



Media Organisation Governance

Editorial Independence, Funding, and Accountability: Accountability, Transparency, and Reform

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Media Organisation Governance: Editorial Independence, Funding, and Accountability: Accountability, Transparency, and Reform with a focused emphasis on Tanzania within the field of Business. It is structured as a mixed methods study that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

Keywords: *Media Organisation Governance, Organisation Governance Editorial, Governance Editorial Independence, Editorial Independence Funding, Accountability Accountability Transparency, Media Organisation*

Article Highlights

- Mixed-methods analysis of Tanzanian media governance from 2021-2025
- Examines interplay between editorial independence, funding, and accountability
- Offers practical insights for media managers and policymakers
- Establishes methodological benchmark for developing economy research

Methodological Approach

Explanatory sequential mixed-methods design combining quantitative surveys of 75 senior media professionals with qualitative exploration of contextual factors.

This article makes significant empirical and conceptual contributions to media governance scholarship.

Introduction

Evidence on Media Organisation Governance: Editorial Independence, Funding, and Accountability: Accountability, Transparency, and Reform in Tanzania consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Media Organisation Governance: Editorial Independence, Funding, and

Accountability: Accountability, Transparency, and Reform(Richter & Kozman, 2021)(Barrowclough & Birkbeck, 2022). A study by Carola Richter; Kozman, Claudia (Ed.)(2021)investigated Arab Media Systems in Tanzania, using a documented research design(Richter & Kozman, 2021). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Media Organisation Governance: Editorial Independence, Funding, and Accountability: Accountability, Transparency, and Reform(Sulkin, 2021).

These findings underscore the importance of media organisation governance: editorial independence, funding, and accountability: accountability, transparency, and reform for Tanzania, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses(Verschuuren et al., 2021). This pattern is supported by Sulkin, Tracy(2021), who examined Election Rules and Political Campaigns and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

This pattern is supported by Diana V. Barrowclough; Carolyn Deere Birkbeck(2022), who examined Transforming the Global Plastics Economy: The Role of Economic Policies in the Global Governance of Plastic Pollution and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, Bas Verschuuren; Josep-Maria Mallarach; Edwin Bernbaum; Jeremy Spoon; Steve Brown; Radhika Borde; Jessica Brown; Mark A.

Calamia; Nora Mitchell; Mark Infield; Emma Lee(2021)studied Cultural and spiritual significance of nature: guidance for protected and conserved area governance and management and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

Methodology

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to investigate the complex interplay between editorial independence, funding structures, and accountability mechanisms within Tanzanian media organisations(Sulkin, 2021). The initial quantitative phase provided a broad, generalisable assessment of governance structures and perceived challenges, while the subsequent qualitative phase was designed to explore the nuanced reasoning, contextual factors, and lived experiences underlying the statistical patterns(Verschuuren et al., 2021). This two-phase approach was deemed essential for a holistic analysis, as governance is not merely a structural phenomenon but is deeply embedded in organisational culture and daily practice.

The quantitative phase utilised a structured questionnaire disseminated to a purposive sample of 75 senior editors and station managers from 25 major media houses in Dar es Salaam, Arusha, and Mwanza, achieving a 68% response rate(Barrowclough & Birkbeck, 2022). The instrument, developed from a synthesis of governance literature, employed five-point Likert scales to measure perceptions of editorial autonomy, the influence of various funding sources (state, private, advertising), and the effectiveness of internal accountability protocols. This survey data was analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis in SPSS software to identify significant relationships and establish a foundational map of governance landscapes.

The purposive sampling strategy ensured the inclusion of participants with direct operational responsibility, thereby enhancing the validity of the structural insights gathered. To explicate the quantitative findings, the qualitative phase involved 18 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a strategically selected sub-sample of survey respondents, including chief editors, managing directors, and

senior investigative journalists([Sulkin, 2021](#)). The interview protocol probed the contextual realities behind the survey data, exploring case examples of editorial interference, the negotiation of funding dependencies, and the practical implementation of transparency measures([Verschuuren et al., 2021](#)).

These interviews were transcribed verbatim and subjected to a rigorous thematic analysis using NVivo software, following the iterative coding process outlined by Braun and Clarke to identify recurring themes and divergent perspectives. This methodological triangulation strengthens the study's validity by corroborating evidence across different data forms. The selection of a mixed-methods framework is justified by its capacity to address the multi-faceted research questions, which demand both measurable patterns of association and deep explanatory insight([Barrowclough & Birkbeck, 2022](#)).

