

Assessing the effects of media ownership on Journalism Practices: A case study of private electronic media houses in Lusaka

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Abstract:

This study examines the effects of media ownership on journalism practices, using a case study approach focused on private electronic media houses in Lusaka, Zambia. The research aimed to assess the influence of media ownership on content production, agenda-setting, and news coverage, while investigating its role in media bias, censorship, editorial decision-making, and ethical practices. Additionally, the study explores how ownership impacts the autonomy and independence of journalists in these media outlets. The case study design was adopted to allow for an in-depth analysis of private media houses, with a particular emphasis on how ownership structures shape journalistic output. Purposive sampling was used to select key media professionals, including journalists, editors, and managers, from private electronic media houses in Lusaka. Data collection involved structured questionnaires and interviews, which gathered both quantitative and qualitative information on the respondents' experiences with ownership influence. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data, while qualitative data were processed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that media ownership plays a critical role in shaping editorial content, often reflecting the political or commercial interests of the owners. This influence frequently leads to biased news coverage, where stories are selected or framed to align with ownership agendas. Many journalists reported facing censorship or indirect pressure to conform to the priorities of media owners, which often resulted in compromised ethical standards, particularly in fairness and accountability. Furthermore, ownership was shown to affect the autonomy of journalists, with many experiencing significant restrictions on their independence in decision-making. Based on these findings, the study recommends the implementation of stronger regulatory frameworks to promote transparency in media ownership and protect editorial independence. Additionally, alternative funding models are encouraged to reduce the dependence of media houses on politically motivated funding. The study also advocates for internal policies that prioritize journalistic integrity and ongoing professional development for journalists to navigate ownership pressures effectively. Enhancing public media literacy is suggested as a way to support independent journalism. These results provide valuable insights into the relationship between media ownership and journalistic practices in Zambia, with broader implications for media freedom and ethics.

Keywords: Media ownership, Journalism practices, Media bias, Editorial decision-making, Media independence

1.0 Introduction:

1.1 Background:

In Lusaka, Zambia's media landscape is dynamic, with private electronic media outlets such as radio and television playing a vital role in public discourse and information dissemination. However, behind the scenes, media ownership significantly influences the journalistic integrity and autonomy of these platforms. Ownership is not merely financial control but also shapes the power and perspectives that influence media content.

Globally, the concentration of media ownership has raised concerns about its impact on media diversity and independence, with scholars like Bagdikian (2004) and McChesney (2008) pointing out the risks it poses. In Africa, and particularly in Zambia, these concerns are reflected in the blend of state and private media ownership, which directly affects journalistic freedom. Zambia's media environment experienced significant liberalization in the 1990s, leading to the rise of private media outlets like Hot FM, Radio Phoenix, Muvi TV, and Diamond TV, which have contributed positively to public engagement.

However, research from the Media Ownership Monitor (MOM) Zambia has highlighted the concentration of ownership among a few conglomerates, raising questions about editorial independence and media pluralism. Even though Zambia's legal framework guarantees press freedom, media professionals face numerous challenges, including harassment, censorship, and legal restrictions under laws like the Public Order Act and the Cybersecurity and Cybercrimes Act. These pressures compromise journalistic independence and restrict the diversity of viewpoints.

Despite these challenges, private electronic media in Lusaka remain crucial for fostering diverse public discourse and media pluralism. However, the specific effects of media ownership on journalistic practices, such as content production and editorial decisions, remain underexplored. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how ownership structures within Lusaka's private media outlets influence journalism, with a focus on promoting media pluralism and protecting journalistic independence to support democratic governance and societal development. This research provides critical insights into ownership's role in shaping the quality and diversity of journalism in Zambia's evolving media landscape.

1.2 Statement of the problem:

When Zambia's media landscape has witnessed significant growth and diversification, the influence of media ownership on journalistic practices remains a critical concern, particularly within private electronic media houses in Lusaka. Despite the proliferation of private media outlets following the liberalization of airwaves in the 1990s, there is limited empirical research examining how ownership structures affect editorial independence, content diversity, and overall journalistic quality. This gap is especially pressing given that the Media Ownership Monitor (MOM) Zambia reports a concerning concentration of media ownership among a few individuals or corporations, raising significant questions about pluralism, transparency, and accountability within Zambia's media sector (MOM Zambia, 2020). Statistics from MISA Zambia indicate that the media landscape, though vibrant, is dominated by powerful media conglomerates, which could potentially influence editorial agendas and compromise journalistic integrity (MISA Zambia, 2019). Additionally, reports from Freedom House and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) highlight the frequent harassment, intimidation, and legal challenges faced by journalists, further underscoring the precarious nature of press freedom in Zambia (Freedom House, 2021; CPJ, 2020). In this context, the lack of comprehensive empirical studies on the effects of media ownership on journalism in Lusaka's private electronic media houses represents a significant gap in the literature. Addressing this gap is crucial for informing policy interventions that promote media pluralism and safeguard journalism independence.

1.3 Objectives:

- i. To assess effects of media ownership in shaping media content production, agenda setting and news coverage.
- ii. To investigate the influence of media ownership on media bias and censorship.
- iii. To ascertain effects of media ownership on editorial decision making process and ethical practice
- iv. To explore the influence of media ownership on autonomy and media independence.

1.4 Theoretical framework:

For a study to assess the effects of media ownership on journalism within private electronic media houses in Lusaka, Zambia adopting the Political Economy of Media theory as a theoretical framework offers a comprehensive lens through which to understand the complex interplay between economic structures, political power, and media institutions (Mosco, 2009). This theory posits that media systems are deeply intertwined with broader socio-economic forces, with media ownership serving as a central determinant of media content production and dissemination (Bagdikian, 2004).

Applying the Political Economy of Media theory to this study involves examining the ownership structures of private electronic media houses in Lusaka and analyzing the economic interests driving media ownership (McChesney, 2008). By investigating the business models, revenue sources, and corporate affiliations of media owners, the study aims to uncover how economic imperatives may influence editorial decisions and content priorities within these media outlets (McChesney, 2016). Moreover, the framework provides a valuable perspective for analyzing how ownership dynamics shape media content production, including news coverage, agenda setting, and framing of issues (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). By exploring whether media outlets affiliated with certain owners or interest groups exhibit bias, censorship, or self-censorship in their reporting, the study seeks to elucidate the influence of ownership structures on journalistic practices and content quality (Curran & Seaton, 2010).

2.0 Literature Review:

2.1 Effects of media ownership in shaping media content production, agenda setting and news coverage.

Media ownership significantly influences the production of media content, the setting of agendas, and the coverage of news. Ownership structures determine which stories are told, how they are told, and what issues are prioritized. McCombs and Shaw's (1972) seminal work on agenda-setting theory highlights how media ownership can shape public perception by controlling the flow of information. In Zambia, private media houses like Hot FM often reflect the interests of their owners, leading to potential biases in content production and news coverage (MISA Zambia, 2020). Studies have shown that media owners with specific political or economic interests tend to influence the editorial line to align with their viewpoints, thereby affecting the diversity and neutrality of news reporting (Baker, 2007).

Globally, the influence of media ownership on content production has been extensively documented. Bagdikian (2004) noted that in the United States, a handful of conglomerates control the majority of media outlets, which has led to a homogenization of news content and a reduction in the diversity of perspectives presented to the public. This trend is not confined to the US; similar patterns have been observed in other developed countries. In the UK, for example, Curran and Seaton (2018) argue that media ownership concentration has led to a narrowing of the range of viewpoints and an increase in sensationalism in news coverage.

A report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2020) also highlighted the influence of media ownership on news production and content diversity in the UK. The report found that media owners' interests often shape editorial policies, leading to a focus on stories that align with those interests while marginalizing alternative perspectives. This concentration of ownership limits the plurality of voices and the range of issues covered, impacting the overall quality of journalism.

In Zambia, several scholars and institutions have examined the implications of media ownership on journalism, with a focus on how ownership influences content production, agenda setting, and news coverage. Mambwe (2018) conducted a comprehensive study on media ownership in Zambia, revealing that private media ownership often leads to biased reporting, particularly when the owners have political or business interests. His research indicates that media houses owned by political figures tend to produce content that favors their owners' political agendas, thereby limiting the diversity of viewpoints available to the public. Mambwe's findings underscore the need for greater transparency in media ownership to ensure that editorial decisions are not unduly influenced by owners' personal interests.

Simutanyi (2020) explores the role of private media in shaping public discourse in Zambia. His study reveals that ownership concentration in the hands of a few wealthy individuals or entities leads to a homogenization of content, where only certain viewpoints are represented. This concentration stifles the plurality of voices and perspectives that are essential for a healthy democratic society. Simutanyi calls for policies that promote media pluralism and diversity to counteract the monopolistic tendencies of media ownership.

The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Zambia has also been active in researching and advocating for media reforms. MISA Zambia's (2020) reports highlight the challenges faced by journalists working in privately owned media houses, including pressures to align with the owners' interests and the resulting compromises in editorial independence. MISA's work emphasizes the importance of creating a regulatory environment that protects journalists from undue influence and promotes ethical journalism.

2.2 The influence of media ownership on media bias and censorship.

Media ownership can lead to significant bias and censorship, particularly in environments with limited regulatory oversight. According to Herman and Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model, media outlets owned by large conglomerates are more likely to exhibit biases that favor corporate interests and government policies supportive of those interests. In the Zambian context, private media outlets have been accused of censoring content that could negatively impact their owners' business or political connections (Freedom House, 2021). Empirical research indicates that ownership concentration often leads to a homogenization of viewpoints, reducing the plurality of voices and limiting critical discourse (Noam, 2009).

Media ownership refers to the control of media enterprises by individuals, corporations, or governments. The structure of ownership influences editorial decisions, the diversity of content, and the degree of bias and censorship within media outlets. The concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few can limit the plurality of voices and viewpoints in the public sphere, potentially undermining democratic discourse (Doyle, 2002). Ownership concentration can create a media landscape where a few powerful entities dominate the dissemination of information. This dominance can lead to uniformity in news coverage, where diverse perspectives are underrepresented. Bagdikian (2004) highlights that in the United States, a small number of corporations control the majority of media outlets, which can lead to a homogenization of content that prioritizes corporate interests.

Several global studies have explored the impact of media ownership on bias and censorship: Robert McChesney's (2004) work in "The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communication Politics in the Twenty-First Century" looks into the consequences of media ownership concentration in the United States. McChesney

argues that the consolidation of media ownership in the hands of a few large conglomerates has significantly altered the media landscape. One of the primary impacts has been a notable decline in investigative journalism.

Curran and Seaton (2018) In their seminal work "Power Without Responsibility: The Press, Broadcasting, and New Media in Britain," James Curran and Jean Seaton explore the relationship between media ownership and news coverage in the UK. They argue that the ownership of media outlets by large conglomerates often results in a conservative bias, which shapes public opinion to favor right-leaning policies. This bias is particularly evident in the influence of media moguls like Rupert Murdoch, whose ownership of major media outlets has had a profound impact on editorial policies and news coverage.

Freedom House's annual report on press freedom in Zambia provides a detailed overview of the pervasive nature of censorship within the media. The report notes that media outlets, particularly those critical of the government, face a range of challenges, including harassment, legal threats, and financial penalties. The closure of The Post newspaper in 2016 is highlighted as a prominent example of government retaliation against critical journalism. The newspaper, known for its investigative reporting and criticism of the government, was shut down ostensibly due to tax issues. However, many observers viewed this action as a politically motivated attempt to silence a significant voice of dissent (Freedom House, 2021).

