lornho and Agha Khan's business interests in other sectors of the economy, it was imperative that their media businesses be pro-government as a scheme to protect their business empire (Nyabuga, 2015). One major factor that fundamentally influenced Moi's attitude towards the media was the 1982 attempted coup (Mbeke, 2010). In the years that followed, the government was very intolerant of any journalist who tried to criticise it. Odero (2000) says for example that in 1987, a Kenyan journalist, Paul Amina, was arrested and detained for following up a story that was seen by State mandarins as an embarrassment to the government. He argues that although the disappearance of the journalist

was well known to all media outlets, they did not report about it. Prior to Amina's arrest, three other journalists were jailed alongside tens of other Kenyans under the Preservation of Public Security Act (Odero, 2000). The accusation was that they were part of an opposition movement known as Mwakenya. The relentless harassment and threats to journalist led to the institutionalisation of self-censorship. According to Odero (2000) most publications that declined to toe the line were forced to close shop (see also Ugangu, 2015). Giving the example of Beyond Magazine, a publication of the Kenyan National Council of Churches, Ugangu (2015) says the outfit was shut in 1987 after revelation that the magazine was set to publish an open letter by then opposition leader Oginga Odinga to Moi. In 1983, the Moi administration established the Kenyan Times as a propaganda machine for the State to counter the established newspapers, mainly the Standard and the Nation (Odero, 2000). Thus, even in these early postcolonial days, the government realised that media control was important for stemming criticism, consolidating power and ensuring that the masses only played a passive role in governance (Mbeke, Ugangu & Okello-Orlale, 2010)). According to the three scholars, this was achieved through enactment of draconian legislation that curtailed free speech and other forms of dissent. As such, they conclude that Kenya's history in the 1970's and 1980's was marked by media interference, arbitrary arrests of journalists, torture and detention. The consequence was an intimidated industry with self-censorship being the order of the day.

2.3.2 The Kenyan Media Scene After 1992

In the closing week of 1991, then President Moi grudgingly repealed Section 2(A) of the then Constitution and re-introduced multi-party democracy (Throup and Hornsby, 1982). As Wanyande (1996) contends, 1992 was not only a turning point for Kenyans but also the media. He writes that access to the press for those agitating for political change became

critical and began to influence views on the role of the media in Kenya at the time. The mass media was now expected to act as change agents or assume the civil society-like roles by agitating for human rights, better conditions for life and deepening of the democratic gains (Wanyande, 1996). However, some writers (for instance Odero, 2000) argue that despite the optimism, press freedom at the time still remained a tall order. That was mainly due to the numerous prohibitive media laws that were never repealed despite the ongoing changes. These included the Public Order Act, the Defamation Act, the Preservation of Public Security Act, the Books and Newspapers Act and the Media Act (see also, Mbeke, Ugangu & Okello-Orlale, 2012; Ngungi, 2006).

Overall, however, the 1990s was the turning point of the media siege that had obtained in the 1980s (see for example Ali, 2009). The 1990's kicked off the liberalisation of the economy and many players including the private sector began building commercial enterprises including in the communication sector (Ali, 2009; Bourgault, 1995). As a result of the liberalisation, Ali (2009) writes, Kenya was soon flooded by many players in the mass media. However, Ugangu (2015) questions whether this was true liberalisation of the Kenyan media because radio frequencies were dished out to regime friendly and pro-establishment individuals as opposed to the honest and deserving cases (see also Kanyinga; Nyabuga 2015; Okello & Akech, 2010). Nyabuga (2015) says for instance that when KTN was established in 1990, its then owner Jared Kagwana was a known government apologist. Thus KTN, just like KBC, was conformist and starved the country of serious information – “the oxygen necessary for effective participatory political process in any modern polity” (Nyabuga, 2015, p.54). But even then, violent assault on press freedom continued. In 1993, for instance, Fotoform printing press, the printer of The People Newspaper (owned by opposition politician Kenneth Matiba) was dismantled by the police for what the State claimed was printing a seditious article (Nyabuga, 2015). In 1994, Bedan Mbugua and David Makali were sentenced to five

months and four months in prison respectively for publishing an article that were allegedly in contempt of court (Kanyiga, 2014; Makali, 2003)

2.3.3 The Kenyan media in the Kibaki era

Mbeke (2010) identifies at least four factors that influenced the government's attitude towards the media during President Kibaki's ten-year rule. These are clamour for a new constitution, disputed 2007 presidential polls and the subsequent bloodbath, corruption and strong opposition politics. For instance, following media exposure of the Anglo Leasing scandal, one of the country's biggest and most documented sleaze, the Kibaki administration became hostile to the media. Mbeke (2010) contends that the malevolence was manifested when armed police officers raided Standard Group headquarters in 2004, burnt newspapers, roughed-up journalists and illegally confiscated media equipment under the guise of threat to national security. Similarly, he argues, the administration's desire to control the media came to the fore when it banned live broadcasting in the middle of announcing flawed election results in 2007. Makokha (2010), gives a detailed account of how the State sought to control the media after the bungled 2007 polls. He writes that on the morning of 30 December 2007, media executives and editorial directors of Kenya's leading media outlets, both print and electronic were summoned to the Office of the President, Harambee House. According to Makokha (2010), himself a former senior editor, the media executives were instructed to use their media outlets to prepare the country for an unexpected announcement. As a sign that the State was keen on using the media to buttress Kibaki's controversial victory, the electoral body soon after announced that Kibaki had won, although the tallying process was far from over (Makokha, 2010). Election observers in the 2007 polls strongly rebuked KBC for its open bias against opposition leader Raila Odinga while openly championing Kibaki's re-election (see also Mbeke, Ugungu & Okello-Orlale, 2010)

Under the guise of preservation of national security following the 2007 post-election violence, the government slapped a ban on live broadcast on the eve of 2008 (Mbeke, 2010; Kanyiga, 2014 and Ugangu, 2015). The move was seen as a deliberate attempt to give a blackout to the opposition that had strongly disputed the results (see for example, Media Council of Kenya, 2009).

Nyabuga (2015) writes that the Kibaki administration sank to a new low in regard to freedom of the press in 2006. This was after State security agencies descended on the Standard Group, raided the Standard Newspaper as well as its KTN subsidiary (see also, Kanyiga, 2014; Ugangu 2015). The raid was motivated by the Standard Group's bold exposure of the Anglo Leasing scandal (Mbeke, 2008). The government took responsibility for the raid with the late Internal Security Minister John Michuki saying it was a warning salvo to rogue media outlets and its journalists (Nyabuga, 2015). During the raid, the State confiscated and burnt thousands of newspaper copies, beat up overnight staff and dismantled the press (Mbeke, 2008). Security officers involved in the raid also switched off KTN for almost 24 hours (see also, Nyabuga, 2015).

2.3.4 Media in the Jubilee era (2013-2018)

August 2010 marked a watershed for Kenya's democracy: media freedom, freedom of expression and right to access to information was guaranteed in the new constitution (COK, 2010). However, Ugangu (2015) argues that while government official's public rhetoric is unanimously supportive of constitutionally guaranteed freedom of the press, their actions and attitude towards the media have not demonstrated the same spirit. African Media Barometer (2016) concludes that media objectivity and impartiality in Kenya has waned over the past

three years. Some scholars like Ugangu (2015) have likened changes to the country's media regulatory landscape that began soon after Jubilee rode to power to a continuation of the repression in the 1990s.

For instance, the enactment of the Kenya Information and Communications (Amendment) Act 2013 and the Kenya Security Laws 2014 sparked outrage of government intent to control the media (Nyabuga, 2015; Ugangu, 2015). Quoting Article 19 East Africa, Ugangu (2015) writes that the Kenya Information and Communication (Amendment) Act 2013 erodes some of the fundamental constitutional rights while giving the government latitude for "silent" control over the mass media.

The Information and Communications (Amendment) Act, 2013, provided for the creation of the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) and a Multimedia Appeals Tribunal (Nyabuga, 2015; Ugangu, 2015). The problem as Ugangu (2015) points out is that the law envisages an independent CA yet the amendment gives the president the powers to appoint the authority's board chairperson. Out of the authority's seven board members, four are appointees of the State, effectively tilting the control of the critical institution towards the government.

Emphasising why the control of CA by the State would be disastrous for the media, Ugangu (2015), summarises the role of the Authority as follows:

Other than the primary responsibility of regulating the telecommunications sector, the Authority is responsible for administering the broadcast content aspects of the act, developing media standards, and regulating and monitoring compliance with those standards (Ugangu, 2015, p.13).

On the other hand, the Multimedia Appeals Tribunal is mandated to hear complaints against

journalists, their publication and media outlets (Nyabuga, 2015). However, as Ugangu (2015) explains, the government also schemed to control this institution by skewing the appointment process. The tribunal should have between five and seven board members. Nonetheless, the Cabinet Secretary in charge of ICT has the powers to declare vacancies and assemble the selection panel. The selection panel is required to provide three names for each position from which the Cabinet Secretary will eventually select his preferred candidates (See for example, Nyabuga, 2015; Ugangu, 2015). The Act also gave leeway for the Tribunal to slap heavy fines on individual journalists and their media houses, an action that has the potential of introducing self-censorship (Nyabuga, 2015; Ugangu, 2015).