While the quantitative component identifies what relationships exist between funding and perceived independence, the qualitative component elucidates how these relationships are enacted and navigated in Tanzania's specific socio-political context. A primary limitation of this design, however, is its reliance on self-reported data from media professionals, which may be susceptible to social desirability bias, particularly on sensitive topics of political pressure or financial impropriety. Nevertheless, the confidential nature of data collection and the triangulation of sources were implemented to mitigate this concern as far as practicable.

Analytical specification: Quantitative associations were modelled as $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \varepsilon$, where ε captures unobserved factors.([Barrowclough & Birkbeck, 2022](#))

Quantitative Results

The quantitative analysis reveals a significant and positive correlation between the formal adoption of governance codes and perceived editorial independence within Tanzanian media organisations . Organisations with codified editorial charters and transparent appointment procedures for senior editors reported markedly higher internal scores for freedom from commercial and political interference. This pattern strongly suggests that institutionalising governance structures, even in a constrained environment, can create tangible buffers for editorial decision-making.

The strength of this relationship provides robust empirical support for the central research question regarding the efficacy of formal governance mechanisms in safeguarding journalistic autonomy against external pressures. Conversely, the data indicates a more complex and weaker association between an organisation's primary funding model and its accountability practices, such as the public disclosure of financial interests or ownership structures . While commercially funded outlets scored higher on metrics of market-facing accountability, such as audience engagement measures, there was no statistically significant link to broader transparency norms considered essential for public trust.

This finding implies that revenue sources alone are an insufficient predictor of a media organisation's commitment to holistic accountability, challenging deterministic assumptions in the literature that directly tie funding type to governance quality. Furthermore, regression models identified organisational size and the presence of an active, independent oversight board as the most powerful predictors of comprehensive transparency scores . Larger media houses and those with boards comprising external civil society or professional figures were consistently associated with more systematic reporting on governance, funding, and editorial guidelines.

This quantitative evidence points to the critical role of scale and deliberate structural design in embedding accountability, rather than it arising organically from daily operations. The cumulative quantitative findings thus establish a clear hierarchy of factors, where formalised governance structures and independent oversight appear more consequential for both independence and transparency than the nature of funding alone. These results quantitatively substantiate the premise that governance is a multi-dimensional construct, where mechanisms for editorial independence and public accountability do not necessarily develop in tandem.

The identified patterns set a firm evidentiary foundation, confirming the salience of institutional reforms while simultaneously highlighting ambiguities, particularly around the role of funding, that require deeper contextual investigation. This naturally necessitates a qualitative exploration of the underlying mechanisms and perceived constraints that these numerical relationships represent, guiding the subsequent analysis of interview and documentary data.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data reveal a profound tension between the formal governance structures espoused by media organisations and the lived reality of editorial decision-making, where financial precarity consistently undermines institutional independence. Interviews with senior editors across multiple outlets described a pervasive, though often unspoken, pressure to align editorial agendas with the interests of primary funders, be they state-linked advertisers, private proprietors, or political patrons . This dynamic frequently manifests not as direct censorship but as a form of anticipatory conformity, where journalists and editors internalise commercial and political risks, leading to the avoidance of critical reporting on certain entities .

Consequently, the principle of editorial independence, while rhetorically championed in organisational charters, is routinely compromised by the exigencies of revenue generation, suggesting governance models are often subservient to funding architectures. A dominant pattern emerging from the analysis is the strategic opacity surrounding both funding sources and internal governance procedures, which severely constrains meaningful public accountability. Participants frequently cited the use of shell companies and intermediary agencies to channel advertising revenue, deliberately obscuring the true beneficiaries of media support .

This deliberate lack of transparency extends to internal mechanisms, where accountability is described as primarily upward—towards owners and financiers—rather than outward towards the public or professional standards . Such practices create a governance environment where the lines between commercial sponsorship, political patronage, and editorial content are intentionally blurred, making it virtually impossible for audiences to discern potential conflicts of interest and thereby eroding the foundational trust necessary for a democratic media system. These findings directly address the article's core question regarding the interplay between governance, funding, and accountability, illustrating how the pursuit of financial sustainability in a constrained market has reconfigured accountability relationships.

The evidence indicates that reforms aimed solely at editorial policy, without concomitant measures to diversify and transparently secure funding, are likely to be ineffective. The qualitative narratives strongly suggest that governance failures are systemic, rooted in an economic model that incentivises opacity and compromises journalistic autonomy, thus perpetuating a cycle of weak accountability. This

situated understanding of the operational realities provides crucial context for interpreting the quantitative patterns of perceived external influence, moving the analysis beyond correlation towards mechanism.

Transitioning to an integrated discussion, these qualitative insights demand a critical re-evaluation of standard governance frameworks, which appear ill-suited to address the deeply entrenched political economy of media in this context.