The closure of The Post newspaper in 2016 stands as a stark example of the impact of media ownership on bias and censorship in Zambia. The Post was one of the few independent newspapers that consistently critiqued the government and exposed corruption and maladministration. Its shutdown, officially attributed to tax evasion, is widely perceived as a politically motivated act aimed at silencing dissent and reducing media plurality. The case of The Post underscores the vulnerability of independent media in environments where political interests can exert substantial influence over regulatory bodies and judicial processes (Cheeseman & Hinfelaar, 2018).

2.3 Effects of media ownership on editorial decision making process and ethical practice

Editorial decision-making processes refer to the systematic procedures and considerations that media organizations employ to determine the content they produce, publish, or broadcast. These processes involve a series of steps where editors and journalists decide which stories to cover, how to present them, and what angles to emphasize. The objective is to deliver news and information that is accurate, relevant, and engaging to the audience. According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996), editorial decision-making is influenced by various factors including organizational policies, journalistic norms, and the socio-political environment in which the media operates. These decisions are critical as they shape public discourse and influence the perception of events and issues among the audience.

In a media organization, editorial decision-making starts with news gathering, where journalists identify potential stories through sources, research, and observation. The next step involves evaluating these stories based on criteria such as newsworthiness, audience interest, and relevance to current events. Editors play a pivotal role in this phase, balancing the need for timely reporting with the importance of thorough fact-checking. Decisions about the prominence of a story—such as headline placement, page location, and broadcast time—are also made during this stage. These editorial choices are guided by the principles of journalistic integrity, including objectivity, fairness, and the public interest (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007).

Ethical practice in journalism, on the other hand, refers to the adherence to a set of professional standards and principles that govern the behavior of journalists and media organizations. These ethical guidelines are designed to ensure that the news is reported in a manner that is honest, fair, and respectful of the rights of individuals and society as a whole. Ethical journalism aims to serve the public by providing accurate and comprehensive information, fostering democratic processes, and holding power to account. The Society of

Professional Journalists (SPJ, 2014) outlines key ethical principles such as seeking truth and reporting it, minimizing harm, acting independently, and being accountable and transparent.

The role of regulatory frameworks and professional ethics in mitigating the influence of ownership on editorial decisions cannot be overstated. Robust regulations that promote media pluralism and protect against monopolization are essential for ensuring a diverse and independent media landscape. According to the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) in South Africa, regulatory measures that encourage diverse ownership can reduce the risks associated with ownership concentration and its impact on editorial independence. Additionally, professional ethics training programs that emphasize the importance of journalistic integrity can equip journalists with the skills needed to navigate ethical dilemmas and resist undue influence.

Editorial decision-making processes and ethical practices are fundamental to the functioning of a free and responsible media. While editorial decisions shape the content and presentation of news, ethical practices ensure that this content is produced in a manner that is truthful, fair, and respectful of public interest. The influence of media ownership on these processes poses significant challenges, but through robust regulatory frameworks and a strong commitment to professional ethics, the media can maintain its role as a reliable source of information and a pillar of democracy. As the media landscape continues to evolve, the principles of ethical journalism and independent editorial decision-making remain crucial for the credibility and trustworthiness of news organizations.

2.4 The influence of media ownership on autonomy and media independence.

The influence of media ownership on autonomy and media independence is a critical area of study in understanding how the dynamics of control within media organizations can affect journalistic practices and the integrity of information disseminated to the public. Autonomy in the context of media refers to the degree of freedom that journalists and editors possess to pursue stories, conduct investigations, and present news without external pressures or interference from media owners, advertisers, or political entities. Media independence, on the other hand, encompasses a broader spectrum of factors that ensure the media's ability to operate free from undue influence, maintain objectivity, and uphold the principles of fair and balanced reporting. This independence is crucial for the media to function as a watchdog of society, holding those in power accountable and providing citizens with unbiased and accurate information necessary for informed decision-making.

Autonomy is a fundamental principle in journalism that guarantees the editorial staff the liberty to make decisions based on professional judgment rather than external pressures. It involves the capacity to select topics for coverage, frame stories, and allocate resources to investigative journalism without interference from media owners or other stakeholders who might have vested interests. A lack of autonomy can lead to a compromised editorial process where journalistic content is tailored to suit the preferences and interests of media owners rather than adhering to the public interest. This can result in a media landscape where critical issues are underreported or ignored, and news coverage becomes skewed to reflect the biases of those who control the media outlets. Autonomy is essential for fostering a diverse range of perspectives and ensuring that the media serves its role in promoting transparency and democracy (McQuail, 2010).

Media independence extends the concept of autonomy to the broader operational framework of media organizations. It includes financial independence, editorial independence, and the ability to resist external influences from political actors, corporate interests, and other powerful groups. Financial independence is particularly crucial as it ensures that media outlets are not overly reliant on funding from sources that might seek to dictate editorial content. This independence is often threatened in environments where media consolidation leads to ownership concentration in the hands of a few powerful entities. Such consolidation

can create a homogenized media landscape where diversity of opinion is stifled, and the capacity for critical, investigative journalism is diminished. Editorial independence is another key component, ensuring that decisions about news content are made by journalists and editors based on newsworthiness and public interest, rather than the strategic interests of owners or advertisers (Baker, 2007).

The impact of media ownership on autonomy and independence has been extensively studied across various contexts, revealing consistent patterns of influence and control. For instance, in environments where media ownership is concentrated among a few conglomerates, the pressure on journalists to conform to the interests of owners is more pronounced. Studies have shown that in such contexts, news coverage often aligns with the economic and political agendas of the owners, leading to biased reporting and censorship of critical content. This undermines the media's role as an independent arbiter of information and a check on power. Furthermore, the fear of losing advertising revenue or facing retaliation from powerful entities can lead to self-censorship, where journalists avoid pursuing stories that might be controversial or damaging to influential stakeholders (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006).

3.0 Methodology:

Research design:

The research design for this study is a case study approach. This method allows for an in-depth examination of the complex and multifaceted relationship between media ownership and journalism practices within the context of private electronic media houses in Lusaka. (Yin, 2014).

Target population:

The target population for this study comprises journalists, editors, and media managers working in private electronic media houses in Lusaka. This population is chosen because these individuals are directly involved in the production and dissemination of news content and are most likely to be influenced by ownership structures. (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013).

Sampling design:

Purposive sampling will be employed to select participants who have relevant experience and insights into the effects of media ownership on journalism practices. This technique allows for the deliberate selection of individuals who can provide rich, informative data on the research topic (Patton, 2015).

Sample size determination:

The sample size for this study is 50-70 participants. This number is deemed sufficient to reach data saturation, where no new information or themes emerge from additional data collection. Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Data collection:

For this study, the primary data collection instrument will be a well-structured questionnaire, chosen for its ability to systematically gather standardized information from a large number of respondents efficiently. (Creswell, 2014).

Data analysis:

The data collected for this study will be analyzed using STATA, a powerful statistical software known for its robust data management capabilities and advanced statistical analysis tools. Descriptive statistics will be employed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample, offering a clear profile of the respondents. (Bryman, 2016).

Triangulation:

This research employed triangulation through the use of the survey method, use of a structured questionnaire, interview, the use of a sample and the use of non-probability sampling technique to arrive at the sample. The Data collected was coded and thematically analysed. (Flick, 2018).

4.0 Findings/Results:

4.1 Presentations of research Findings:

The study involved participants from two prominent media houses in Lusaka: Hot FM and Radio Phoenix. These media outlets were selected for their significant influence in shaping public discourse and journalistic practices in Zambia. A total of 52 respondents participated in the study, with 30 participants drawn from Hot FM and 22 participants from Radio Phoenix. Hot FM, which operates both a radio and television channel, has a larger workforce due to its dual operations in broadcasting. This broader scope of media coverage necessitates more personnel, thus reflecting its larger presence in the study. Radio Phoenix, primarily focused on radio broadcasting, had 22 respondents, consisting mainly of journalists, radio hosts, and news editors.

Figure 1. Gender

Gender	Freq.	Percent
Male	27	51.92
Female	25	48.08
Total	52	100

As shown in figure 1, it shows gender distribution of the respondents in the study shows a near-even balance between male and female participants. Out of a total of 52 respondents, 25 were female (accounting for 48.08%) and 27 were male (representing 51.92%).

Figure 2. Age

	Obs	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
Age	52	33.84615	10.44948	16	59

The age distribution of the respondents from both Hot FM and Radio Phoenix reveals an average (mean) age of 33.85 years. This suggests that the workforce in these media houses is relatively young, with a diverse age range. The standard deviation of 10.45 years indicates a significant spread in ages, meaning there is considerable variation in the ages of respondents. The youngest respondent was 16 years old, while the oldest was 59 years old.

Figure 3. Education

	Freq.	Percent
Tertiary	35	67.31
Secondary	17	32.69
Total	52	100

Figure 3 show that the majority, 67.31%, have attained tertiary education, indicating a well-educated workforce within Hot FM and Radio Phoenix. A smaller proportion, 32.69%, completed secondary education, suggesting some variation in educational backgrounds but still reflecting a significant degree of formal education across the sample.

Figure 4. Position in the Media House

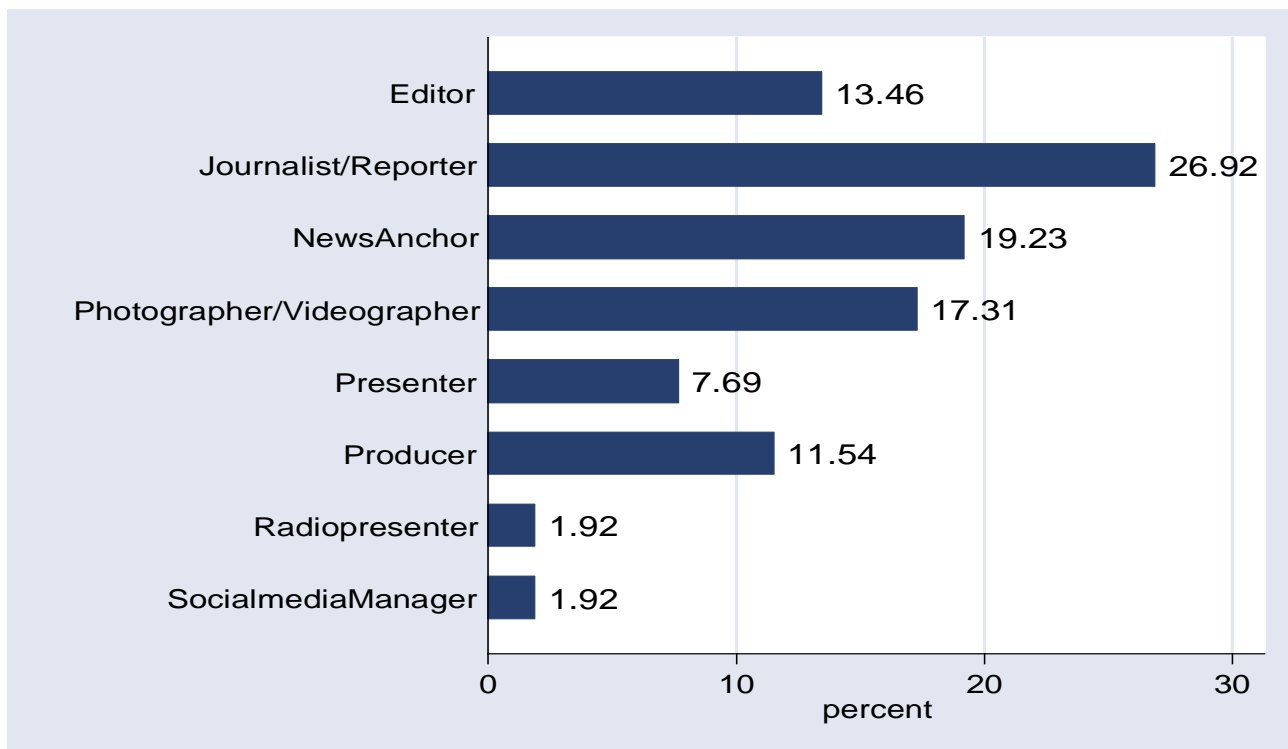


Figure 4 shows positions within Hot FM and Radio Phoenix indicates a diverse range of roles, with 26.92% of respondents working as journalists or reporters, the largest group in the media houses. News anchors make up 19.23%, followed by photographers/videographers at 17.31%, highlighting the importance of visual media. Editors account for 13.46%, while producers represent 11.54% of the respondents. Presenters, both on radio and television, make up a smaller portion, with 7.69% for TV presenters and 1.92% for radio presenters. Social media managers are also represented, though minimally, at 1.92%, reflecting a growing

Figure 5. Experience

Experience	Freq.	Percent
Less Than 1 year	9	17.31
1-3 Years	18	34.62
4-6 Years	10	19.23
7-10 Years	9	17.31
10 & above Years	6	11.54
Total	52	100

Figure 5 shows that among the 52 participants from Hot FM and Radio Phoenix, 34.62% have 1-3 years of experience, indicating a youthful workforce. Additionally, 19.23% have 4-6 years, and 17.31% have 7-10 years of experience. Notably, 17.31% are newcomers with less than 1 year of experience, while 11.54% have been in the industry for over 10 years, representing a smaller proportion of highly experienced staff.