A special report by Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ, 2015) also highlighted the setbacks that free speech has faced in the Jubilee era. The CPJ report cited the case where a news article highlighting excessive expenditures by the office of the president, published by the Standard newspaper, angered the highest office in the land. The editors from the newspaper were reportedly summoned by State House and read the riot act. Further, the newspaper published a formal apology. Subsequently, the reporter who authored the explosive article was fired (see also, Mwita, 2021; Onyando, 2018)

According to a report by Peace Pen Communications (PPC, 2018) one of the most stinging criticisms levelled against the Kenyan media is in regard to its coverage of the 2017 polls. In a media monitoring report dubbed Media Besieged, the PPC report says that ahead of the August 8, 2017 polls, the Communication Authority warned media houses against independent tallying of presidential results. However, major media houses including the Nation and the Standard Group deployed resources to monitor the voting process in a bid to enhance accountability. Surprisingly, no tallies were ever done (PPC, 2018). Similarly, there is a blunt indictment of the Kenyan media by the European Union Election Observation

Mission (EUEOM) report (2018). The EUEOM says the media did not independently scrutinise the tallying of votes at the constituency level but instead turned themselves into conveyor belts, only focusing on the controversial statistics provided by IEBC. The EUEOM (2018) concludes that the main broadcast channels leaned towards one or the other camp. PPC (2018) also writes that although the coverage of the nullification of the presidential election was given prominence, the Kenyan media remained cautious and fearful and in some instances appeared to shift blame to the judiciary for being hell bent on “destabilizing the State through the ruling” (p.12)

The EUEOM (2018) report also states that given that most influential media outlets have links to the country's political elite, journalists reported varying degrees of self-censorship when reporting. The report attributed the censorship to business and political interests of the media owners as well as fears of possible withdrawal of government advertising.

According to the EUEOM (2018), after the contested 2017 polls, many journalists were not only blocked by the police and declined access to critical information, they were also assaulted. As political violence deteriorated, the report states that on 17 November, the Communication Authority of Kenya ordered all electronic media to “cease airing live coverage of political events with immediate effect” (EUEOM, 2018, p.37). The report however says there was no legal basis to the restriction and section of the media ignored the directive.

Many publications (see for example, Africa Media Barometer 2016; PPC, 2018) say that the Government Advertising Agency (GAA) was formed with the hidden agenda of influencing editorial content and given more teeth in early 2017 (an election year) through the introduction of a government publication known as MyGov. PPC (2018) contends that the publication which carries government ads is circulated by inserting it in major newspapers on

a weekly or fortnightly basis. However, because of the contractual nature between the government and the media houses, the content of MyGov cannot be edited. This, as PPC (2018) posits, affects the editorial independence of media houses by carrying news articles that may not meet their professional standards. African Media Barometer (2016) concludes “...consolidating advertising in one department is likely to intimidate media into toeing the government line” (P.20).

Another fundamental development in regards to Jubilee administration’s relationship with the media happened in the last week of January 2018. The government switched off four private TV stations, the longest in Kenyan history, for broadcasting live the mock swearing in of Opposition leader Raila Odinga as the ‘people’s’ president (Onyando, 2018; Mwita, 2021)

2.4 Media ownership, advertisement power and political connections

In their 1988 seminal work, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky argue that the mainstream mass media is effectively a propaganda machine for the elite in society. According to their propaganda model, many factors such as advertising, concentration of media ownership as well as government sourcing creates an inevitable conflict of interest that eventually makes mass media a propaganda tool for undemocratic elements. The two, however, point out that the media camouflages in a liberal court to protect itself from criticism.

Such views are buttressed by other scholars like McQuail (2010) who contends that the media like any sector is part of the global economic system with close ties with the political system. Media owners, local manufactures, influential corporate chiefs and the political elite are both at the apex of the society as wealthy individuals (Murphy, 1977). These individuals as

Murphy (1977) writes always think alike about political and economic issues. McQuil (2010) however regrets that the consequence of such a system is “reduction of independent media sources, concentration on the largest markets, avoidance of risks, and reduced investment in less profitable media tasks such as investigative journalism” (p.65).

Although the liberalisation of the Kenyan media was seen as a major triumph, concentration in which leading media outlets are owned by a few, politically connected individuals is a major challenge (Ali, 2009; Nyabuga, 2015, Ugangu, 2012). The Nation Media Group, The Standard Group, Royal Media Services, Radio Africa Group and Mediamax Network are owned by only a handful of oligarchs. The Nation Media Group which operates a leading Newspaper, TV Station, several radio stations and a powerful multimedia online media is controlled by the Agha Khan (Nyanjom, 2010). The Standard that owns two TV stations, a radio station as well as a Newspaper and online news website is largely controlled by the family of ex-President Moi (see also Obuya, 2021; Oriare, Okello-Orlale & Ugangu, 2010). Royal Media Services that operates the country’s leading TV station, Citizen TV and a record 11 radio stations is owned by S.K. Macharia, a man known to have deep political connection with the political elite (Nyanjom, 2010; Oriare, Okello-Orlale & Ugangu, 2010). Mediamax that runs K24 TV, The People Daily and a host of radio stations is associated with President Uhuru Kenyatta’s family (Nyanjom, 2012; Simiyu, 2003)

Because of the high stakes in Kenyan politics, politicians have taken advantage of the liberalisation of the media industry to invest in media (Nyanjom, 2012; Mbeke 2010). As such, politically influential and economically powerful individuals have a huge stake in the mass media industry in Kenya (Kayigah, 2014; Makokha, 2010). Quoting unnamed editor, Nyanjom (2012) writes:

As one editor observed, politicians have realised that acquiring votes through the airwaves is more cost-effective than traversing a constituency personally or using proxies, giving monetary or material favours (Nyanjom, 2012, p.41).

Various scholars and authors (for example Kayigah, 2014; Makokha, 2010; Nyanjon, 2012) have alleged outright bias in the media especially on political coverage. The NMG, for instance, was perceived to be anti-Moi yet the same media house championed Kibaki's political interests (Nyanjom, 2012). He argues that Nation supported Kibaki's re-election bid in 2007 and one of the company's directors was part of Kibaki's campaign machine. Because of Agha Khan's vast business interests in Kenya and that of his Ismaili community, he has often been a close associate of the Kikuyu business elite who saw Moi as an obstacle to economic growth (Nyanjom, 2012). Similarly, S.K. Macharia, the entrepreneur who owns Royal Media Services supported the "YES" plebiscite in 2005 and the Kibaki re-election in 2007 (Nyanjom, 2012; Mbeke, Ugungu & Okello-Orlale, 2010). Nyanjom (2012) concludes that the Kibaki administration had facilitated Macharia's acquisition of several radio frequencies.

But as Nyanjom (2012) contends, media owners often use their media outlets to advance own personal, commercial or political interests or those of their associates. As such, media concentration strangles diversity and plurality of opinion and is a major setback to democracy. Nyabuga (2015) writes:

"To leave the media in the hands of the powerful elite who may have little interest in issues of the marginalised and common people may have serious consequences on attempts to create the genuine nation-state that Kenya aspires to be," (Nyabuga, 2015, p. 30)

2.5 Theoretical framework

This study is supported by two theories, the propaganda model and the authoritarian theory.

These two theories will demonstrate why the research problem as explained above exists.

The propaganda model was introduced by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky to explain how systemic biases and propaganda work in the corporate mass media. In their 1988 seminal work, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Herman and Chomsky view private media as businesses interested in selling their products – readers, viewers and listeners – to their customers (advertisers) instead of people centered journalism.

The two scholars argue that the mainstream mass media is effectively propaganda machinery for the elite in society and “yet wears a liberal coat to protect itself from criticism from outsiders” (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, p.306). They argue that the media serve, and propagandize on behalf of the powerful societal interests that control and finance them. The representatives of these interests have important agendas and principles that they want to advance, and they are well positioned to shape and constrain media policy. Herman and Chomsky identify five filters that influence media productions: Media ownership, advertising (media funding), sourcing, right-wing corporate ‘flak’ and an ideology of anti-communism. They use these filters to explain why the media often serve as propagandists for the interests of the elite. For instance, because of concentration of media ownership, information presented to the public will be biased depending on the interests of the owners. Advertisers too call the shots because essentially, they are the financial engine of media houses without which media can hardly operate. Then there is the sourcing of news where the mass media is drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information mainly due to economic necessity and reciprocity of interest. The authenticity of news provided for example

by government news agencies such as the presidential press service can have elements of spin to serve political purposes.

We can relate this model to the happenings in Kenya. For instance, media ownership is highly concentrated with the Nation Media Group, Standard Group, Royal Media Services, Radio Africa Group and Media Max Network controlling huge percentage of the media market in Kenya. There is also over dependence on advertising as well as reliance on government sourcing.

The other theory in this study is the authoritarian theory. This is one of the four theories of the press postulated by Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm in their book titled “Four Theories of the Press”. The four theories of the press are popularly known as normative theories of communication.

According to the authoritarian theory, all forms of communication in any given jurisdiction are controlled by the government or its influential bureaucrats. Here, media is not permitted to criticise influential people or the government of the day. As such, there is government censorship on sensitive information or any media stories that negatively portray the state.

Licensing of media, content approval and even punishments are the other means used to curb full freedom of the press. Media is taken as a means to serve the interests of authorities and the state and to enhance powers of the ruling elite. Among the reasons for this is to achieve social order such as maintaining national peace and security.

In this theory, the needs of the people are inconsequential to the media. Instead, it thrives on setting agenda and serving propaganda.

The switching of three private TV stations for broadcasting live the mock swearing-in of Opposition leader Raila Odinga is an example of how the authoritarian theory has been used in Kenya. Onyando (2018) says President Uhuru Kenyatta had expressly threatened to shut down and revoke the license of any media house that would broadcast the event. Apart from taking the stations of air, police also laid siege at Nation seeking to arrest NTV General Manager Linus Kaikai and his colleagues Larry Madowo and Ken Mijungu who were the anchors in the studio that day (Onyando, 2018)

Mwita (2021) quoting Denis Galava, a former editor at both the Nation and the Standard says “the Jubilee government has destroyed the news ecosystem making it impossible for good journalism to pay.” (P. 22)

Whichever way you look at it, our journalism is under assault — from loss of talent to financial pressures and a listless government whose instinctive reaction to critical journalism is ‘stop advertising with this company,’ ‘sack this writer/editor’ or ‘we’ll cancel your licence.’ There’s literally no room to do critical journalism anymore (Mwita, 2021, p.22)

Conclusion

It’s clear from the review of literature that editorial interference in Kenya existed before independence and has remained to date. From the Kenyatta administration to the current Jubilee regime, reviewed literature suggest that all these four governments have always wanted to have their way in the media. Their strategies were however varied from arbitrary arrests and detention of journalists, skewed allocation of radio and TV frequencies, enactment of draconian media laws to violent attacks on newsrooms. It’s also clear that media owners close links with those in power is as old as the history of the press in Kenya. While the media was initially seen as a partner in development, the political elite came to realise that the mass

media could also be used to advance their political ambitions. This led to many political players acquiring stakes in the media industry. Media concentration and the use of advertising power to influence editorial content have also been prevalent in Kenyan media history.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study's primary concern was to analyze media performance during the Jubilee era with respect to media ownership and editorial content in Kenya. Doing this required the use of established scientific methodology, including appropriate and reliable data. This chapter discusses the research methods used and justifies their selection. Ong'ondo and Jwan (2020), define research methodology as the overall plan of the entire process that explains the choice of a particular paradigm, justifies a particular approach, highlights specific method(s) and describes the data generation techniques and analysis procedures. However, Kothari (2004) summaries research methodology as a way to systematically solve a research problem. This chapter discusses research design, target population, sampling, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, validity and reliability of the methodology and concludes with ethical considerations for this study.

