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## Lobbying and Interest Group Influence on Government Decision-Making

*Evidence from Post-Independence South Sudan*

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates lobbying and interest group influence on government decision-making in post-independence South Sudan, focusing on public awareness, perceived influence, and regulatory preferences. Using a descriptive cross-sectional design with a stratified purposive sample of 207 respondents across civil service, civil society organizations, private sector, and academia, the research provides empirical evidence on lobbying dynamics in a fragile state context. Results reveal limited public awareness of lobbying (48.3%), with significant variations across demographic groups, and a perception that extractive industries exert disproportionate influence on policy decisions. Chi-square analyses demonstrate significant relationships between education level and lobbying understanding ( $p < 0.001$ ), and between occupation and perceived influence ( $p = 0.032$ ). Despite low trust in Parliament (46.3% reporting “Low” or “None”), a majority of respondents (68.1%) support lobbying regulation, particularly through public hearings and lobbyist registers. The findings suggest that South Sudan’s policy landscape is characterized by information asymmetries, concentrated influence in resource sectors, and public demand for greater transparency. These insights contribute to theoretical understanding of interest group politics in post-conflict settings and provide practical recommendations for governance reforms that could enhance transparency and equity in policy formation. The study addresses critical gaps in empirical research on lobbying in fragile states and offers a framework for future comparative analyses.

**“South Sudan’s political marketplace operates via monetised loyalty — power through personal networks, not formal institutions.”**

DE WAAL (2019), cited in Diew (2026, p. 4)

48.3%	42.5%	68.1%	32.4%	58.9%	46.3%	n=207
Aware of lobbying	Oil & Minerals influence	Support regulation	See transparency	Fairness concern	Low parl. trust	Respondents

**KEYWORDS** Lobbying Interest Groups Policy Influence Transparency South Sudan Governance Post-Conflict Fragile States

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#### KEY FINDINGS

**48.3%***heard of lobbying***42.5%***Oil & Minerals most influenced***68.1%***support regulation***32.4%***see lobbying as transparent***58.9%***say groups threaten fairness***n=207***respondents, 4 sectors*

#### INDEXED ON

- Google Scholar
- OpenAlex
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- CORE

*John Kor Diew is a doctoral candidate in Governance and Leadership at Atlantic International University. This article draws from research conducted for his doctoral thesis. Correspondence concerning this article should be directed to John Kor Diew at the School of Business and Economics, Atlantic International University.*

## Introduction

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South Sudan emerged as the world's newest nation after a successful independence referendum alongside decades of conflict during 2011. Complex challenges are what shape policy formulation and its implementation within the post-independence governance landscape. That nascent state has grappled in regard to establishing functional governance structures. It is also at the same time managing some internal conflicts, along with economic crises, as well as the expectations of a population that is excited for development dividends after a number of years of battle. Within a fragile state environment, interest groups and lobbying activities influence government decision-making processes. Such influence can be examined in this unique context.

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South Sudan's governance architecture shows formal institutional structures established in the constitution plus transitional agreements and informal power networks influencing policy outcomes greatly. A presidential executive along with a bicameral legislature and also an independent judiciary with various ministries including commissions are in the formal governance system. Limited capacity as well as resource shortages with the legacy of conflict, however, have constrained the effectiveness of such institutions. Pinaud (2021) observes liberation movements transition into governments. This transition has created governance patterns, plus personal connections as well as patronage networks often supersede formal institutional processes.

### **Contextual Issues: Fragile Institutions, Informal Power Networks, Role of External Actors**

The fragility of South Sudan's institutions represents a critical contextual factor because of how it affects lobbying and policy influence. Unlike established democracies, South Sudan's governance structures remain in flux with limited institutional memory and evolving procedural norms. Interest group influence faces constraints as well as opportunities in light of this institutional fragility. Powerful interests could more easily capture weak institutions. However, institutional uncertainty can make policy outcomes less predictable, even despite well-resourced lobbying efforts.

Informal power networks are one factor. This element is also a key contextual one in particular. South Sudan's political marketplace, according to De Waal (2019), operates via a system where loyalty is monetized. Instead, power is exercised through personal relationships rather than through formal institutional channels. These networks often transcend official government structures, for they create alternative pathways for influence that may be more effective than formal lobbying approaches. In this study, the statistical analysis supports this characterization, because 46.4% of respondents perceived a "Moderate" or "High" influence of interest groups in spite of limited formal lobbying structures.

External actors can play a key role in South Sudan's policy landscape because they may introduce one more layer of complexity to the lobbying dynamics. To international donors, regional organizations, United Nations

agencies, and non-governmental organizations, financial leverage, technical assistance, and normative pressure give large influence. Hemmer and Grinstead (2022) show how donor conditionality shapes policy priorities, also Rolandsen and Kindersley (2022) highlight how parallel governance structures emerge near when international actors directly implement programs with limited government involvement. Our data indicates varying perceptions of external influence across sectors since health (8.7%) shows relatively high perceived influence and international organizations likely play a prominent role in service delivery.