Effects of Media Ownership in Shaping Media Content Production, Agenda Setting And News Coverage.

This section explores how media ownership influences decisions on content production, the setting of news agendas, and coverage of news events.

Figure 6. To what extent do you agree that media ownership influences the types of stories covered by your media house?

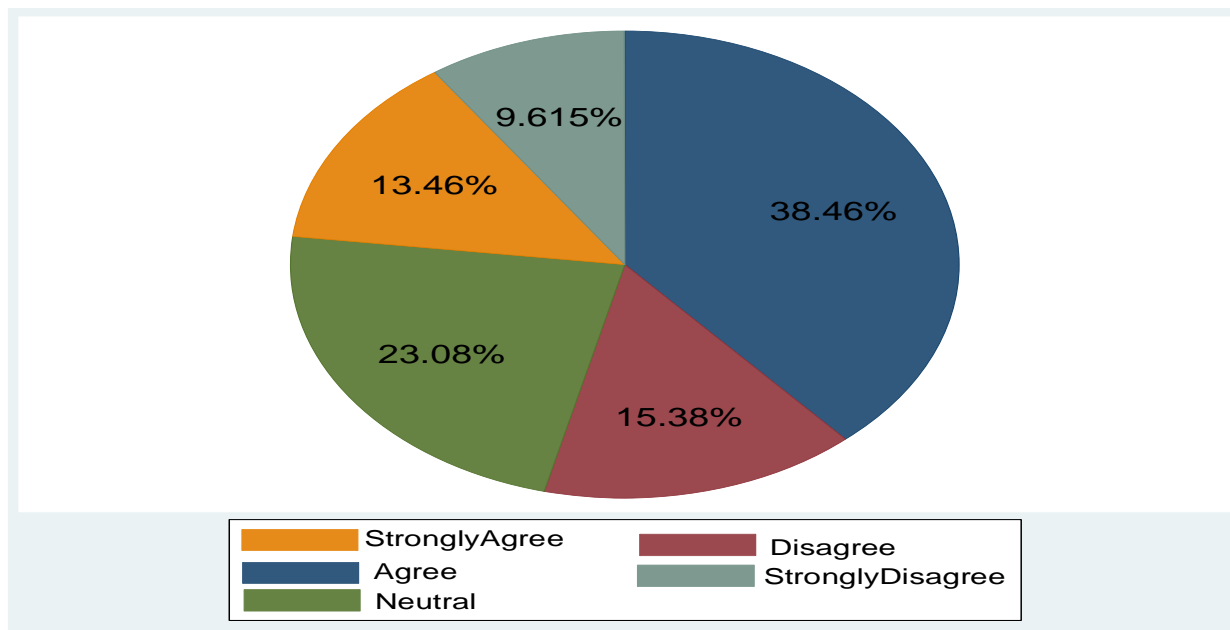


Figure 6 shows how respondents perceive the influence of media ownership on the types of stories covered by their media house. The majority, 38.46%, agreed that media ownership does influence the types of stories covered, while 13.46% strongly agreed, bringing the combined total of those who believe in ownership’s influence to over half (51.92%). However, 15.38% disagreed, and 9.62% strongly disagreed, reflecting a minority who feel ownership does not have a significant impact. A considerable portion, 23.08%, remained neutral, suggesting some uncertainty or lack of a strong opinion on the matter.

Figure 7. How often does media ownership affect the editorial agenda in your organization?

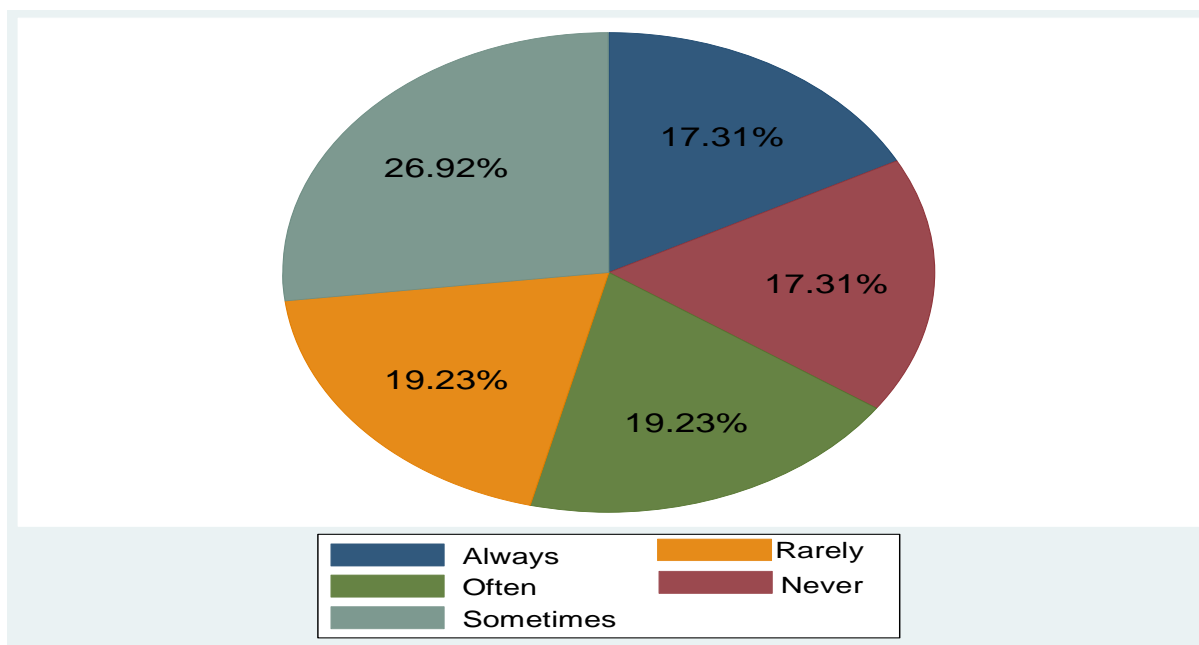


Figure 7 on how often media ownership affects the editorial agenda within organizations shows a fairly distributed set of responses. 26.92% of participants stated that media ownership sometimes influences the editorial agenda, making it the most common response. This is followed by 19.23% who said it often affects the editorial direction, and an equal 19.23% who believe it rarely has an impact. Interestingly, 17.31% of respondents said that media ownership always affects the editorial agenda, while another 17.31% indicated that it never does.

Examples of how media ownership has shaped content production and news coverage in your organization:

The responses gathered from the survey on how media ownership shapes content production and news coverage reveal several significant patterns. A notable 31.71% of respondents observed that media owners influence the coverage of politically sensitive issues, with some noting a clear bias toward favoring the government or specific political entities. This aligns with previous studies that show media ownership often sways editorial content to serve the financial and political interests of owners (McChesney, 2004). Economic factors were also highlighted, with 12.20% of participants mentioning that economic ties influence story bias, suggesting that media houses might prioritize coverage that aligns with the business interests of their owners. Additionally, 14.63% of respondents noted that content is shaped by audience preferences, a tactic often employed to attract viewership or increase advertising revenue, a common practice in privately owned media outlets.

Figure 8. The key factors that influence agenda setting in your media house

Key Factor(s)	Freq.	Percent
Advertiser Influence	5	9.65
Advertiser Influence, Editorial Policy	1	1.92
Audience Preferences	15	28.84
Editorial Policy	5	9.62
Owner's Business Interests	12	23.08
Owner's Political Affiliations	7	13.46
Owner's Political Affiliations, Owner's Business Interests	7	11.46
Total	52	100

The table (Figure 8) highlights the key factors influencing agenda setting in media houses, with audience preferences being the most influential factor, cited by 28.84% of respondents. This is followed by owner's business interests (23.08%) and owner's political affiliations (13.46%), which are also significant drivers. A

smaller proportion of participants indicated that advertiser influence (9.65%) and editorial policy (9.62%) play a role. Notably, political affiliations combined with business interests were mentioned by 11.46% of respondents, showing the intersection of business and political considerations in shaping media agendas.

Figure 9. Participant also evaluated the effects of media ownership in shaping media content production, agenda setting, and news coverage, using the following indicators, with rating scales: Always (100%) > Often (high frequency) > Sometimes (moderate frequency) > Rarely (low frequency) > Never (0%)

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Very Low	
Ownership Influence on Content Production	11.54%	19.23%	40.38%	9.62%	19.23%	100%
Ownership Influence on Agenda	13.46%	21.15%	36.54%	11.54%	17.31%	100%
Priority Given to Ownership Interests	11.54%	25.00%	30.77%	15.38%	17.31%	100%
Inclusion of Diverse Voices:	7.69%	40.38%	13.46%	25.00%	13.46%	100%
Ownership Influence on News Coverage	11.54%	34.62%	17.31%	15.38%	21.15%	100%

Figure 9 reveals that media ownership significantly influences content production, agenda setting, and news coverage. The majority of respondents (40.38%) indicated that ownership sometimes affects content production, with 19.23% saying it often influences, and 11.54% stating it always does. Regarding agenda setting, 36.54% felt ownership sometimes shapes it, while 21.15% said it often does, and 13.46% stated it always has an impact. Ownership interests were reported as sometimes prioritized by 30.77%, often prioritized by 25%, and always considered by 11.54%. Diverse voices are often included according to 40.38% of respondents, but 25% indicated that diversity is rarely included. On news coverage, 34.62% felt ownership often affects it, with 11.54% stating it always does, while 21.15% reported very low influence.

Investigate the influence of media ownership on media bias and censorship.

Figure 10. How often does the media outlet present biased reporting in favour of the owner's interests?

Figure 10 on biased reporting shows varying frequencies across organizations. About 28.85% of respondents said it happens sometimes, 23.08% reported it rarely occurs, and 21.15% stated it happens often. Additionally, 7.69% said it always happens, while 19.23% indicated it never occurs.