3.2 Research Design

Various scholars (see for example, Green and Tull, 2009; Kothari, 2004 and Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2020) have proposed various definitions of research design. Kothari (2004) defines research design as the conceptual structure within which research is conducted. It, therefore, constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. This means that the design must constitute what the researcher will do from the beginning to the final analysis of data (Kothari, 2004; Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2020). Research design answers questions like, what is the study about? What type of data is required? What will be the sample size? Ong'ondo and Jwan (2020) as well as Kothari (2004) liken a research design to a house plan required before construction begins.

3.3 Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach because of the nature of the topic and the resultant research questions. Since the study enquires into media performance, it aimed to understand human action which falls in the realm of qualitative research (Kothari, 2004; Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2020). According to scholars of qualitative research, the approach is preferred by researchers who seek to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group or interactions from multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2007). This study too relied on respondents from diverse backgrounds to understand media performance in Kenya. As Silverman (2005) contends, qualitative research is preferred where informants are required to observe and describe their lives. In this case too, qualitative research is appropriate because it is aligned to the researcher's descriptive research design. As stated above, qualitative research targets in-depth data using multiple sources and techniques. As such, to obtain answers to the research questions, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with various respondents. These respondents were given opportunity to speak freely about the subject under study. As Malterud (2001) contends, qualitative research enables the exploration and analysis of real experiences by people in a given context. Similarly, qualitative research looks at study phenomena comprehensively to simplify its complexities for easy understanding of the context (Punch, 2005). Qualitative research was therefore useful in this study as it gave the respondents the opportunity to describe and explain pertinent issues related to media performance since the Jubilee administration took power in 2013.

3.4 Research method

The study adopted a case study research design as the primary method. A case study entails careful and a complete observation of a social unit, be that unit a person, a family, an institution, a cultural group or an entire community (Creswell, 2009; Kothari, 2004; Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2020). Kothari (2004) argues that a case study puts more emphasis on depth rather than breadth. It also leverages on numerous data sources to systematically evaluate a single person, a group or an organisation (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). A case study forms a good approach with a unit of analysis, making it possible to explore a particular research problem where queries are directed at establishing the causes of an event and also how it happened (Simons, 2009; Yin, 2009).

In this research, the case study was used to narrow down a wide area of research into few and easily researchable examples. Instead of analyzing media performance in Kenya by looking at all media outlets, including hundreds of radio stations, the researcher narrowed down on three daily newspapers. These are the Nation, the Standard and the Star newspapers. These three papers command a huge newspaper market share in Kenya (see Nyabuga, 2015; Obuya, 2021) and therefore are representative enough to draw valid and reliable conclusions. The researcher probed deeply and analysed intensively the role of media owners in editorial processes and whether this has impacted editorial independence.

3.5 Target Population

Target population refers to the entire set of units from which the study data was gathered and consequently used to make inferences (Kothari, 2003; Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Furthermore, target population defines specific units which will be covered by the generalization of the study findings (Dempsey, 2003). Kothari (2007) posits that all the items under consideration in any field of inquiry constitute a universe or population.

For this study, the target population were senior editors involved in direct supervision of content generation, packaging, processing and dissemination. However, to get multiple perspectives, known in research as data source triangulation (Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2020), the researcher also reached out to media scholars and the regulator: the Media Council of Kenya (MCK). MCK is an independent institution established to among others, promote and protect freedoms and independence of the media.

3.6 Sample Size and Sample Size determination

Sampling refers to the way research participants are selected and accessed (Mason, 2002). Other scholars such as Zikmund (2003) define sampling as the procedure where a small portion of the population is used to make conclusions about the whole. This means a sample is a subset of a population. Mason (2002) emphasizes that sampling and sample size determination should be done carefully because it has implications on the trustworthiness of the findings.

This study adopted a purposive sampling approach. Kothari (2004) refers to purposive sampling as deliberate sampling or non-probability sampling. In this study therefore, the researcher made a deliberate choice on the nature of respondents to be chosen to achieve what Ong'ondo and Jwan (2020) describe “as rich and thick data by affording the researcher quality access” (p.130). This sampling method also enabled the researcher to make a judgment on the value of input derived from interviewing a particular person. As Papoo (1997) posits, the need to utilize purposive sampling is influenced by the deliberate judgment by the researcher on the kind of information that a particular respondent will avail.

For this study, purposive sampling was preferred because it assumes not everyone in a newsroom or in the media is deeply knowledgeable to provide insights on the goings-on in the industry, especially on the sensitive issues like editorial interference. Experience and

seniority in the newsroom are therefore key factors that would determine whether a respondent is suitable for this study. The choice of scholars in this study, however, was determined largely by research interests. In addition to having practiced as journalists, most of the scholars chosen have widely authored and published academic papers in related areas. Lastly, the MCK was chosen because of its media monitoring role. The specific respondent from MCK has a wide experience and has served for many years as deputy to the MCK chief executive officer and was qualified to give a credible assessment of media performance.

Kothari (2004) warns that purposive sampling may give biased results especially when the population is not homogeneous. This is not, however, the case in this study as the respondents were chosen carefully, taking into consideration experience, seniority and ethnic diversity. And as Creswell (2007) emphasizes, this study selected participants with different perspectives to enhance the quality of data.

Mason (2002) contends that for purposive sampling, whether the sample is big enough to be statistically representative of the total population is not a major concern. She argues that the researcher should only ensure that the sample provides access to enough data that would adequately address the research questions. Despite this argument, other scholars such as (Yin, 2003) advises that the larger the respondents the better. In this study therefore, the researcher strove to get respondents that are statistically representative of the sample to enhance what Ongo'ndo and Jwan (2020) refers to as credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

In narrowing down on the appropriate respondents, the following factors were considered:

1. The ability of respondents to understand the topic of study.
2. Respondents' involvement in the Kenyan media industry; either as an active editorial manager, former editor, media scholar or media regulator.
3. Participants' willingness to give their time to the study.
4. The necessity to ensure that a large enough sample was interviewed in order to be reasonably sure that the results of the survey are accurate and conclusions are generalisable, credible and valid.

However, despite adherence to the above criteria, the following challenges were realized:

1. Some respondents were generally unwilling to share the information they have on the subject, saying it would be a betrayal of trust given to them by their media houses.
2. Time constraints, especially while interviewing media managers who have strict deadlines in the newsroom.
3. The other major challenge was brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. With in-person meetings discouraged, some respondents were unwilling to have physical meetings, forcing the researcher to interview them virtually.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments and Techniques

The study utilised in-depth interviews for data collection. This involves collection of detailed information regarding an area of interest and mostly uses probes as a way of getting details (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Rubin and Rubin (2005) say in-depth interviews are based on qualitative research philosophy and are more or less an extension of ordinary conversation. The interviewer, however, determines the next question as the discussion flows.

For this study, in-depth interviews were preferred for what Ong'ondo and Jwan (2020) argue is to know what “a participant in a research thinks, the attitude of that person and or to explore a person’s reasons for thinking in a certain way or for carrying particular perceptions or attitudes” (p.134). Secondly, the questions asked of respondents in this study were open-ended and required an explanation from the participants. Lastly, as Gillham (2000) notes, interviews are best used if the material is sensitive in character so that trust is involved. This study involved editorial managers talking about sensitive issues of the management or mismanagement of their media enterprises. As such, face-to-face interviews that require building confidence in the respondent, especially on why they can trust the researcher with the information was critical.

Through interviews, therefore, the respondents in this study were given a chance to explain in detail their views about media performance during the Jubilee regime. As Bower (1973) and vi in Jensen (2002) contend, the basic justification for interviewing is that “the best way to find out what people think about something is to ask them” (Bower, 1973 p.35). The interviews were semi-structured to allow for deeper exploration of responses by respondents, probing and exploring emerging dimensions that may not have been previously considered pertinent aspects of the study.

Kothari (2007) lists several advantages of interviews as opposed to other methods of data collection. These include, ability to generate more in-depth information, non-responses to information are diminished and greater flexibility to restructure questions especially when dealing with unstructured interviews.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity in research are used to underscore the trustworthiness or the extent to which a study meets the threshold of academic research. Creswell (2007) defines validity in

research as the consistency of research findings while reliability refers to the credibility of research findings (see also Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). In fact, Creswell (2003) concludes that the strength of any research lies in gaining valid and reliable information from credible and reliable sources. So how was trustworthiness achieved in this study? Firstly, the researcher ensured a diversity of respondents with varied perspectives, known in quantitative research as data source triangulation (Gillham, 2000; Mason, 2002; Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2020). This study involved senior editors, academics and a senior executive at the MCK. These individuals have many years of experience and were qualified to speak on the subject of study.

Secondly, the research procedure was made clear and detailed. As Yin (2003) suggests, the way to ensure dependability is to make clear and detailed description of the steps followed. He contends that to address the reliability problem “is to make as many steps operational as possible and to conduct research as if someone were always looking over our shoulder” (p.38).