Integration and Discussion

The findings of this mixed methods study collectively suggest that the governance of media organisations in Tanzania is characterised by a profound and systemic tension between formal commitments to editorial independence and the practical realities of constrained funding and political pressure. This integration reveals that the proclaimed adherence to accountability and transparency principles, as noted in organisational charters, is frequently undermined by the opaque nature of both state-linked and private revenue streams, which appear to create indirect mechanisms of influence over editorial content. This dynamic resonates with Curran's critique of market-driven media, wherein financial dependencies inherently compromise autonomy, yet is further complicated in the Tanzanian context by the additional, pervasive influence of the state as delineated by Moehler .

Consequently, the governance framework for many Tanzanian media houses exists in a state of contradiction, where rhetorical support for reform is negated by operational practices that perpetuate a culture of self-censorship and strategic alignment with powerful interests. The discussion must therefore situate these governance challenges within the specific political economy of Tanzania, where the interplay of state authority and commercial fragility creates a uniquely restrictive environment. The qualitative data indicate that accountability is often exercised upwards towards funders or regulators rather than outwards towards the public, a reversal of normative democratic media theory.

This aligns with Moehler's observation of state strategies that co-opt media for nation-building, effectively subordinating independent oversight to a state-defined notion of developmental journalism. In such a climate, transparency regarding funding sources becomes not merely a governance shortfall but a significant professional risk, discouraging the very disclosures that would empower public accountability. Thus, the call for governance reform, while ostensibly a technical or managerial issue, is inextricably linked to broader political and legal structures that currently limit civic space.

The practical implications for media practitioners and reformers in Tanzania are substantial and sobering. This study indicates that isolated interventions focusing solely on editorial guidelines or codes of ethics are likely to be ineffective without concurrent efforts to diversify and secure media funding, thereby reducing vulnerability to coercive influences. The findings suggest that sustainable reform must address the foundational economics of media survival, promoting alternative revenue models that enhance financial resilience.

Furthermore, advocating for a more enabling regulatory environment, as per Moehler's analysis, remains a critical, though formidable, prerequisite for meaningful change. Ultimately, strengthening media governance in Tanzania requires a holistic strategy that confronts the interconnected political, economic, and professional barriers to genuine editorial independence and public accountability.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the governance of media organisations in Tanzania is characterised by a precarious and often contradictory interplay between the normative ideals of editorial independence and the practical realities of funding and accountability. The findings indicate that while formal governance structures exist, their efficacy is substantially undermined by a reliance on volatile commercial revenue and state-linked advertising, which creates pervasive self-censorship and compromises journalistic autonomy. Furthermore, the regulatory environment, rather than fostering transparency, often employs accountability as a mechanism for political control, thereby stifling the media's role as a public watchdog.

This tripartite tension between editorial imperatives, financial sustainability, and imposed accountability frameworks constitutes the central governance dilemma for Tanzanian media. The primary contribution of this research lies in its integrated, multi-stakeholder analysis which empirically demonstrates how governance mechanisms are enacted in practice, moving beyond prescriptive models to reveal the lived experiences of media managers, editors, and journalists. By synthesising qualitative insights with an analysis of organisational documents, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how external pressures are internalised within newsrooms, thereby extending the theoretical discourse on media governance in hybrid political regimes.

It challenges the assumption that commercial independence inherently guarantees editorial freedom, showing instead how market dependencies can produce similarly constraining effects to overt political interference. The most pressing practical implication for Tanzania is the urgent need to diversify and de-politicise media funding. Stakeholders should advocate for and develop innovative revenue models, such as reader-funded memberships or ethical grant-making from independent civil society foundations, to reduce susceptibility to both political and commercial coercion.

Concurrently, reforming the statutory media council into a genuinely independent and powerful self-regulatory body, with a mandate to arbitrate disputes and enforce transparency in ownership and funding, is a critical step towards redefining accountability as a professional standard rather than a state instrument. As a logical next step, future research should undertake longitudinal, comparative case studies of Tanzanian media organisations that are attempting to implement alternative governance and funding structures. Such work would assess the sustainability of these models and their tangible impact on editorial output and organisational resilience.

Ultimately, strengthening media governance is not merely an institutional concern but a foundational prerequisite for fostering a robust public sphere and enhancing democratic accountability in Tanzania.

Contributions

This study makes a significant empirical contribution by providing a contemporary, integrated analysis of the interplay between editorial independence, funding models, and accountability mechanisms within Tanzanian media organisations from 2021 to 2025. It offers a novel conceptual framework that bridges business governance theory with media studies, specifically tailored to the Tanzanian socio-economic context.

The findings yield practical insights for media managers, policymakers, and reform advocates seeking to enhance transparency and sustainable governance. Furthermore, the robust mixed-methods design establishes a methodological benchmark for future research on media ecosystems in similar developing economies.

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