Fig.10

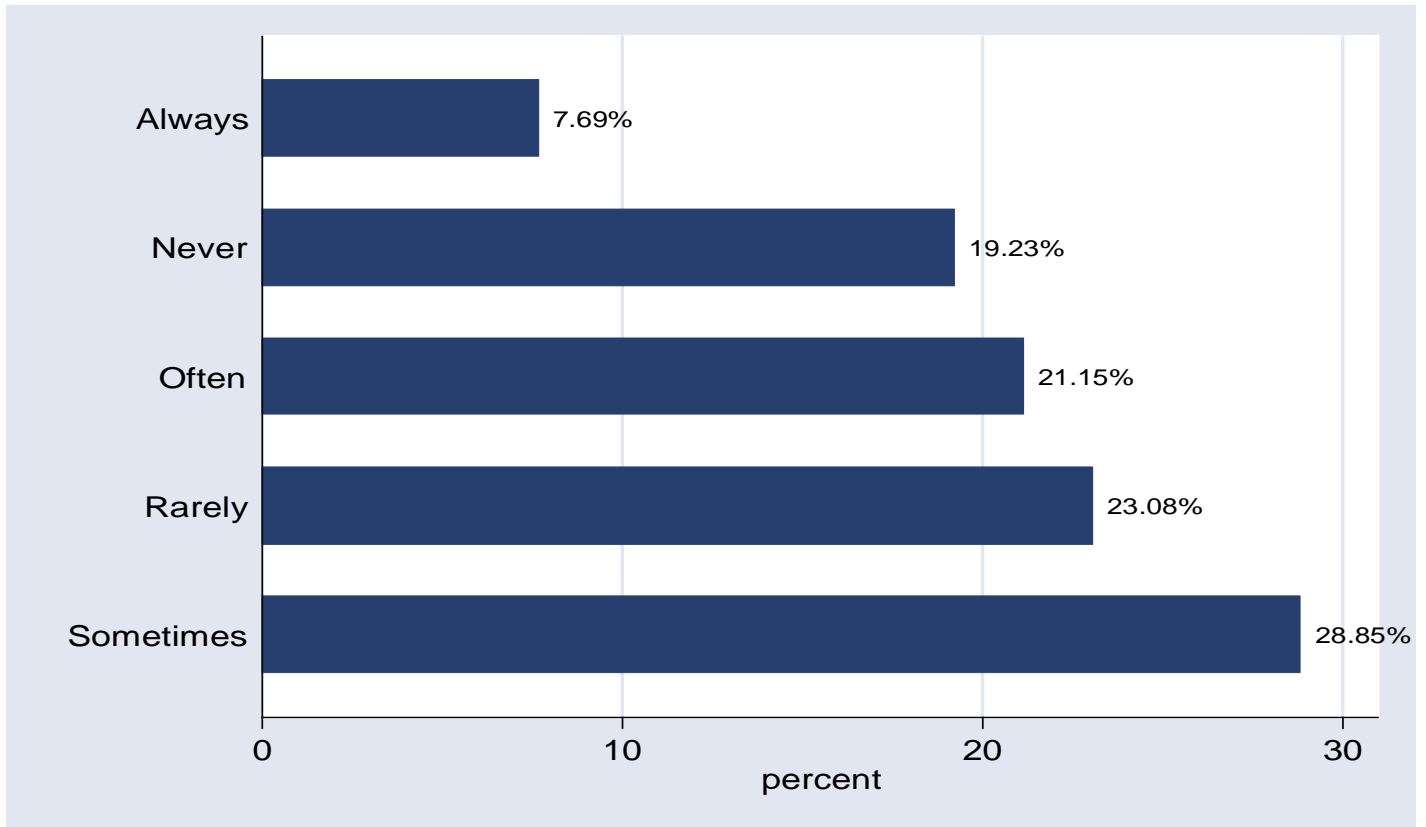


Figure 15. To what extent does the media outlet prioritize stories that align with the owner's political or business interests

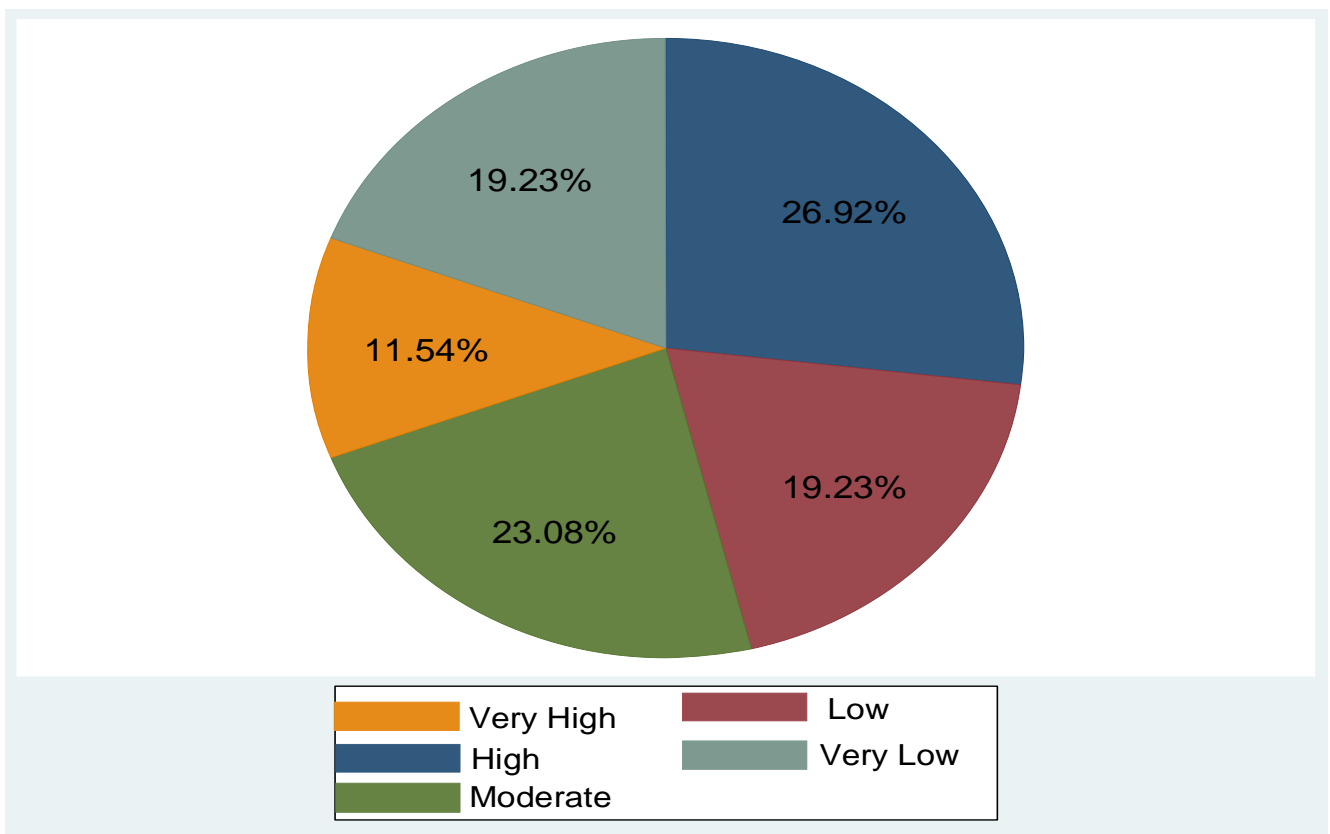


Figure 15 shows a significant influence of ownership on story selection. 26.92% of respondents reported high prioritization of stories aligned with the owner's interests, while 11.54% noted very high prioritization. 23.08% rated it as moderate, and 38.46% reported low to very low prioritization.

Figure 16. How often does the media outlet engage in self-censorship to avoid conflicting with the owner's interests?

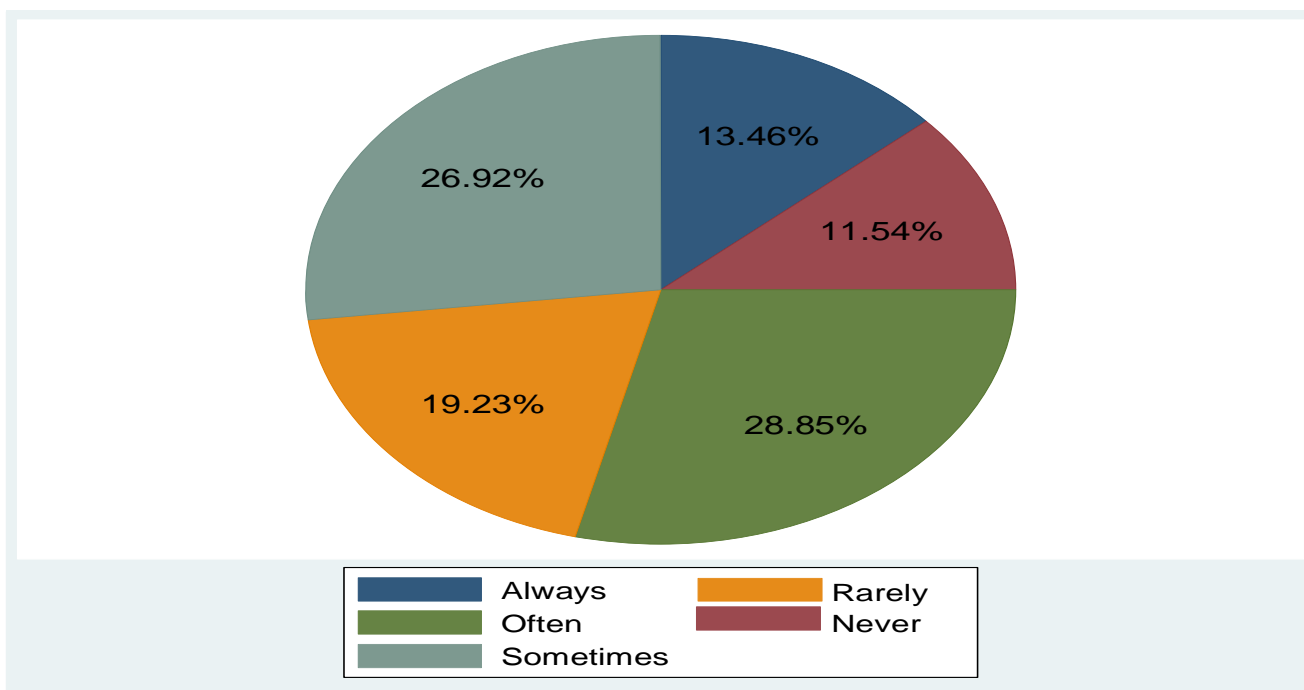
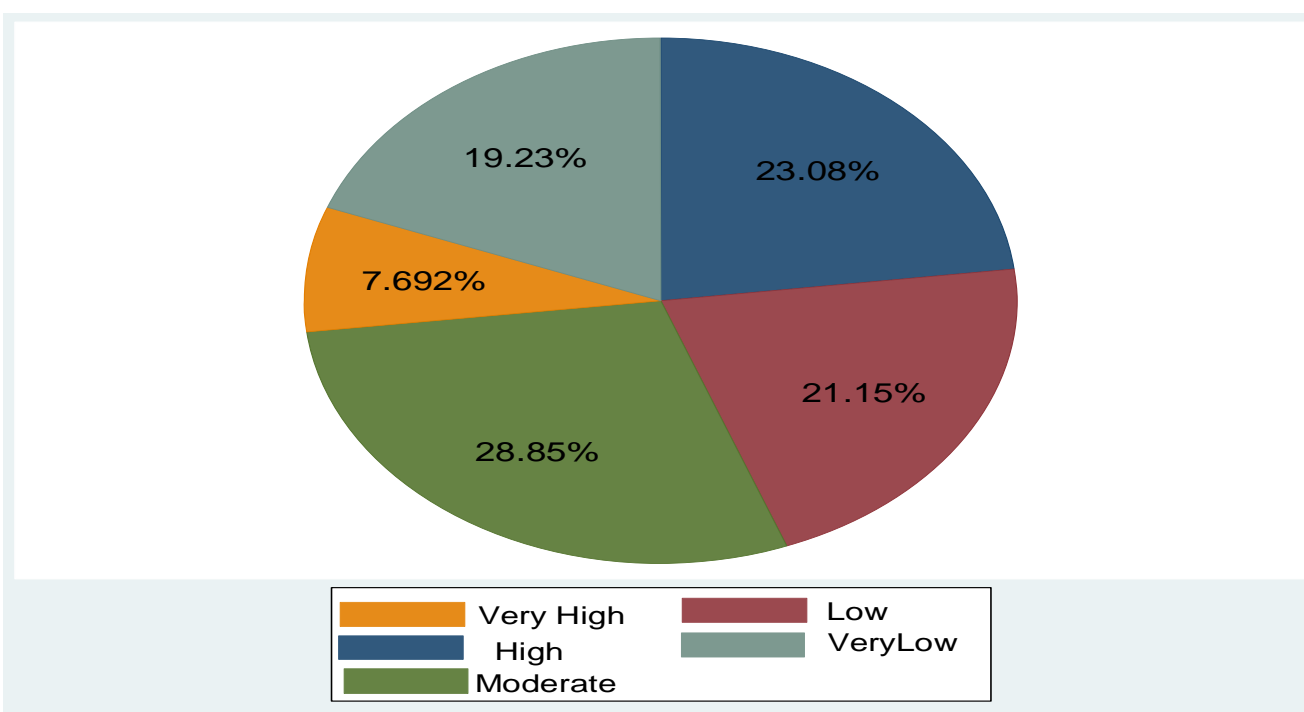