Lastly, the researcher made every effort to ensure that he remains neutral and does not influence the findings. As Gillham (2000) argues, like all human beings, researchers can carry their prejudices and prior conceptualizations into the research process based on their education or experiences. However, the researcher was conscious of this from the outset and endeavoured to maintain an open mind.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The study was undertaken in the purview of highest ethical considerations. First, all information sourced from numerous academic material has been dutifully acknowledged. Secondly, before proceeding for fieldwork, the researcher obtained a duly signed certificate of fieldwork from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Nairobi.

The certificate served as proof to respondents that this study would be used for academic purposes only. In addition, the respondents were apprised of the purpose of the study and promised that their identities would be held with the highest level of confidentiality. Furthermore, information that may appear to point to its source was paraphrased to eliminate any likelihood of linking the opinions to their respondents. The researcher did not coerce or promise any material incentives for information contributed by any of the respondents and the researcher only sought input from participants driven by their own free will. To achieve objectivity, all the interviews for active editors were conducted outside the workplace. Where the respondents permitted, the interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis. However, since the subject of study was deemed “sensitive” by some practising journalists, the researcher only took notes to ensure all important responses were captured. Moreover, interviewees were asked to confirm that the interviews were not invading their privacy, and assured that where agreed, their anonymity would be maintained.

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis is the process of interpreting and making sense of data (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Creswell (2009) defines it as the process of sorting, cleaning and transforming raw data into useful information. This involves deduction and organization of the content into themes related to the research objectives. The researcher relied on raw respondent’s answers for various questions. In addition, comparison was made with the existing literature before drawing conclusions. The researcher also compared and contrasted the responses to establish possible patterns or trends.

The data analysis took place in four key stages: transcription, familiarization, identification of themes and interpretation. The researcher began by transcribing interviews or typing field notes. The next stage was to familiarize with the information before organising the content

into themes. The final step was to interpret the information by elaborating what it means.

Conclusion

This chapter begins by discussing the research approach and explains why a qualitative approach is preferred. It then delves into the research design. For this study, a case study research design was the best as supported by the reasons previously indicated. The chapter also examined sampling and the sampling procedure. Respondents were senior editors selected in three newsrooms in Kenya. Other respondents were media scholars and a participant from the MCK. The sampling procedure was purposive, meaning the researcher made a deliberate choice in deciding on the respondents. Also captured in this section is the data collection instrument and technique. The researcher explains why in-depth interviews were preferred. The chapter is concluded by discussing how the reliability and validity of the study was safeguarded.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETITION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on the pre-set objectives. The first section assesses levels of ownership influence on editorial performance during the tenure of the Jubilee administration. It provides personal accounts of editors, media scholars and MCK regarding editorial interference in three newsrooms and the place of media owners in this practice. It then examines areas of media coverage susceptible to ownership influence and factors informing ownership influence on editorial content. The chapter is concluded by looking at the effects of media ownership on professional journalistic practice in Kenya.

The analysis is presented in narratives using quotations, summaries and paraphrases from the above mentioned data sources. To enable the respondents relay first-hand experience, most of their testimonies are provided through first personal experience.

4.2 Media ownership and Editorial performance

One of the questions posed to editors interviewed for this study was: Is there interference with editorial content in your media house? There was unanimity among the respondents that there was some form of editorial tampering in the day-to-day operation of the newsroom. However, the respondents differed on whether media owners were directly involved in editorial meddling. The roles of other players, particularly editors and board of directors have come under sharp focus.

4.2.1 The Star newspaper

All the respondents from the Star newspaper said that their role as gatekeepers is unique since some of the media owners sit through all editorial meetings. As such, the media owners are aware of all the stories lined up for publication on a daily basis. They have the opportunity to suggest alteration of story angles, spike certain stories or demand to edit the stories themselves, especially where their interests are at stake. In other instances, they ask that stories be killed.

Sometimes when they ask to edit the stories, the copy is thoroughly toned down. In fact, the impact of story is lost. You have nowhere to complain. Some reporters have resigned to fate, saying so long as their salaries are guaranteed, they don't care (Interview with a senior editor, Nairobi, 4 June 2021)

One of the editors gave the example of a property tussle in an upmarket estate in Nairobi where one of the media owners was a party. The media owner on occasion files stories about the dispute and ensures that they are published. The stories are one sided and do not meet the ethical guidelines provided in the code of conduct of journalism.

In the same media house, one of the media owners, a former journalist, is the primary author of the paper's editorials. Although consensus is sought about the subject of the editorials, the interests of the owners, both commercial and political always carry the day.

A long-serving journalist and media lecturer, Dr Jared Obuya, termed the practice of media owners also serving as editorial managers as a danger to independent practice of journalism.

Editorial grip is even tighter where owners are also managers. It's not good for the practice of journalism because journalists are suffocated (Interview with Obuya, Nairobi, 28th September 2021).

All the four editors said that over the last year, they have been asked by the media owners to run “favourable” stories on a leading 2022 presidential candidate. Suspicion is rife among editors that the politician has acquired substantial stake in the media house through proxies. These speculations have since become public. The rumours have prompted the owners to deny any links to the politician.

Every time we carry a major negative story about the politician, the owners must complain. They would openly suggest we run some PR stories to appease the politician. However, they have never bothered to tell us why this is happening (Interview with a senior editor, Nairobi, 4 June 2021).

One editor narrated how his chief executive officer — a major shareholder of the firm — called in the night sometime in 2018 to have a splash story that had been sent to press killed. The story reported the renovation of a coastal hotel acquired by the senior politician but which had encroached on the Indian Ocean.

However, signs that something had changed came when the CEO announced to the editors that he had approved the hiring of a senior writer from the politician’s ethnic community to take care of his political interests. According to the editors, the indirect message was that the new reporter would be the propaganda machine for the politician.

How would we as editors ensure that his reportage is objective, fair, balanced and accurate when he is being hired to execute some agenda? (Interview with a senior editor, Nairobi, 6 June 2021)

In late June 2021, the media owners stopped an exposé about the same politician’s foreign trip which was believed to have personal commercial interest and the upcoming 2022 polls. No reason was given to the editors for stalling the story.

Victor Bwire, the director for media training and development at MCK, said the paper's latest coverage trends suggest it is leaning towards Deputy President William Ruto.

Although he says media ownership is not the biggest threat to media independence in Kenya, Bwire says it remains a big challenge.

Proprietorial issues are one of the worst problems journalists face in Kenya. Three quarters of media houses in Kenya are owned by politicians and businessmen. They have not invested in the media because they are motivated by public good or fight for human rights, they simply want to further their political or business interests (Interview with Bwire, Nairobi, 12 October 2021)

The chairman of Radio Africa Group is a renowned businessman with deep connections in the establishment. He has chaired the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI), an influential umbrella body of the private sector in Kenya with unfettered access to State House and is always in the President's entourage. Whenever the newspaper runs a major negative story about the establishment, the chairman must call to complain. One editor recalled an incident in 2014 when they published a story about President Kenyatta running out of cash in Abu Dhabi. The company chairman was angry as he risked losing the many privileges he has courtesy of the government as State House was furious. According to the editor, the media owners led by the chairman immediately ordered that an apology be published without bothering to check on the accuracy of the story. This was followed by intense lobbying to repair relations with the State which involved freezing any other negative story on the government and its officials. The editor said:

We would be told quite openly, please go slow on State House for a while (Interview with a senior editor, Nairobi, 5 June 2021).

Three Kenyan media scholars, Dr Jared Obuya, Dr Wilson Ugangu and Dr Joseph Nyanoti argue owners of Kenya's most dominant media outlets are all connected to the establishment which cannot allow independent practice of journalism to thrive.

Media owners in Kenya and the key players in the establishment are one and the same. So they [media] cannot go so far in their criticism of government. They will always hold back depending on what interests is at play (Interview with Ugangu, Nairobi, 27th September 2021).

Nyanoti said professional journalists are always caught between a rock and a hard place because of the relationship between media owners and the State.

So when we talk of media freedom in Kenya, it puts journalists in a strait jacket. You can only maintain your professionalism up to a given extent (Interview with Nyanoti, Nairobi, 27th September 2021.)

4.2.2 The Nation Newspaper

Unlike respondents from the Star Newspaper who were unanimous that their media owners interfere with editorial content, a majority of Nation editors said most instances of editorial interference came from individual board members and top editors, sometimes "for their own selfish interests". However, some board members have nominal shares at NMG which essentially makes them part of the media ownership. In addition, Aga Khan is represented in the NMG board, including by foreign directors. This means board decisions are taken in his best interest.

Although he is far removed from routine editorial processes, four respondents said he occasionally gets involved, especially when the country faces critical historical times like elections. For instance, in the lead up to the 2017 presidential elections, Aga Khan asked the

editorial management to go slow on anti-government sentiments following relentless complaints from State House. In fact, he hired a South African Company to analyse Nation headlines to verify government claims that NMG was leaning towards the opposition.

Aga Khan sat through a training session of top editors at Serena Hotel and one of the questions that was curiously being raised by trainers from the US was: ‘how can we write in a manner that is not pro-opposition?’. After these trainings, you could see a lot of censorship on anti-government stories (Interview with a Nation Editor, Nairobi, 8 June 2021).

Dr. Obuya, a media lecturer at Moi University says ahead of the 2017 polls, government support by the Nation was almost institutionalised.

There was almost an editorial policy that they are leaning towards the government...The editorial director was policing all the newspaper headlines. Anti-government stories could not see the light of day (Interview with Obuya, 28 September 2021)

Three respondents said Aga Khan’s closeness to the establishment in Kenya; particularly the Kenyatta family is well known to the editorial leadership. He may not directly censor your work but there are some stories you have to widely consult on before publishing.

There is no time that Aga Khan has come to Kenya without visiting State House, especially during this Jubilee regime. Aga Khan was very close to Kenyatta senior. That explains why Serena Hotel was allocated land inside Business Park. The two also have common business interest (Interview with a former Nation editor, Nairobi, 10 June 2021).