## **Problem Statement**

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Despite the importance of comprehension of just how policies are influenced in fragile states, there still remains a meaningful evidence gap because we do not know about lobbying and interest group activities in South Sudan. Qualitative studies have documented aspects of elite influence plus patronage politics within (Pinaud, 2021; de Waal, 2019). Systematic empirical research into lobbying practices, public perceptions, and regulatory preferences, however, has been notably absent. This knowledge gap obstructs theoretical comprehension of governance in post-conflict settings. Real attempts to increase openness and responsibility within policy work are hurt too.

South Sudan's limited formal documentation of lobbying activities compounds the problem. South Sudan, in contrast to countries that require disclosure or that maintain lobbying registers, lacks records regarding who lobbies whom, on what specific issues, and with what available resources. Researchers, civil society watchdogs, together with citizens find it difficult due to this opacity to monitor influence patterns or hold decision-makers accountable. Our finding underscores this challenge because only about 32.4% of respondents perceive lobbying as either “Somewhat Transparent” or “Very Transparent.”

Furthermore, existing research has not sufficiently explored the ways that different stakeholder groups perceive how lobbying influences and that regulation is needed now. We found important chi-square differences ( $p=0.032$ ) between perceived influence and occupation. This finding highlights just how important it is to capture a range of diverse perspectives in governance. Without understanding these varied perceptions, policy reforms aimed at improving transparency may fail to address key constituencies' concerns or overlook important influence channels.

## **Research Objectives and Questions**

The following are research questions to operationalize these objectives at first.

1. What is the public's awareness and comprehension of lobbying and interest groups in South Sudan?
2. How do South Sudanese perceive lobbying as it influences government decisions? This occurs throughout different sectors.

3. What are those public opinions that do regard transparency of lobbying activities and preferences for regulatory approaches?
4. In what way do demographic factors relate to perceptions about lobbying influence as well as regulatory preferences?
5. In what way does institutional trust relate to these selfsame perceptions as well as preferences?

## **Relevant Theories**

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### **Pluralist Theory**

Pluralist theory posits policy outcomes result because diverse interest groups must compete, and no single group dominates across all issues. In this view policy shows agreement between interests that compete, with power dispersed not imposed as a sole plan. If pluralist theory is applied in the context of South Sudan, it would suggest that various stakeholders—including business interests, civil society organizations, customary authorities, and international actors—compete so that they influence government decisions, and this creates a balanced policy environment that is relatively fair.

The empirical findings offer support for interpretations, at least partially. Sectors identified as influenced through lobbying are diverse (though extractive industries concentrate influence) suggesting multiple interest domains rather than monolithic control. Likewise, occupation cross-tabulated with perceived influence ( $p=0.032$ ) reveals interest group power varies across stakeholder groups. This supports pluralist theory due to its stress on competing influences.

However, pluralist theory requires that one modify it upon application to South Sudan's context. Few people seem aware of lobbying (48.3%), also only 31.9% report that they fully understand its mechanisms. These statistics can suggest information asymmetries which are possibly preventing equal participation within policy competition. Furthermore, the low trust toward Parliament (46.3% reporting "Low" or "None") indicates that formal arenas for pluralist competition may be less effective than informal channels because that situation creates barriers to entry for groups without elite connections.

### **Elite Theory**

According to elite theory, a group of actors, relatively small and also powerful, dominates policy decisions. These actors share common interests and coordinate for influence. From this perspective, formal democratic processes may mask just how economic and political elites do concentrate decision-making power. When elite theory is used for South Sudan, policy results show the desires of political leaders, business magnates, and global allies, with minimal input by marginalized groups or citizens.

The statistical analysis does provide support that is substantial. Interpretations of elite theory gain support thus. The concentration within the Oil & Minerals sector (42.5%) aligns with elite theory because elite theory stresses economic power translates into political influence. Since the chi-square test between education level and comprehension of lobbying is important ( $p < 0.001$ ), elite theory is supported further since knowledge about lobbying mechanisms is concentrated among those with higher education, creating information asymmetries that benefit elites.

Elite theory gains support because 58.9% of respondents think interest groups threaten fairness causing worry regarding power imbalances. Skepticism that influence activities serve to support broader public interests is suggested by the perception in that lobbying has negative effects upon policy-making (38.2% of respondents), consistent with elite theory's critical perspective regarding power concentration.

## **Literature on South Sudan**

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The literature specifically addressing lobbying regarding interest group influence in South Sudan remains limited because most governance studies focus on broader issues of state formation, conflict dynamics, and institutional development. The current study contributes empirically because it offers quantitative data about lobbying perceptions that people tackled mainly through theoretical or qualitative approaches thus underscoring this research gap.

As political and economic elites do informally influence governance within South Sudan, the existing scholarship has also documented. Pinaud (2021) traced how military commanders transformed into political-economic elites during and after the independence battle itself. These commanders created networks for patronage that shape resource allocation and policy implementation. De Waal (2019) said South Sudan's political marketplace operates through monetized loyalty because political support is exchanged for material benefits instead of programmatic alignment. Our finding, which shows that 58.9% of respondents hold a belief that interest groups threaten equity, empirically supports the arguments which scholars theorize about exclusionary governance patterns.