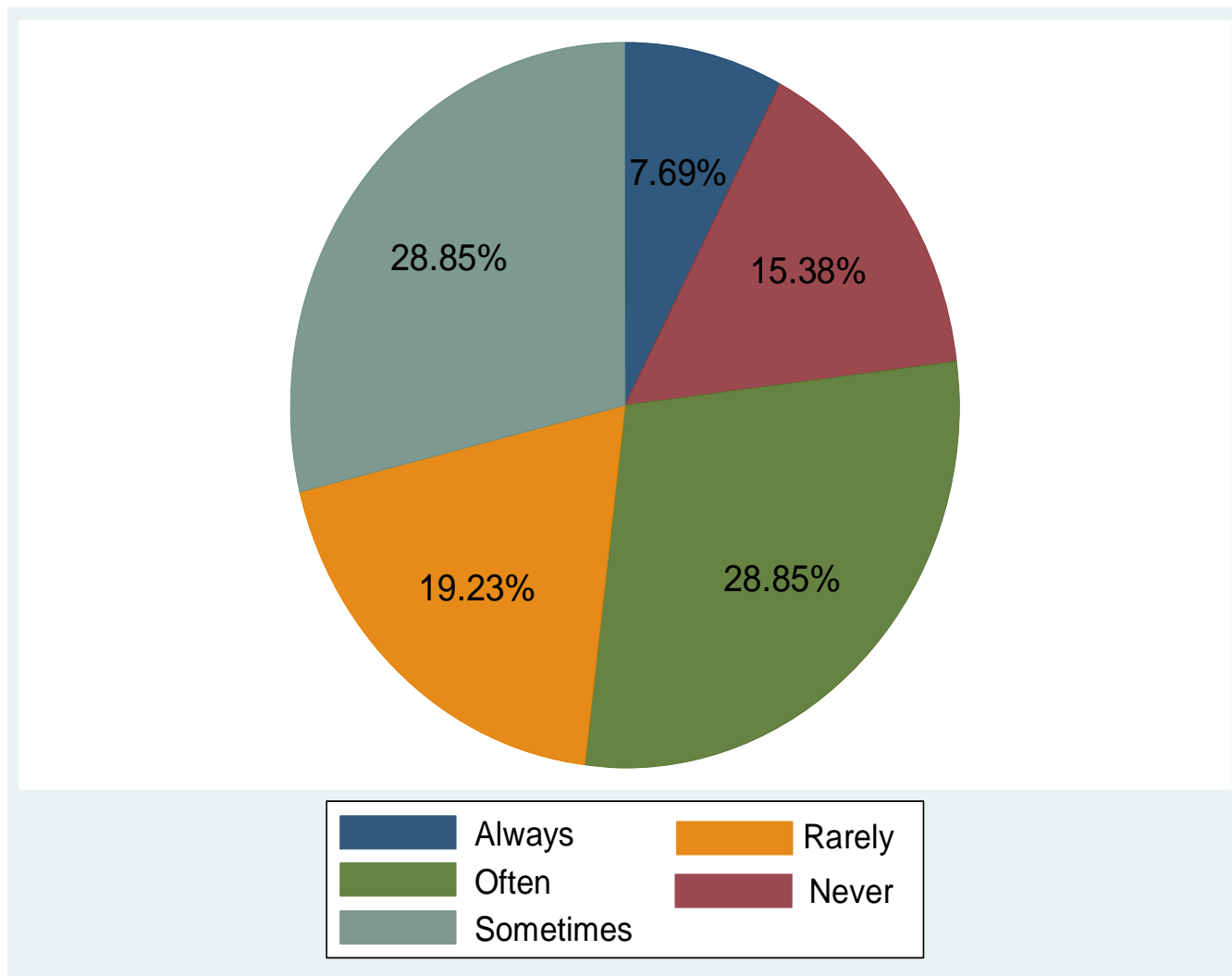
Figure 16 shows that 28.85% of respondents believe self-censorship occurs often, and 26.92% say it happens sometimes, indicating that over half (55.77%) see self-censorship as a regular practice. 19.23% reported it happens rarely, 13.46% said always, and 11.54% stated it never occurs, suggesting some media houses operate more independently.

Figure 17. To what extent does the media outlet restrict or limit reporting on sensitive topics that may impact the owner's interests?



In Figure 17, the majority of media outlets (52.31%) report moderate to low restrictions on sensitive topics that may impact the owner's interests, with 28.85% indicating moderate restrictions and 21.15% reporting low restrictions. However, a significant portion, 23.08%, faces high restrictions, and 7.69% report very high limitations

Figure 18. How often does the media outlet experience external pressure from the owner or other external sources to influence reporting?



In Figure 18, a notable proportion of media outlets (28.85%) often experience external pressure from the owner or other sources to influence reporting. This is closely followed by 28.85% who experience such pressure sometimes. In contrast, 19.23% report rare experiences of external pressure, and 7.69% experience it always. However, 15.38% of media outlets never face this external influence.

Describe instances where you believe censorship occurred due to ownership influence: Instances of censorship due to ownership influence were highlighted in several areas within media outlets. Responses revealed that advertising-related censorship was prevalent, where content would be altered or restricted to favor advertiser interests, including prioritizing financial gains over stories of human interest or editorial independence. Additionally, some media outlets reported political censorship, particularly in covering political campaigns and briefings, where certain narratives were restricted to align with the owner's political views, as observed during the 2021 general elections and in reporting on Edgar Chagwa Lungu's eligibility. However, a minority of respondents indicated that they had never experienced censorship, suggesting that not all media houses were subject to such influences.

Effects of Media Ownership On Editorial Decision Making Process And Ethical Practice

Figure 19. How often do ownership interests conflict with editorial decisions in your media house?

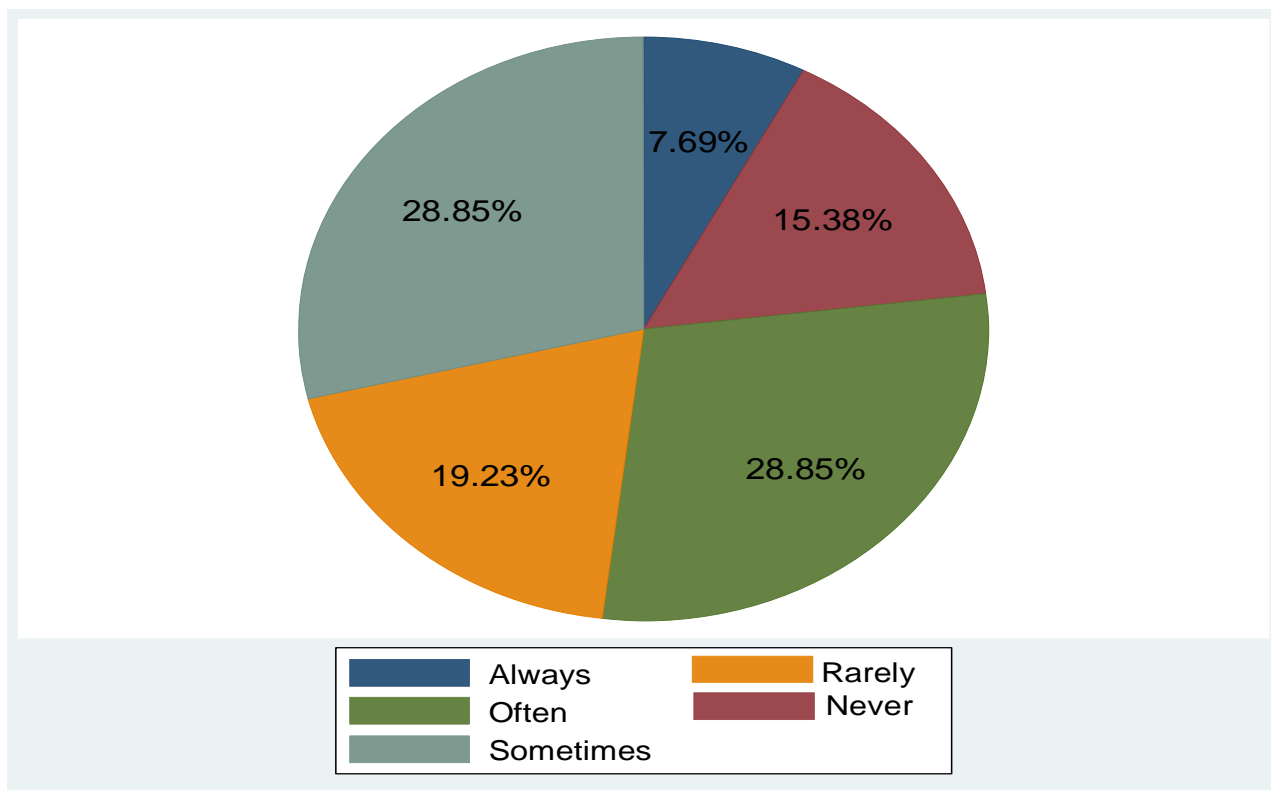


Figure 19 reveals the frequency of conflicts between ownership interests and editorial decisions in the media outlet. A significant portion of respondents (28.85%) indicated that such conflicts occurred often, followed by another 28.85% who stated that conflicts happened sometimes. Smaller groups reported that conflicts occurred rarely (19.23%) or always (7.69%). On the other hand, 15.38% of respondents mentioned that conflicts with editorial decisions never occurred, suggesting that some media outlets maintain a strong editorial independence despite ownership influence.

Figure 20. How often are editorial decisions based on journalistic merit rather than ownership interests?