Dr Ugangu, the associate dean, Faculty of Media and Communication Studies at Multimedia University of Kenya said it is an open secret that Aga Khan has always had to come in to give some editorial directives.

Dr Obuya however thinks the editorial slant has nothing to do with Aga Khan but with top editors. He says Aga Khan has always wanted the Nation to be used for public good.

The problem at the Nation is the editors. There is no editorial accountability, especially from the editorial directors who are using their positions for personal selfish gain... The problem is not largely about ownership but editorial leadership. Editors have been pandering to ethnic interests. There is evidence. Aga Khan has been a promoter of diversity. At one time, there was a push to shut down Taifa Leo but he refused. He said it should be published even if it's not making profit. He has wanted the Nation to be used for public good (Interview with Obuya, Nairobi, 27th September 2021).

One fact confirmed by at least four Nation editors was that the paper was extremely cautious about publishing multi-million shilling scandals in the lead up to the 2017 elections. A directive had reportedly been given to some editors by the editor-in-chief to keep off stories of the NYS scandal, Eurobond and the collapse of the coffee sector, especially the mention of the Kenyatta family name.

The editor-in-chief also wanted editors to moderate or stop publishing columnists too critical of the government, especially the highly-regarded economist, David Ndi. The columnists later resigned enmasse from the Nation, saying it had become a government mouthpiece.

Two years before they resigned, the columnists wrote to Aga Khan and the NMG board of directors to protest against what they described as “a systematic process to constrain

independent voices within the company, contrary to its stated editorial policy to promote diversity and freedom of the media”.

Five respondents also said the NMG board and senior editors gave in to the Jubilee administration’s tactics, including coercion and co-option to get positive visibility. The introduction of GAA was a deadly blow to the media. With GAA, the government would only dole out advertising to media outlets willing to give it positive coverage. The payment of billions in pending advertising bills was yet another avenue to squeeze the press to toe the line.

The NMG board cannot allow anything that stands between them and money.

Eventually, editorial independence gave way to profitability (Interview with an editor, Nairobi, 10 June 2021).

Dr Ugangu says media owners have been squeezed by the Jubilee administration, including through threats to sell off their holdings. According to Ugangu, Jubilee employed many tricks to have their way in the media, including enacting draconian media laws, arrests, open and subtle threats to journalists as well as economic sabotage.

Part of their strategy to control the media was through economic sabotage by curtailing of government advertisement. Media outlets that were seen to be assertive were denied advertising revenue. They would also hold onto the advertising revenue and use it as a bargaining chip for positive press... The ruthless manner in which the government handled the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting was also part of their strategy of ensuring they have control of the media (Interview with Ugangu, Nairobi, 27th September, 2021).

In fact, even senior government bureaucrats have taken advantage of government advertising to arm twist the media and ensure that no negative story is published against them. One of the editors gave the example of the Ruaraka land scandal in which one of the most influential government officials was adversely mentioned. According to respondent, any story that negatively mentions the senior government official is treated very cautiously. The private sector is also using this tactic of dangling their advertising power to tamper with editorial independence. Gambling companies have been cited as among the most notorious.

The state has also co-opted top media managers into government in a manner that is likely to compromise the roles of the media. One editor recalled for instance that the NMG editorial director was named chairman of a state corporation, an appointment done by the president himself. The NMG investigations editor was also appointed to the National Steering Committee on Implementation of Tea Regulations. Former Nation CEO and the editor-in-chief were also separately appointed board members to parastatals soon after they retired from NMG. The appointments were seen as a reward for their roles at the helm of the media house.

Many state mandarins still expect them [retired officials] to pay back by pulling old strings to influence content. In addition, both men own public relations firms and are out looking for contracts (Interview with an editor, Nairobi, 10 June 2021).

Dr Obuya said that since these editors did not reject the appointments, they demonstrated they had gone to bed with the government.

Other than the media, Aga Khan also has shareholding in several other critical sectors, including healthcare, banking, insurance, education, pharmaceuticals, agro and food

processing, energy, telecommunication etc. As a result, respondents said it's not permitted to publish a negative story about any of these business enterprises that touches on nearly all sectors of the economy.

There are cases of medical negligence at the Aga Khan hospital that Kenyans innocently report to the Nation hoping for some exposé but we can't dare follow up.

There was a time Jubilee insurance was blacklisted by the Nairobi Hospital, it was a big deal. We had the story but we couldn't run it (Interview with a Nation editor, Nairobi, 9 June 2021)

One of the editors recalled the case of the NYS scandal in which two of the banks adversely mentioned were each associated with Aga Khan and the Nation Media Group chairman.

According to Dr Nyanoti who teaches media and communication at United States International University-Africa, media owners have vast interests in other businesses which provide advertising support for media houses. In fact, they own some advertising agencies. This cannot allow independent practice of journalism to thrive.

According to some editors, most Nation board members are influential individuals with various commercial interests in Kenya. He recalled that at one point, a vice chancellor of a public university was a member of the NMG board and the paper could not publish any negative stories about the institution. Instead, the paper would run several PR stories, praising its sound management moves.

Even at the moment, the board chairman is a chancellor of a private university; others sit on various boards including Telkom Kenya and Vivo Energy Kenya Limited. So you can only scratch the surface while writing stories about these institutions (Interview with Nation Editor, Nairobi, 10 June 2021).

However, seven other respondents said that one of the biggest threats to editorial independence at the Nation is the editors themselves. Many top editors are said to be doing communication consultancies with private firms and government entities. As a result, these editors will not allow any negative stories to be published. However, they will be at the forefront of pushing PR stories on behalf of these companies to justify their pay cheques. The other threat is corruption where editors receive money to tone down, spin or even kill stories

One of the editors said a former editor-in-chief was doing consultancy for the Chinese who were constructing the Standard Gauge Railway. It's the same editor who had issued freeze order on the coverage of the NYS scandal, Eurobond scandal and the collapse of the coffee sector.

I remember one of the reporters had done an email to the Chinese regarding the SGR. However, it's the editor-in-chief who sent back the questions to the reporter and openly told him there was no story there. He did not even mind to inform the line editor. Such is the impunity in newsrooms (Interview with a Nation Editor, Nairobi, 9 June 2021).

Dr Obuya, Dr Ugangu and Mr. Bwire all warn that corruption in the media is getting out of hand. In Dr Obuya's assessment, the corruption index in the media is way beyond other private sectors in Kenya and is only comparable to graft in government.

There are editors who are co-opted to support one political group or the other. So stories are slanted in a certain way. People are obviously bribed and this affects the quality of journalism and the trust people have in the media (Interview with Ugangu, Nairobi, 27th September 2021).

Bwire says the independence of the Nation has drastically reduced. He says decisions on how to treat major stories have been ‘individualised’.

This finding confirms earlier studies by Mbeke, Ugangu & Okello-Or-lale (2010) who concluded that corruption is deeply entrenched in newsrooms. In fact, the three scholars said the menace cuts across all cadres of staff, from the reporters, the editors and owners who are co-opted and show editorial bias.

At least three other editors at NMG said some sackings of senior editorial staff were instigated by the board to appease the government. Shareholders, for instance, were put under intense pressure by the government over a January 2, 2016 stinging editorial authored by Dennis Galava. Nevertheless, the pressure was brought down to bear on the editor and Galava was sacked. According to some respondents, the Jubilee administration elbowed media owners from the inner sanctums of power after their election in 2013. As a result, media owners have been trying by all means to please the government to regain their position of influence.

The decision to sack Denis Galava was taken away from the editorial. You could clearly see it was the old men [board of directors] calling the shots. But there are subsequent sackings which were camouflaged as redundancies which also had everything to do with the work of these journalists (Interview with a Nation editor, Nairobi, 10 June 2021).

An editor who was controversially fired confirmed the editor-in-chief was uncomfortable with some of his investigative stories, including how Eurobond proceeds were spent. He said when he produced in court email evidence of the editor-in-chief stopping him from pursuing certain stories, the labour court was convinced his termination, officially on account of redundancy, was unprocedural. He says like him, many senior journalists had been fired in a similar fashion. Many however did not seek redress in court.

Because of co-option of senior editorial staff and board members, corruption and pressure from the government, some respondents said the Nation became partisan in the run-up to the 2017 elections. One editor recalled how the Nation wrote a biased story against opposition politician and businessman Jimmy Wanjigi in the lead-up to the 2017 polls. The editor said there were genuine fears within the newsroom the story could have been sponsored by the establishment to disorient the Opposition campaign. One of the concerns raised by the respondent about the story was the use of very strong adjectives that are rare in nation news pages. The paper for instance described Wanjigi as “uber tenderpreneur and corrupt deal maker”. One of the paragraphs in the story read:

“Long term investigations by the Nation have revealed a story of an almost impossibly wealthy tender oligarch, whose money affords him a degree of political influence, which has turned the Kenyan political class, intelligentsia and media into a mere pawn in a corrupt chess game where the Kenyan economy is plucked like chicken”

Dr Ugangu says that ahead of the 2022 general election, the NMG seems to have decided to support and promote the position of Uhuru Kenyatta in regards to his succession.

If the editor is not independent, you cannot expect the reporters to be independent. In fact, they begin to practice self censorship because they know the stand of their bosses on certain issues (Interview with Obuya, Nairobi, 28 September 2021).

4.2.3 The Standard Newspaper

Like the Aga Khan at the Nation, the family of former President Daniel Moi and their business partners at the Standard Group have massive business interests in transport, banking, agri-business, aviation, manufacturing, real estate, education, security, construction among other sectors. One editor said such massive business interests that bestride the region do not gel well with media enterprise and makes “independent practice of journalism almost impossible.”

There is an unwritten rule at SG that there should be no negative news stories about these companies. This means that editors have to know the Moi family interests, which also informs the manner of appointment of editors.

The Standard has the highest turnover of its editorial directors. The reason is simple, the interests are so many and editors who insist on pushing the boundaries cannot survive (Interview with a Standard editor, Nairobi, 9 June 2021)

Occasionally, the media owner would request for PR stories to promote their various enterprises. Kiptagich Tea Factory, for instance, one of the firms associated with the Moi family was highlighted in parliamentary proceedings in 2014 as one of the private entities that had been allocated land in the Mau Forest. When the story got to the managing editor, he expunged the name of the factory from it. However, rival papers splashed the Moi link. The other examples are stories touching on South Sudan and senior officials in Salva Kiir’s administration.

Since SG media owners are politicians with interest in the country's top leadership, five editors admitted to some element of political spin to favour the ownership. For instance, a major human interest story may only be allocated limited space or killed to give prominence to stories associated with the media owner, even when the news value is negligible. For strategic political reasons, the pictures of Gideon Moi and those of his political associates are placed strategically in the newspaper, when they appear in functions. However, his political opponents are treated with hostility and sometimes denied media interviews.

It has become almost a rule that when the media owner is having some event, regardless of the news value, it has to be covered and given prominence. Photographers have to concentrate on Gideon Moi even when it's a presidential function. The reporters have also learnt that no negative story about the media owner can see the light of day (Interview with a Standard editor, Nairobi, 14 June 2021)

This particular media owner and their family are known to be pro-establishment, with close contacts with those in power. As a result, the newspaper's role to hold those in power accountable is only superficial. Some editors said the media house is a government apologist with little obligation to question critical governance issues bedevilling the country.

Dr Obuya says editors know the inclination of their media owners and as such practice self censorship to protect their interests.

At the Standard, you can't touch the Moi family and his friends, including the Kenyattas. They use the media outlet for business and for politics. At the back of their minds, editors know the inclination of the owners. Reporters are openly told you "can't go there" (Interview with Obuya, Nairobi, 28 September 2021)

This point is reinforced by Dr Ugangu who says Gideon Moi is a close ally of the Kenyattas and therefore the Standard Group “cannot go far in its criticism of Uhuru’s administration”. On October 23, 2019 for instance, the Standard carried a headline story titled: James Macharia, the super minister with tonnes of cash but little to show for it. The story focussed on the ministry’s huge allocation from the exchequer and questioned the delivery. The paper promised a second part of the story that was never to be. Two editors said the minister reached out directly to the media owner and a directive was issued to freeze further publication. This was not an isolated case. Many senior government officials are also using the government advertising power to stifle editorial independence. Two editors said it’s almost impossible to have negative story about the cabinet secretaries for ICT and Interior.

However, Bwire says although there is proprietorial interference, the biggest threat to media independence are the journalists themselves.

I have spoken to many media owners who have confessed they were not involved [in censorship]. So journalists are also just using owners as a cover-up ... Headlines are on sale. Editors are on retainers of some people. It’s known (Interview with Bwire, Nairobi, 13 November 2021).

One respondent said that sometime in October 2019, the Standard Newspaper recalled one of its best headlines based on solid court papers on instructions from Gideon Moi. The story was a feud between Ida Odinga and her daughter in law. Orange Democratic Movement Party leader Raila Odinga reportedly reached out to Gideon to suppress the story and the latter agreed. However, more devastating was that the PDF copy of the unpublished edition had leaked, and was widely circulated online.

The same week, another story of graft investigations at Kenya Ports Authority was also killed because of the Moi family business interests at the port. Since the weekend editors were unaware, a similar story was again lined up for publication on a Saturday. However, owners again intervened and the paper was recalled from press. Like the story of the Odinga family feud, the PDF copy of KPA scandal also leaked, putting the Standard's credibility into jeopardy.

Our source of the story who was the DCI was very disappointed. To him, journalists had been bribed to drop the story.” (Interview with a senior editor, Nairobi, 17 June 2021)

One of the editors said the Standard's Deputy News Editor who also doubles as the Bureau Chief for Nakuru is an aide to Gideon Moi. He runs his political errands and is still expected to be an impartial journalist and senior editor. He is said to be so powerful that his Nairobi bosses cannot overrule his decisions without the permission of the media owners. One editor said:

Our analysis of Rift Valley politics has never been objective. The bureau chief will always ensure the stories are tilted towards the Moi family. It's tragic that people who have openly taken political sides are still working as journalists (Interview with a senior editor, Nairobi, 15 June 2021)

Bwire said it is well known that the bureau chief is an aide to Moi and described his involvement in newsroom affairs as a 'mockery' of the journalism profession.

Citing the sacking of veteran journalist Peter Opondo from the Standard Group, Bwire says media owners are deeply involved in editorial processes.

However, five respondents said despite interference from media owners, there is an equally bigger threat to editorial content from corrupt editors. There are senior editors who are on the payroll of government officials, businesses leaders and politicians to protect their interests.

There are also many instances where editors would kill stories and invoke the name of Gideon Moi when it's known that they are the ones doing the dirty work.

There are so many interests in the newsroom, especially on corruption stories.

When you are not being stopped by media owners, it's the editors (Interview with a senior editor, Nairobi, 17 June 2021)

4.3 Factors informing ownership influence on editorial content

The other question that this study sought to answer was: What are the factors informing ownership influence on journalistic performance in Kenya? Respondents gave varied factors as detailed below:

4.3.1 Media owner's interests.

One of the most cited factors for editorial interference is the individual interest of the owners. As part of the elite in society, media owners in Kenya have many business interests other than the media. Still, others are politicians with aggressive political ambitions.

At the Standard, you can't touch the Moi family and his friends, including the Kenyatta's. They use the media outlet for business and for politics (Interview with Obuya, Nairobi, September 28th 2021)

As such media owners go to great lengths to protect their own interests, including tampering with editorial content. This confirms earlier studies (see for example Nyanjom, 2012; McQuil, 2010; Muphy, 1977) that concluded investment in the media industry is driven by

private interests. Just as Nyanjom (2012) discovered, respondents in this study said media owners who are politicians know that they can use their enterprises to fight their political wars. The mass media is also seen as a more cost-effective way of mobilising for votes instead of reaching out directly to the electorates.

4.3.2 Political pressure/threats

Respondents said the Jubilee administration used many tactics, including threats to media owners and top editors to stop negative publicity. According to three editors, Jubilee rode to power with a hostile attitude towards the media and the civil society, arising from persistent media focus on the crimes against humanity charges that President Uhuru Kenyatta and his Deputy William Ruto faced at the ICC.

A lot of issues coloured their policy towards the media, arising mainly from the crimes against humanity cases that they faced at the ICC. Before their election, the media was fairly vocal about the crimes committed and candidly focused on the ICC cases. However, after their election, they began to censor the media so that they control the flow of information. There were open and subtle threats to journalists to have them toe the line (Interview with Ugangu, Nairobi, 27th September 2021)

Government bureaucrats, including the President himself would criticise media owners and editors. Two respondents cited the CS for interior who would insult editors and threaten unspecified consequences, including demanding tax arrears.

Some of these guys were on the verge of deportation with the government using their work permits as a gimmick to demand nothing but PR stories, especially towards the elections (Interview with a senior editor at the Star, Nairobi, 6 June 2021)

Some respondents recalled that in 2014, top SG editors were summoned to State House for “portraying the government in bad light”. The Standard Newspaper had reported that top government officials spent Sh100 million at a two-day luxury retreat to discuss austerity measures. After the meeting, the Standard ran an apology.

Uhuru himself would publicly bash the media, saying “gazeti ni ya kufunga nyama” [newspapers are meant for wrapping meat] (Interview with Obuya, Nairobi, 28 September 2021)

Dr Ugangu recalled that as part of these intimidation tactics, a NMG parliamentary editor was arrested in 2015 and driven to the DCI over a story highlighting Sh3.8 million questionable expenditures at the Ministry of Interior. Although he was released on the same day, the then Interior CS had vowed he would not be freed without naming the sources of the story.

4.3.3 Commercial pressure

According to respondents in this study, advertisers, including government agencies are aware that they are the lifeblood of the media. They exploit this relationship to their advantage, including censoring sensitive stories. Since media owners are keen on profitability, they do not entertain anything that stands on the way of their companies raking in more money.

A good editor would tell a cub reporter, “you story is brilliant, but you know what, we can’t run it. There is a supplement coming and if we run your story our goose is cooked. The money won’t come and we won’t be paid. So do you want your pay or you want to change the world?” (Interview with Nyanoti, Nairobi, 27 September 2021).

Bwire says it’s impractical for media enterprises to rely heavily on government advertising and still hope to be a watchdog.

These findings correspond to earlier studies by Mbeke, Ugangu & Okello-Or-lale (2010), Nyabuga (2015) and the Committee to Protect Journalist (2015). CPJ (2015) had concluded that advertisers in Kenya wield immense powers, including “the ability to plant stories, influence editorial decisions and even asks that stories be spiked” (P. 8).

4.3.4 Largesse from government

According to some respondents in this study, media owners are always positioning themselves to benefit from the government. As such, they always want to be friendly to the establishment. The favours they seek include appointments to State corporations, awards of lucrative government contracts by their media entities or related firms, delay in payment of corporation taxes by their vast business empire, etc.

4.3.5 Social relations/political relations

Murphy (1977) contends that media owners, local manufactures, influential corporate chiefs and the political elite are both at the apex of the society as wealthy individuals. As such, these individuals tend to think alike about political, economic and social issues. According to respondents in this study, these groups of individuals have some form of symbiotic relationship that drives them.

This is why Gideon Moi would order that a negative story touching on the Odinga’s be pulled down at the expense of newspaper sales (Interview with a senior editor, Nairobi, 9 June 2021)

Worse however, because of these social or political connections, the media would be forced to turn a blind eye to glaring societal ills like corruption.

4.4 Areas of media coverage susceptible to ownership influence

This study also sought to find out the areas of media coverage that are most prone to editorial tampering. The various responses were condensed and discussed as below.