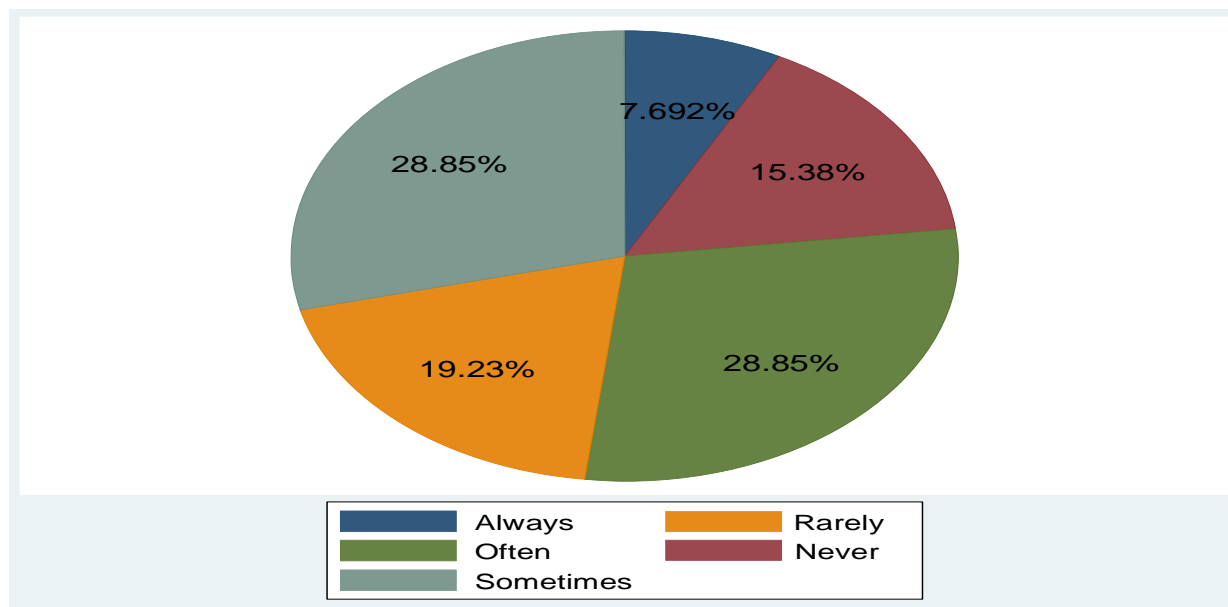


Figure 20 shows that 28.85% of respondents indicated that editorial decisions are often based on journalistic merit, while another 28.85% said this happens sometimes. However, 19.23% reported that editorial decisions are rarely driven by journalistic merit, and 15.38% stated they are never based on it. Only 7.69% of respondents claimed that editorial decisions are always made based on journalistic principles.

Figure 21. In your view, how does media ownership influence the ethical practices within your organization?

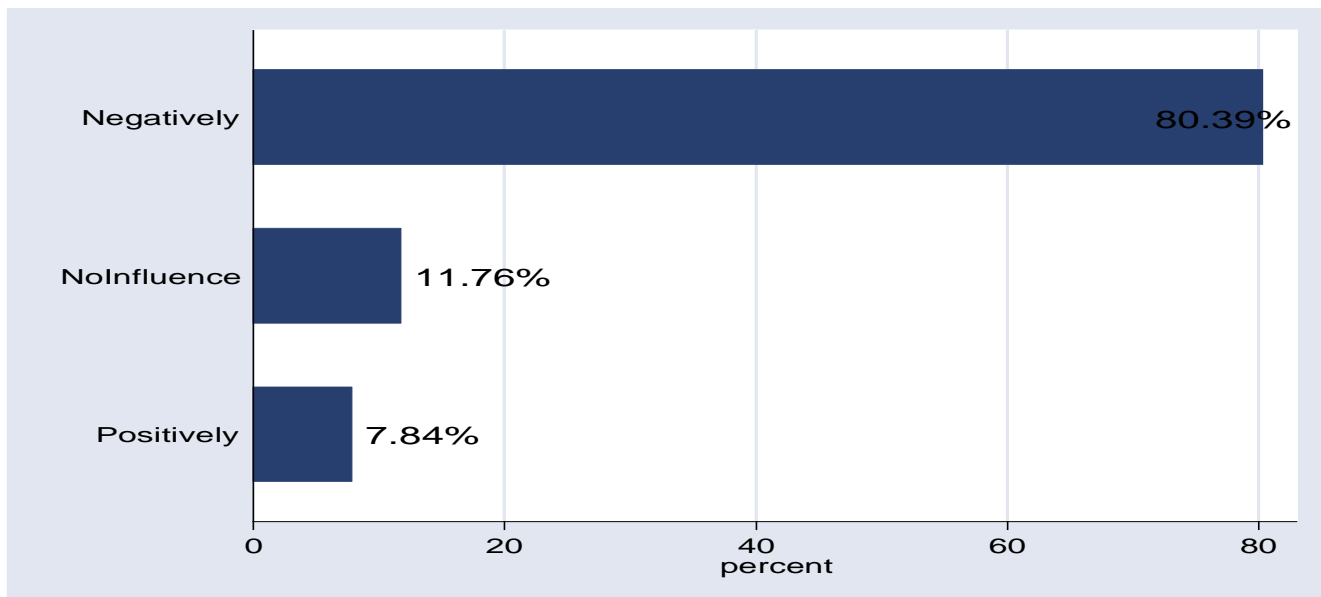


Figure 21 highlights the impact of media ownership on ethical practices within media organizations. A significant majority of respondents (80.39%) believe that media ownership influences ethical practices negatively, suggesting that ownership interests often compromise journalistic integrity. A smaller portion, 11.76%, reported that ownership had no influence on ethical practices, while only 7.84% felt that media ownership influenced practices positively.

Figure 22. To what extent does media ownership impact the tone and framing of news stories?

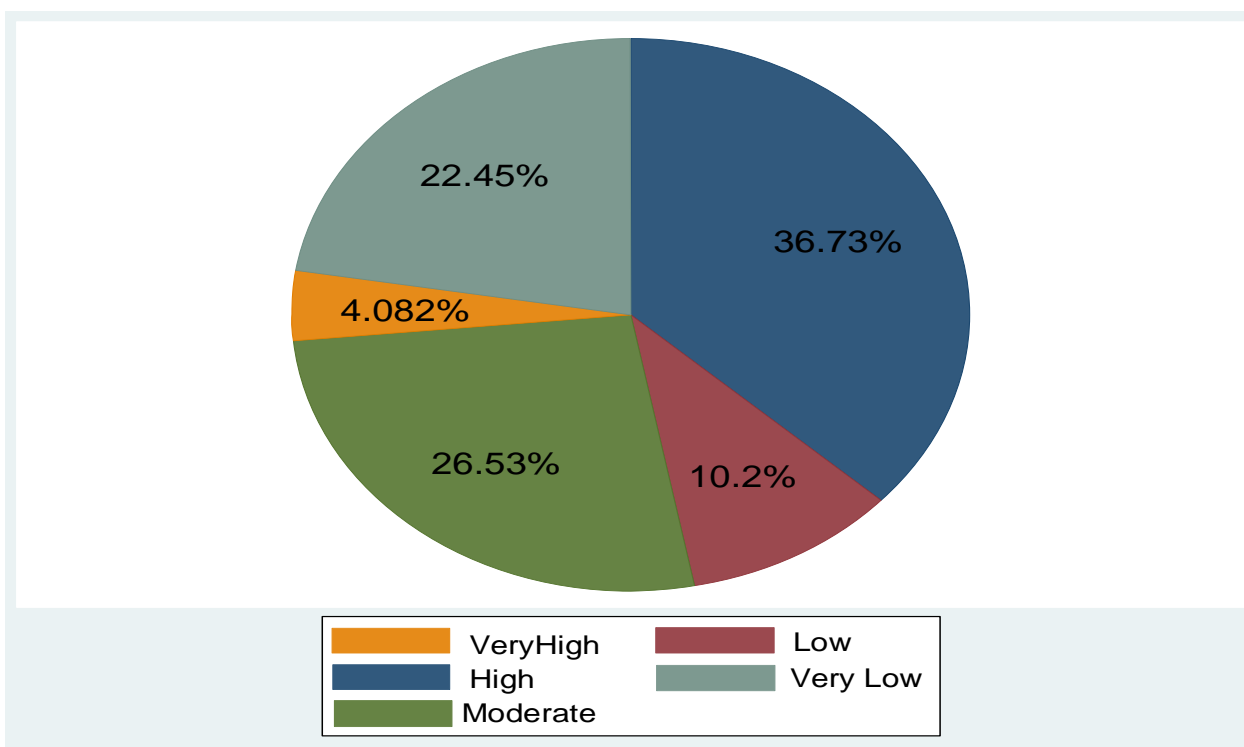


Figure 22 shows the impact of media ownership on the tone and framing of news stories. The majority of respondents (36.73%) indicated that media ownership has a high impact on how news stories are framed and the tone they take. A moderate percentage (26.53%) reported a moderate impact, indicating that while ownership influences the framing, other factors may also contribute. On the other hand, low (10.20%) and very low (22.45%) impacts were reported by a smaller number of respondents. Only 4.08% indicated a very high impact.

Figure 23. Does media ownership compromise ethical standards in pursuit of ratings or profits?