4.4.1 Political content during election campaigns

According to respondents in this study, one area of media coverage that is prone to editorial tampering is political stories, especially during heated election campaigns. Media owners would often call to ask that some stories be toned down, twisted or dropped altogether.

Media owners have a tight grip on editorial content when it comes to politics. Other stories like environment, culture etc, they don't even bother (Interview with Obuya, Nairobi, 28 September 2021).

In the lead up to the 2017 polls for instance, some media owners asked for massive coverage of government achievements to help the incumbent secure re-election. This was also replicated in some county-level polls. The same is already being repeated as Kenya gears-up for the 2022 polls.

Just recently we were stopped from publishing a story on the foreign trip of a prominent political leader. Once we reached out to his communication team for a comment, the politician swiftly called the media owners. We were asked to kill the story (Interview with a Senior Editor at the Star, Nairobi, 7 July 2021)

However, stories that criticise the government for instance the cost of projects, corruption, heavy borrowing, scrutiny of government performance etc are treated cautiously. This trend was also replicated by county governments where governors are using their connections as well as advertising power to fight negative press.

4.4.2 Corruption and poor governance stories

Media owners have become very sensitive to media exposés on corruption, poor governance or even abuse of human rights. According to a number of respondents, stories covering the subjects are always toned down, twisted or killed if they touch on their friends, influential elite or advertiser. This effectively kills the watchdog role of the media. In fact, according to several respondents, investigative journalism is dead. Before Jubilee's re-election in 2017, the government looked at media outlets running critical stories, such as corruption, as adversaries. Well connected individuals also reach out to media owners and senior editors to kill sensitive stories about them.

The Ruaraka land scandal became a political hot potato in newsrooms. There was a government official who was adversely mentioned in the scam but whose name could not be mentioned in the papers (Interview with an Editor, Nairobi, 12 June 2021).

Previous studies (see for example, Nyanjom 2012, Nyamwaya, 2010) have also laid blame on journalists for entrenching this practice. Nyanjom (2012) says "there is evidence that many media practitioners have succumbed to the lure of lucre so that politicians and the corporate sector do not have a very difficult time influencing what appears in print or on the airwaves".

4.4.3 Business stories

Corporate entities will go to any length to have negative stories that can hurt their brand image dropped. Instead, they will make a pitch for marketing and PR stories that advance their commercial interests. Such firms use their advertising record to ask for favours and a promise for more advertising revenue.

A common trend in recent days is where banks don't want to be named in graft investigations where courts have frozen bank accounts belonging to their customers.

Board members would ask, “just run the story but don’t mention the banks” (Interview with Nation Editor, Nairobi, 12 June 2021).

4.4.4 Blunder by the political/ business elite/Government bureaucrats

Such stories are considered as among the most sensitive in the newsroom. One respondent recalled the story of a 2022 presidential aspirant who was accused of sexual assault at the Coast sometimes in June 2021. Nonetheless, the story could not run in some media houses because of his political connections despite the matter being reported to the police.

The moment the reporter calls some characters to get a right of reply, the story is already dead. You receive a call from a media owner inquiring what the story is all about and how his friend can be helped (Interview with the Star Editor, Nairobi, 7 June 2021).

4.5 Media Ownership and professional journalistic practice.

Besides focusing on media ownership and editorial influence, the study respondents were also asked about the effects of such editorial influence on professional journalistic practice in Kenya. The study posed the question: What is the effect of editorial interference on professional journalistic practice in Kenya?

4.5.1 Talent haemorrhage

Editorial interference causes frustration in newsrooms for both reporters and editors, resulting in a multiplier effect. According to respondents interviewed, these include resignation of best talent, some who have opted out of the profession. Some senior journalists have also been pushed out for demanding answers why some stories can’t run. This exit of talent and experienced journalists bleeds the industry of institutional memory and leaves the media with

rookies. This leads to more errors in newspapers, more defamation suits, a decline in sales and eventual loss of revenue.

This is why some people have resorted to social media where some commentators can clearly put issues into perspective. It could as well be among the reasons why circulation is declining (Interview with Ugangu, Nairobi, 28th 2021)

4.5.2 The decision-making power of the editor is compromised

According to several editors, one of the critical consequences of editorial interference by media owners is that they lose their gate-keeping role. This is because, they have to consistently consult parties outside the newsroom to give concurrence if certain stories can be published. As such, the gate-keeping role of the editor in determining the newsworthiness of a story is lost. In this way, public interest stories are sometime lost while stories that do not merit, including defamatory content are published.

Just the other day, there was the story of a prominent politician who was accused of sexual assault at the Coast. Since we know he is close associate of some of the media owners, we had to consult and as we rightfully suspected, he ordered that we suppress the story (Interview with a Star Editor, Nairobi, 4 June 2021).

4.5.3 Kills confidence of news sources in reporters/newspaper

News sources tend to lose confidence in the reporters and their newspaper once journalists are unable to get out information they shared. This is especially so if the information is of great public interest. Some of the information shared is also sensitive and can cost such sources their jobs or even their lives. So when the newspaper is unable to publish such a story because of vested interest, news sources would shy away from sharing any information in the future or even answering any questions from such a reporter.

Some sources would openly protest that you have been paid to kill the story. Once you are unable to publish, your relationship is over (Interview with an Editor, Nairobi, 12 June 2021).

4.5.4 Kills morale and creativity

Investing hours investigating a story which may end up being killed breeds resentment and frustration in the newsroom. Some editors narrated how reporters who are victims of the story “massacre” become frustrated and are unwilling to do any such assignments again.

The reporters will openly challenge you. “Why are you giving me an assignment which you know very well that you will not publish?” (Interview with a Nation Editor, Nairobi, 9 June 2021).

Although he doesn’t explain the exact cause, Bwire says journalists in Kenyan newsrooms are demotivated. He says this could be linked to job stability as many have been fired in undignified manner.

The level of laziness in newsrooms these days is unbelievable. People simply don’t take their work seriously. Journalists don’t want any assignment that is intellectually engaging. They go to press conference unprepared, they can’t even ask questions... Journalists are not motivated. I don’t know whether it’s because of poor pay. There is a big attitude problem. The same reporters cross over to BBC, Aljazeera, or DW and they are the best (Interview with Bwire, Nairobi, 12 October 2021).

4.5.5 Embolden threats and intimidation against journalists

The fact that media owners can easily order for a story to be pulled down from a website or prohibit its publication bolsters impunity. According to some respondents, well-connected news sources adversely mentioned in official reports will tell reporters and their editors that

the story you are pursuing “is going nowhere”. Some have even threatened the reporters with the sack. This is because such characters are confident they have the media owner or top editors at their beck and call.

This was the case when a communication secretary in the office of the deputy president threatened a nation journalist that he would be fired for publishing a story hitting on the DP William Ruto (Interview with a Nation Editor, Nairobi, 12 June 2021).

4.5.6 Breeds self-censorship

Over time, reporters and their editors begin to learn the interests of the media owner. According to some respondents, the newsroom then begins to have an unofficial list of untouchable people and institutions. Subsequently, when they get any negative stories of the “untouchables”, they either ignore it despite the significance or file a censored version. However, where reporters file the story with the facts, it’s toned down by the editor to safeguard the interest of the media owner.

If the editor is not independent, you cannot expect the reporters to be independent. In fact, they begin to practice self-censorship because they know the stand of their bosses on certain issues (Interview with Obuya, Nairobi, 28th September 2021).

Conclusion

This chapter delved into the personal testimonies of editors, media scholars and a representative from MCK on editorial independence and the role of media owners in this practice. The findings show that editorial independence remains a mirage. There is a great deal of editorial interference by owners which is exacerbated by meddling by the editors themselves. Media owners’ interests, yearning to rake in more advertising revenue, desire for

government largesse, social/political relations are among factors that inform media ownership influence on editorial content.

The study also found out that media owners have become very sensitive to media exposés on corruption, poor governance or even abuse of human rights. This effectively kills the watchdog role of the media.

The chapter concludes by looking at the impact of editorial meddling on journalistic practice. One of the most significant findings of this study is that the killing of a single story has a spiral effect, including on the morale of staff. It also emboldens threats against journalists and kills public confidence in the media.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study and also presents its conclusions. This section also provides recommendations on how to address editorial interference.

This research was a case study of three daily newspapers in Kenya. Its respondents were senior editors, media scholars and an insider at MCK. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling technique. The study employed qualitative research method. To enable the respondents relay first-hand experience, most of their testimonies are provided through first persona experience.

5.2 Summary of the findings

One of the study's findings is that editorial interference remains entrenched in Kenya's print outlets. In fact, even young outlets that could be regarded as "alternative press" are equally under the capture of their owners and by extension politicians and advertisers. The involvement of media owners in the day-to-day content production is part of the biggest threats to media independence.

The Jubilee administration has used several tricks from coercion to co-option of journalists to influence media reporting. The GAA is an anti-press freedom monster created by the Jubilee administration to stifle media independence. Besides using it to punish obstinate media players, the payment of advertisement revenue has also been turned into tokenism for positive press.

Increased acquisition of media shareholding by the political elite portends a dangerous future for the press in Kenya. Politicians are keen to use their outlets to champion their political ambition and mobilize for votes. This explains why the issue of ethnicity is also cropping up in editorial hiring where politicians are keen to have their tribesmen in strategic editorial positions to champion their interests.

Media owners are fighting to retain their proximity to power. As such, they use their media outlets to endear themselves to the establishment. They can engineer a spin or demand freezing of some stories touching on critical areas of governance. Of course, this positioning is strategic to benefit from government largesse. The favours they seek include appointments to State corporations, award of lucrative government contracts by their media entities or related firms, delay in payment of corporation taxes by their vast business empires, etc.

Media owners have invested heavily in other sectors outside the media industry. Besides, board members also have varied commercial interests — sitting in many other boards — both in private sector and in government. This limits journalistic reach since the freedom to report freely on these areas is curtailed. Instead, the media are asked to do PR and marketing stories for these enterprises while turning a blind eye to any other corporate issues that may arise.