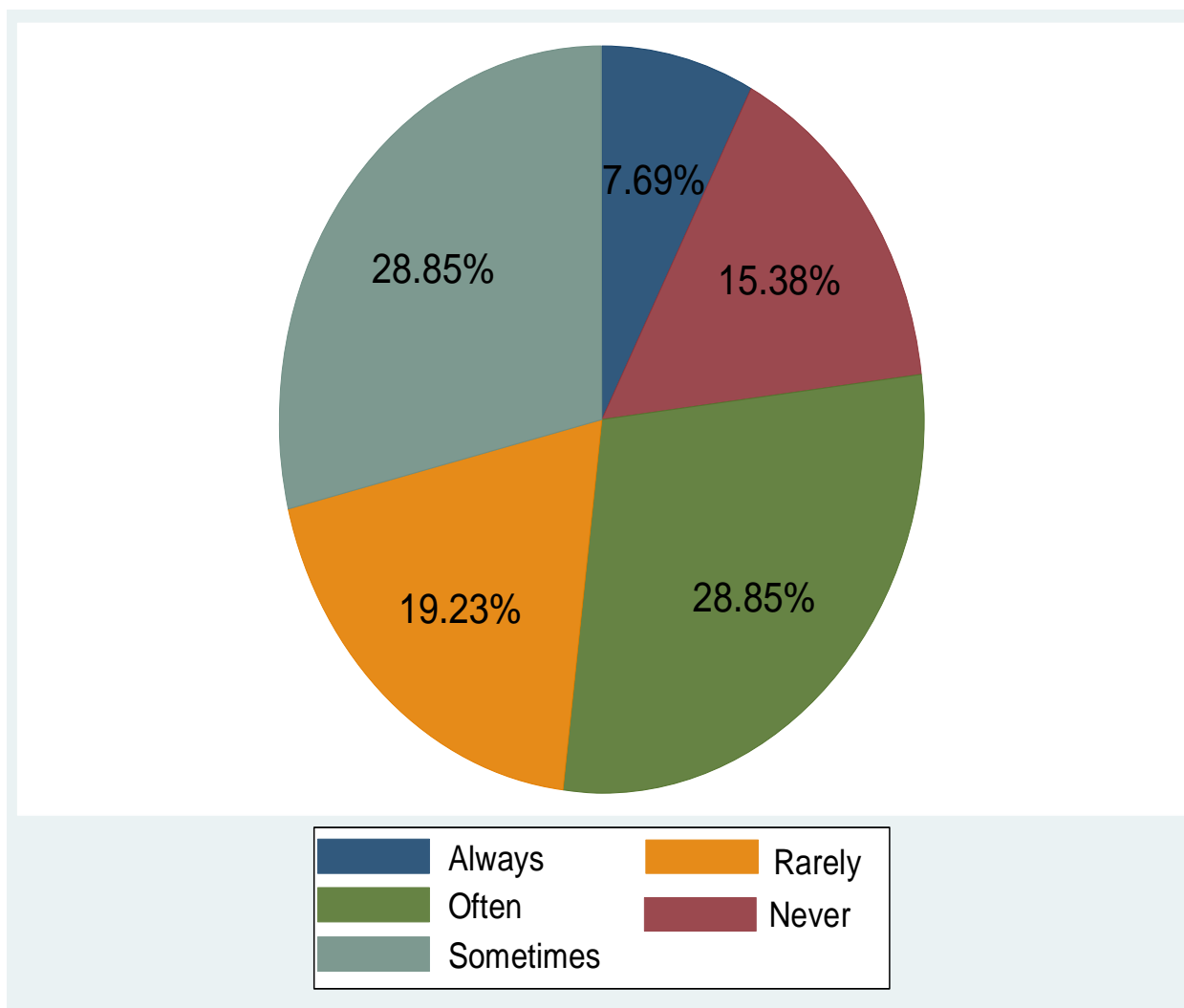
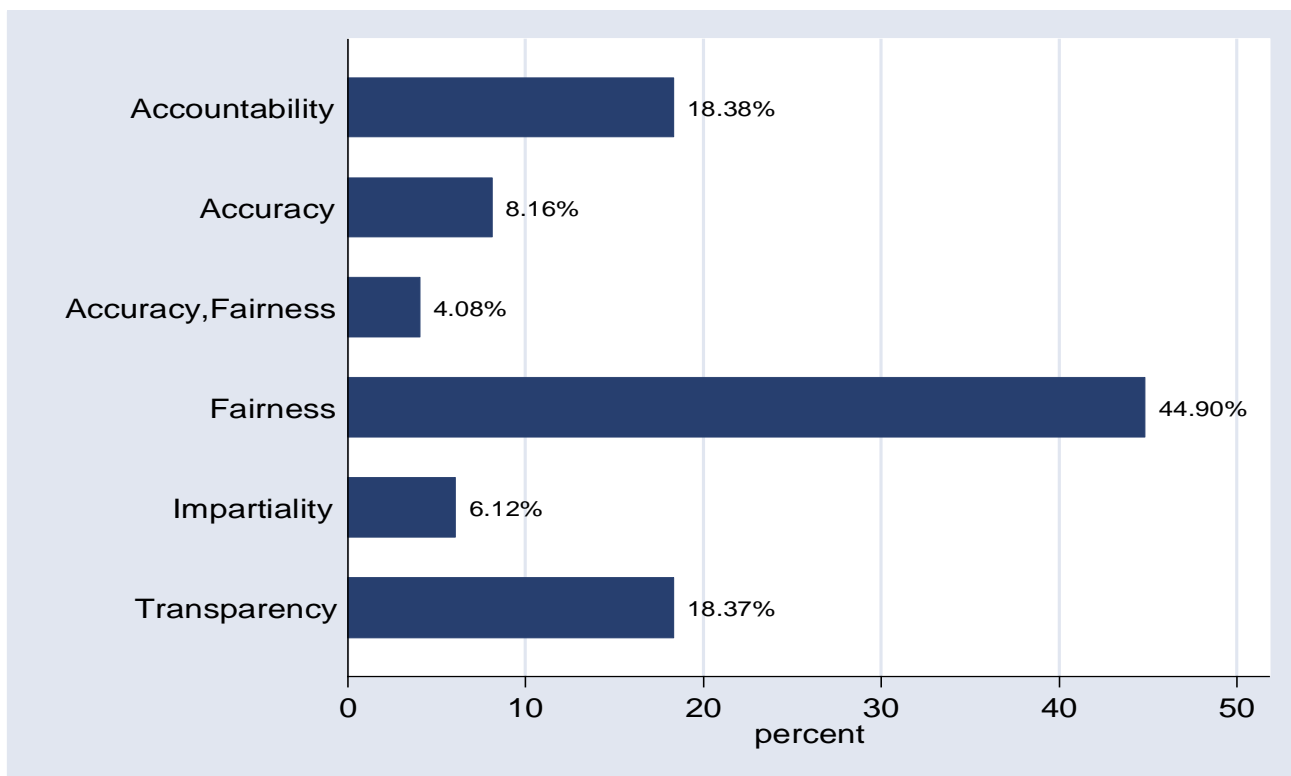


Figure 23 shows that 28.85% of respondents believe media ownership often compromises ethical standards for profit, with another 28.85% saying it happens sometimes. Meanwhile, 19.23% reported rare occurrences, and 15.38% said it never happens. Additionally, 7.69% stated that ethical compromises always occur, indicating a consistent influence of ownership on ethical journalism.

Please provide specific examples where editorial decision-making was influenced by ownership interests.

The analysis of editorial decision-making shows that media organizations often prioritize business and political interests over journalistic integrity. Respondents highlighted that advertising profits, political campaign coverage, and personal interests of media owners influence editorial choices. Coverage tends to focus on events that benefit the organization financially or politically, compromising human interest stories and credibility. Media owners also shape coverage, especially during politically sensitive periods, with limited focus on public interest. This reveals the complex relationship between media ownership and ethical journalism, where commercial and political objectives dominate.

Figure 24. Which ethical practices are most affected by media ownership in your organization?



The analysis of ethical practices most affected by media ownership in organizations reveals that fairness (44.9%) is the most significantly impacted, followed by accountability and transparency, each cited by 18.37% of respondents. Impartiality and accuracy were also reported as affected but to a lesser extent, at 6.12% and 8.16%, respectively

Explore The Influence Of Media Ownership On Autonomy And Media Independence

This final section examines the overall influence of media ownership on the autonomy and independence of private electronic media houses.

Figure 25. To what extent does media ownership impact the autonomy of journalists in your media house?

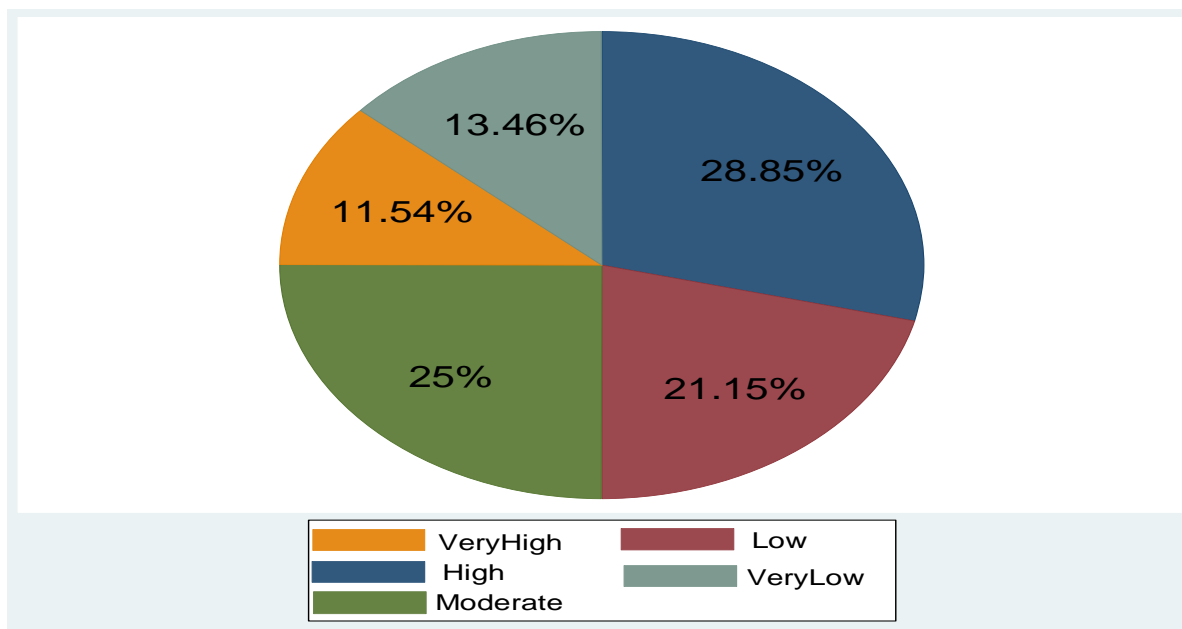
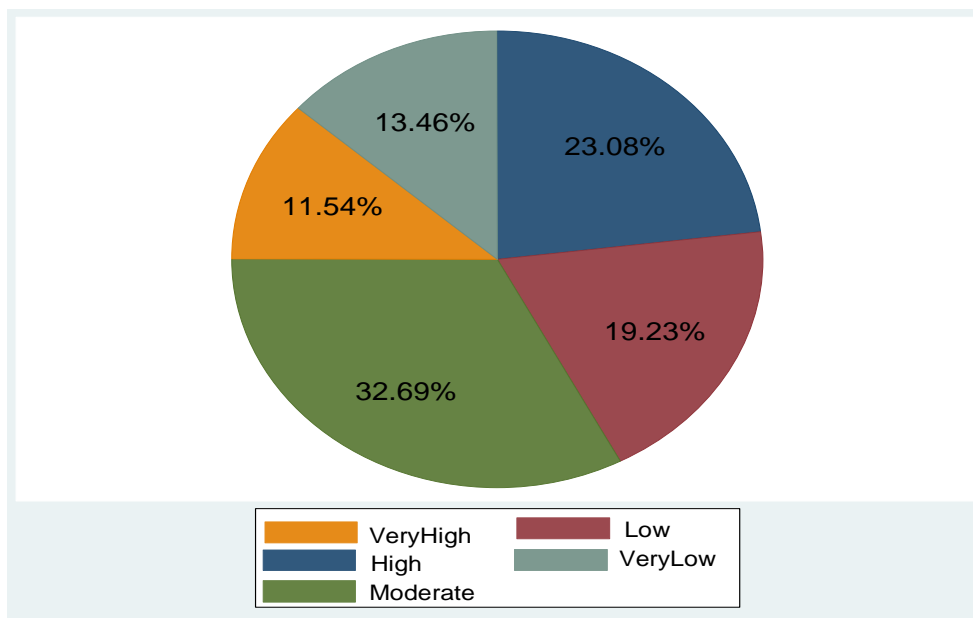


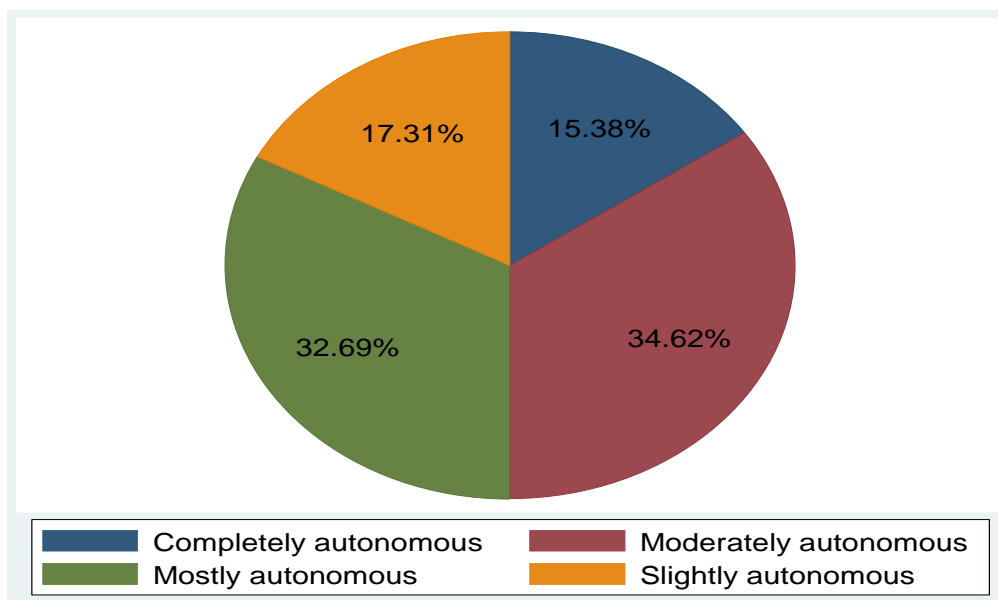
Figure 25 reveals that media ownership significantly impacts the autonomy of journalists in media houses. Approximately 28.85% of respondents report a "high" impact, while 11.54% experience a "very high" influence, indicating that nearly 40% of respondents believe ownership heavily affects journalistic independence. Meanwhile, 25% of respondents note a "moderate" impact, showing that a sizable proportion still experiences some degree of interference. On the lower end, 21.15% of respondents feel a "low" impact, and 13.46% report a "very low" effect, suggesting that in some media houses, ownership may exert less pressure.