Some editorial changes, including sackings have been linked to editorial content churned out by journalists. These are done to appease the establishment. Even more striking is that media owners have become very sensitive to stories on corruption, bad governance, human rights and criticism of government. This explains why there is a spirited bid by some media houses to moderate or soften the tone of columnists too critical of the government. This completely erodes the role of the media as a watchdog in society, ensuring that those in authorities uphold their oaths of office and implement the wishes of the electorates.

Some top editors have been singled out as doing communication consultancies for private or government entities. So in their gate-keeping role as editors, they also hold brief for these entities, freezing negative stories and frustrating journalistic scrutiny into these firms. Besides consultancies, corruption is also deeply entrenched and editors pocket money to kill or publish stories.

A section of media owners are pro-establishment, with close contacts with those in power. As a result, their newspaper's role to hold those in power accountable is only superficial. Negative stories touching on certain people such as the political elite, government officials, etc are killed or toned down.

Since some media owners are politicians with interest in the country's top leadership, political spin in news reports have been entrenched. There is always a deliberate attempt to favour the media owner. A major human interest story may only be allocated limited space or killed altogether in order to give prominence to stories associated with the media owner.

Advertisers use their purse to control editorial content. Big corporates with a huge advertising war chest are not a subject of media scrutiny. Even government bureaucrats have taken advantage of government advertising to arm twist the media and ensure that no negative story is published against them.

This study identified at least four factors informing media ownership influence on editorial content. These are media owners' interests; desire to rake in more commercial revenue, positioning by media owners for government largesse as well as social or political relations.

The study also identified areas of media coverage that are susceptible to ownership influence. These include corruption, stories on government criticism or audit of government

performance, political or business rivalry as well as blunders by the powerful in society including the political elite/business elite or government bureaucrats.

One of the most significant findings of this study is that editorial interference has a spiral effect with devastating consequences on the professional practice of journalism. Among these consequences is that it kills the confidence of news sources in reporters. Editorial tampering also kills morale and creativity in journalists, embolden threats or intimidation against journalists, breeds self-censorship and triggers talent haemorrhage from newsrooms.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the indicated findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

The Kenyan media is under the capture of its owners, the state, the political elite and the powerful in society. As a result, media's ability to genuinely pursue public interest stories and robustly demand accountability is thoroughly constrained. In fact, in some instances, the media have been used to manipulate the public instead of being an educator and agent to confront impunity.

Kenya's print media ability to report authoritatively on issues of corruption, poor governance human rights and maladministration is thoroughly deficient. Since media owners are sensitive to these stories, journalists only scratch the surface. Stories are sometimes toned down, killed or some names are censored.

Investigative journalism is unable to thrive in Kenya's newsrooms. Since media owners are not supportive in the shining of the spotlight into the country's darkest corners, newsrooms are unable to generate great content through investigative reporting that can attract new readers.

The Jubilee administration has used GAA to increase its stranglehold over the media. Advertisement is given only to “submissive” media houses willing to sing to the government tune. Equally, the government dangles the billions it owes the media in advertising bills to demand positive press. Those willing to acquiesce are rewarded by some payment while the obstinate media players are punished by holding onto their pay.

Media owners are using their outlets to fight their wars. These wars may be social, economical or political. In many instances, there is a deliberate move by the media to manipulate public opinion for vested interests. The Kenyan media is used to cover up embezzlement, malfeasance and clientelism.

There exists an unholy alliance between media owners and the political elite. As a result, media owners are at the beck and call of politicians and senior government bureaucrats. This explains why media owners demand the killing of stories at the request of their friends. In addition, politicians are allowed to acquire shareholding in media enterprises to propel their politics. With politicians having stakes in the media, they order the hiring of politically correct journalists who will do their bidding in the coverage. In this way, media bias grows.

Media owners are consistently positioning themselves to benefit from largesse from the establishment. In their bid to please the establishment, they go to great lengths, including, getting rid of journalists hell-bent on holding those in power accountable. The government and its bureaucrats exploit this positioning to freeze any media scrutiny.

Corruption is deeply entrenched in newsrooms and senior editors have become gatekeepers for “evildoers” making independent practice of journalism difficult. Editors have become part of “tenderpreneurs” that the media ought to be exposing and are themselves fighting for government contracts, raising questions of conflict of interest.

Editorial interference could spark public resentment against the media and lead to the deteriorating trust in the media as an institution. This study has shown that editorial interference has a spiral effect with many consequences on the professional practice of journalism. Among these consequences is that it kills the confidence of news sources in reporters. In addition, the issues of editorial interference are becoming a public discourse and could have devastating consequence if a majority of citizenry is convinced the media is compromised. The public resignation of columnists from the NMG is a good example.

Multi-sectoral leadership and investment by media owners is a threat to media freedom. Media owners do not allow their media to shine a spotlight into these enterprises; instead they use the media as marketing tools for these firms.

5.4 Recommendations

The findings above present a disturbing picture with the potential of completely ruining the credibility of the Kenyan media. This study makes a number of recommendations to help remedy the situation. These recommendations largely centre on the radical changes necessary within newsrooms as well as the requisite legislative and policy changes. These are discussed as below:

The media must desist from over-reliance on government advertising revenue for survival and should instead remodel the businesses to find innovative and sustainable ways of generating revenue. One of the alternatives is the adoption of the paywall for the untapped digital assets. However, selling online content would require thoroughly researched and well thought out stories that give the public value for money.

The media should go back to the basics and resist content manipulation. Exposing the truth will increase public confidence in the media and hence more circulation. With increased circulation, advertisers will come calling.

Pro-democracy advocates, progressive civil society players and pro-reform donors should come together and establish or support independent and a robust not for profit press in Kenya. This would provide critical platform for public engagement and give voices to those shunned by mainstream media. It would also cover matters of public interest such as corruption without fear or favour. This development can also engender fresh thinking within mainstream media whose audiences will be at stake.

Media concentration or cross-media ownership should be statutorily controlled. Since media owners have been proven to use their media outlets for their own selfish gains, cross media ownership then become a dangerous tendency. Legislation should be enacted to limit media concentration as this would allow diversity of opinion and pluralism to thrive.

Media stakeholders including media owners, the Media Council of Kenya, the Kenya Union of Journalists, the Association of Media Women in Kenya etc should lobby for the overhaul of the GAA as an advertising model. The media can make this a big public discourse and engage with the government to have GAA to remodelled to align it with global best practices.

Besides the Complaints Commission whose mandate is limited, the MCK should be given express powers to discipline errant practitioners. The MCK Act, for instance, could be amended to allow the council suspend or cancel practising certificates of wayward journalists. Similar powers have been given by law to other professional associations such as the Law Society of Kenya and the Kenya Medical Association.

Proper remuneration for journalists is critical as part of measures to stem corruption within the industry. However, since better pay alone is unlikely to stop graft, media practitioners like civil servants should accept lifestyle audits.

There is need to establish accountability programmes or a robust media watch for the watchdog. This can also take the form of media consumer lobbies. This periodic monitoring of the media would help pile pressure on the profession that their conduct and the content churned out is under close scrutiny.

Media owners should delink themselves from day-to-day operations of the newsrooms.

5.5 Areas for further research

During the course of this study, some research gaps were identified. There is need for a broader and a detailed research focused on the why public trust on the mass media in Kenya is dwindling. While this study has unearthed some factors affecting editorial independence in Kenya, it's not clear whether these are the reasons for the waning trust in the media.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview guide for editors

1. Is there interference with editorial content in your media house?

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2. If yes, who is responsible for this editorial interference?

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3. To what extent if any are media owners involved in editorial interference in your media house?

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4. Would you kindly give some examples that you can recall of such editorial interference by media owners in your media house?

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5. Is there government interference with editorial content in your media house?

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6. If yes, would you give some examples?

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7. What other payers would you say are involved in editorial interference? Please explain?

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8. What are the factors informing ownership influence in journalistic performance in Kenya?

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9. What area of news coverage in your view is most susceptible to editorial interference? Kindly explain?

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10. Are there any effects of editorial interference on professional journalistic practice in Kenya?

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Appendix II: interview guide for scholars and MCK

1. Do you believe there is editorial independence in Kenyan newspapers?

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2. Would you please comment about editorial independence of the Nation, the Standard and the Star Newspapers?

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3. To what extent if any are media owners involved in editorial interference in these media houses?

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4. Do you believe there is government interference with editorial independence of these newspapers?

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5. If yes, please explain the government involvement?

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6. Do you think this is something unique to the Jubilee government alone or it's a continuation of what happened in previous regimes?

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7. What other players would you say are involved in editorial interference?
Please explain?

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8. What are the factors informing ownership influence in journalistic
performance in Kenya?

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9. What area of news coverage in your view is most susceptible to editorial
interference? Please explain?

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10. Are there any effects of editorial interference on professional journalistic
practice in Kenya?

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Appendix III: Certificate of Fieldwork


UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

Telegram: Journalism Varsity Nairobi
Telephone: 254-02-3318262, Ext. 28080, 28061
Director's Office: +254-204913208 (Direct Line)
Telex: 22095 Fax: 254-02-245566
Email: director-soj@uonbi.ac.ke

P.O. Box 30197-00100
Nairobi, GPO
Kenya

REF: CERTIFICATE OF FIELDWORK

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on 22-6-2018 in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project can be allowed to proceed for fieldwork.

Reg. No: K50/81256/2015
Name: OLICK FELIX OLICK
Title: MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND EDITORIAL CONTENT:
AN ANALYSIS OF MEDIA PERFORMANCE IN THE JUBILEE ERA

<u>DR GEORGE NYABUGA</u> SUPERVISOR	<u>C. Nyabuga</u> SIGNATURE	<u>2.07.2018</u> DATE
<u>Dr Samuel Siringi</u> ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR	<u>Siringi</u> SIGNATURE	<u>25/07/2017</u> DATE
<u>Dr. N. K. Ndlovu</u> DIRECTOR	<u>NK</u> SIGNATURE/STAMP	<u>25.7.18</u> DATE