Figure 26. How much control does media ownership have over editorial content?



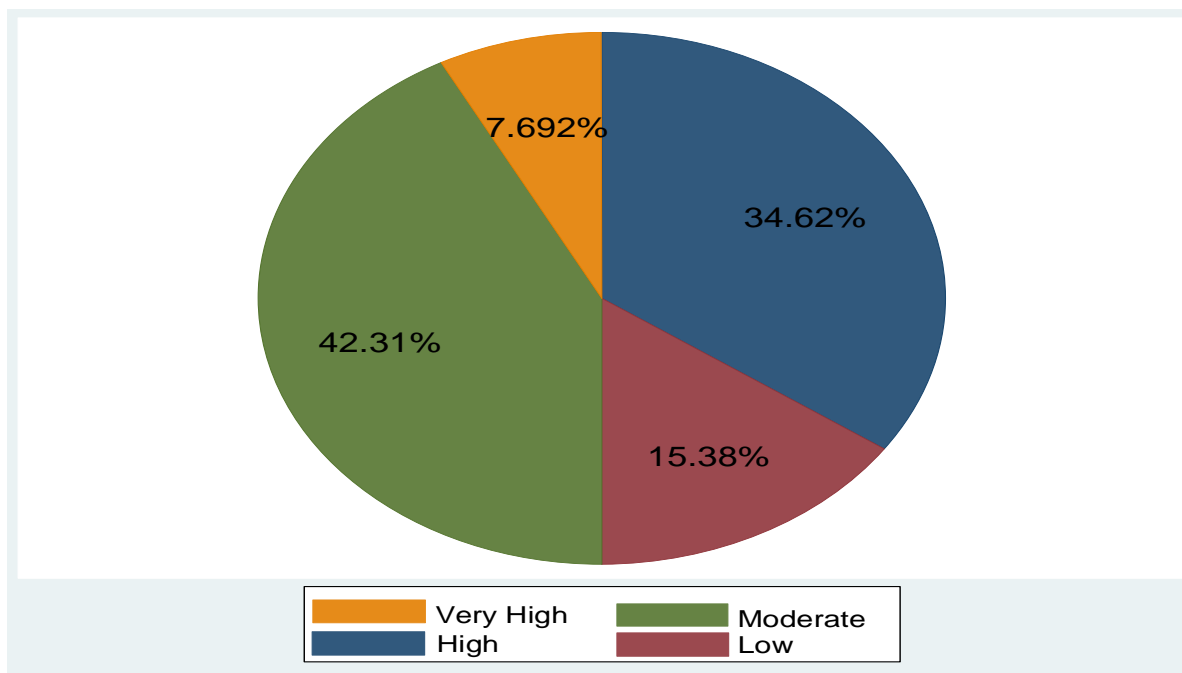
The analysis of Figure 26 reveals that media ownership exerts considerable control over editorial content in media houses. A significant portion of respondents, 32.69%, report a "moderate" level of control, while 23.08% and 11.54% observe "high" and "very high" control, respectively, indicating that over 60% believe ownership has a notable influence. Meanwhile, 19.23% of respondents perceive a "low" degree of control, and 13.46% experience "very low" control.

Figure 27. To what extent do you feel that journalists in your organization are able to operate autonomously, without interference from media owners?



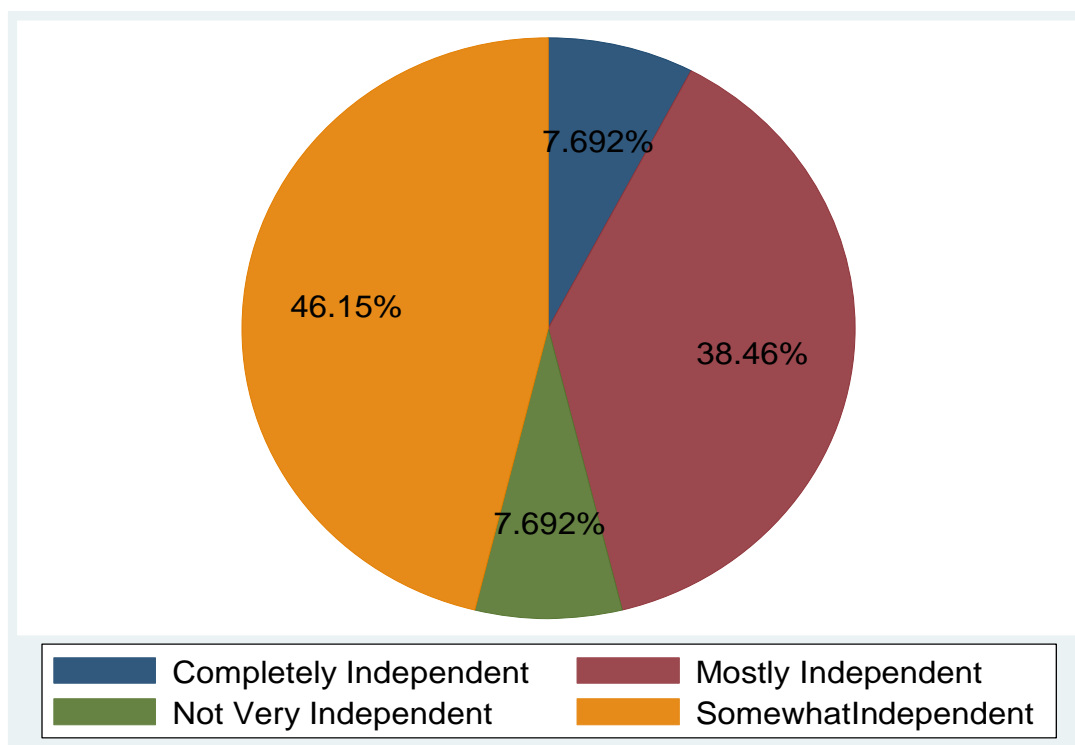
The analysis of Figure 27 shows that while a portion of journalists experience autonomy, many still face interference from media owners. Specifically, 34.62% describe their autonomy as "moderate," and 32.69% feel "mostly autonomous," suggesting a balance between independence and influence. However, only 15.38% feel "completely autonomous," while 17.31% report being "slightly autonomous."

Figure 28. To what extent can journalists and editors make independent decisions without ownership interference?



Specifically, 42.31% rate their ability to make independent decisions as "moderate," with 34.62% considering it "high." However, only 7.69% report a "very high" level of independence, and 15.38% rate it as "low."

Figure 29. How would you describe the level of media independence in your organization?



The data in Figure 29 reveals a nuanced perspective on media independence within the organization. A significant portion of respondents, 46.15%, describe the media as "somewhat independent," while 38.46% consider it "mostly independent." Only a small percentage, 7.69%, rate the media as "completely independent" or "not very independent."

Figure 30. In what ways has media ownership influenced your ability to report independently?

Ways Media Ownership Influences Reporting Independence	Freq.	Percent
Bias in content selection	22	42.31
Editorial oversight by owners	22	42.31
Pressure to align with owner's preferences	8	15.38
Total	52	100

The data in Figure 30 suggests that media ownership significantly impacts journalists' ability to report independently. The two most cited factors, "bias in content selection" (42.31%) and "editorial oversight by owners" (42.31%), highlight how ownership can shape what news is reported and how it is framed. Additionally, a smaller percentage (15.38%) of respondents reported feeling pressure to align their reporting with the owner's preferences.

Figure 31. What measures do you think can enhance the autonomy and independence of media in Lusaka?

Measures to Enhance Media Autonomy and Independence	Freq.	Percent
Clear separation of ownership and editorial policy	20	38.46
Increased transparency in media funding	11	21.15
Strengthening journalist unions	21	40.38
Total	52	100

Figure 31 reveals three key measures that respondents believe can enhance media autonomy and independence in Lusaka. The most frequently suggested measure is "strengthening journalist unions" (40.38%). "Clear separation of ownership and editorial policy" follows closely (38.46%). Lastly, "increased transparency in media funding" (21.15%) highlights the importance of clear and open financial sources to avoid undue influence on editorial decisions.

4.2 Discussion:

The demographic characteristics of the study participants reveal key insights into the workforce composition of Hot FM and Radio Phoenix in Lusaka. The study involved 52 respondents, with a slight male majority (51.92%) and a balanced age range (16 to 59 years), averaging 33.85 years. A majority (67.31%) had tertiary education, indicating a highly educated workforce. The participants' roles varied, with most working as journalists (26.92%), news anchors (19.23%), and photographers/videographers (17.31%). The majority (34.62%) had 1-3 years of experience, showcasing a youthful and evolving workforce.

The study also explored the effects of media ownership on editorial decisions, finding that ownership significantly influences content production, agenda setting, and news coverage. Over half of respondents (51.92%) agreed that media ownership impacts the types of stories covered, with a majority reporting that ownership sometimes or often influences editorial decisions. Economic and political factors were identified as key drivers, with 31% noting that media owners shape coverage of politically sensitive issues to favor government narratives or business interests.

Ownership interests also influence agenda setting, with 36.54% of respondents reporting that it "sometimes" affects how editorial agendas are shaped. A significant portion (30.77%) noted that ownership interests are "sometimes" prioritized in editorial decisions, impacting both content selection and the inclusion of diverse voices. While 40.38% felt diverse voices are often included, 25% noted they are rarely represented, indicating challenges in balancing ownership priorities with diverse perspectives.

The study highlighted the issue of media bias and censorship linked to ownership. Over half (55.77%) of respondents acknowledged self-censorship as a regular practice in their outlets, often driven by ownership's political or commercial interests. External pressure was also noted, with 28.85% indicating frequent external influence on editorial content, particularly during sensitive periods like elections. Censorship instances were often tied to commercial interests, such as altering stories to please advertisers or suppressing political content.

The study emphasized the impact of ownership on ethical practices, with 80.39% of respondents believing that ownership negatively affects journalistic integrity. Conflicts between ownership and editorial decisions were common, with many respondents (28.85%) noting frequent clashes. The findings indicate that ownership pressures often compromise fairness, accountability, and transparency, leading to biased reporting and ethical challenges in the media industry.

4.3 Conclusion:

The study examines the impact of media ownership on journalism practices in private electronic media houses in Lusaka. It finds that ownership significantly shapes media content, often aligning editorial priorities with owners' political or commercial interests, narrowing public discourse. Ownership also leads to bias and censorship, as journalists face pressures that compromise editorial integrity, reducing diversity of viewpoints and undermining the media's watchdog role. The research shows that ownership influences editorial decision-making and ethical standards, resulting in biased reporting and ethical lapses, which erode public trust. Furthermore, ownership structures limit journalistic autonomy, with financial or political pressures leading to self-censorship and reduced investigative journalism. The study concludes that media

ownership impacts content, promotes bias, limits editorial freedom, and compromises ethics. It recommends regulatory reforms for transparency, protections for journalistic independence, and alternative funding models to ensure a free, independent press essential for democratic governance.

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