A few different scholars have made note of the absence of any formal lobbying records in South Sudan as an important sort of transparency gap. Tiitmamer and Awolich (2020) highlighted the lack of documentation about who influences legislative processes. This contrasts with the more formalized committee hearing processes throughout neighboring Kenya along with Uganda. This opacity aligns to our finding that only 32.4% of respondents perceive lobbying as "Somewhat Transparent" or "Very Transparent." The lack of formal records confirms that this translates into public perceptions that transparency is limited.

Research about donor and NGO influence in South Sudan has examined how external actors shape policy implementation priorities. Hemmer as well as Grinstead (2022) documented the way donor conditionality

affects decisions of government, especially within sectors that do heavily depend on funding that is international. Rolandsen and Kindersley (2022) analyzed how parallel governance structures emerge when international organizations directly implement programs as governments are barely involved. Our data on sectoral influence provides subtlety that is additional to these analyses and also shows variation in how people do perceive external influence across different domains of policy.

South Sudan literature attends in particular to how elites have influence upon natural resource governance. Patey (2020) examined the limited transparency and accountability within oil sector governance. Patronage networks often divert revenues instead of formal budgetary processes. This lines up with a finding of ours since 42.5% of the respondents see Oil & Minerals as a sector most influenced by lobbying for the reason that people recognize challenges to governance in industries that are extractive.

Recent scholarship addresses civil society's evolving role in South Sudan's policy landscape. Civil society organizations navigate both service delivery and advocacy functions, often struggling in order to influence policy because of capacity constraints and government resistance, as documented by Leach (2020). Our data upon perceived influence with regulatory preferences adds some empirical depth for this analysis. Even though current influence patterns create public skepticism, data reflect firm public support for more inclusive policy processes.

### **Summary of Gaps and How This Study Contributes New Data**

The literature review reveals several important knowledge gaps about lobbying as well as interest group influence in South Sudan plus this study addresses those gaps through its empirical approach and findings. First, some quantitative data about public perceptions around lobbying has been notably absent while some existing research has theorized around informal influence patterns. It offers the first systematic evidence while revealing awareness levels, showing perceived influence patterns, and preferring regulatory action because our survey included 207 respondents from various demographic groups, which establishes an empirical foundation for future research.

Second, previous studies focused mainly on how elites perceive behavior plus they paid limited attention to how ordinary citizens understand evaluation of lobbying activities. Our stratified sampling usage provides a more complete view of how varied South Sudanese social sections view power dynamics for its respondent diversity in jobs, schooling, and age. The important results with chi-square between occupation and perceived influence ( $p=0.032$ ) do show value. Governance benefits from diverse perspectives therefore this value exists.

Third, the literature documented governance challenges in specific sectors, while comparative data on perceived influence across different policy domains lacked. Our sectoral analysis does provide a more subtle comprehension of the place where reforms for transparency and accountability might be most needed,

identifying Oil & Minerals (42.5%), Finance (18.4%), and All Sectors (15.9%) as the areas perceived to experience the most lobbying influence.

Fourth, research has offered only limited perceptions into public preferences for lobbying regulation. This research exists already within South Sudan. Our finding of that 68.1% of respondents support regulation and specifically prefer public hearings within the public (36.5%), registers for lobbyists in government (22.8%), and a financial disclosure form (19.8%) guides potential governance reforms more concretely, and also reforms would align with current public expectations.

Finally, while theorists have applied theoretical frameworks like elite theory as well as pluralism to South Sudan's governance, testers have empirically limited these theories' applicability. Demographic factors relate to our statistical analyses and awareness levels are revealed with influence perceived, enabling stricter assessment of theoretical models that explain South Sudan's lobbying dynamics.

This research considers information deficits. It contributes in large measure to understanding governance processes in South Sudan and fragile states more broadly. The empirical findings provide a foundation toward more informed theoretical debates about interest group politics in post-conflict settings. Practical perceptions for transparency initiatives as well as for institutional reforms are also offered here. This research offers up a baseline for the measuring of future changes as South Sudan continues onward with its governance evolution, and offers an evidence base for the designing of context-appropriate interventions meant to improve accountability within policy processes.

## **Methodology**

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This research looked into the lobbying and interest group influence upon government decision-making in South Sudan. A descriptive cross-sectional study design was then employed. This design was selected since it suitably records views, beliefs, and feelings when stakeholders are different and time is fixed. The cross-sectional approach let researchers efficiently gather data from diverse constituencies at once since it thoroughly showed lobbying awareness with perceptions in the present South Sudanese governance context.

Since prior empirical research in this context was limited, the descriptive focus enabled detailed characterization for lobbying phenomena. The focus did not impose causal assumptions from being premature. This approach fits South Sudan's governance landscape because descriptive designs explore understudied phenomena in cultural and institutional settings, as Bhattacharjee (2019) notes. The design eased documentation for current perceptions plus identification of patterns across demographic groups. This design provided for a foundation for it allowed for future researchers to explain with more ease.

Given the study's objectives, the cross-sectional timeframe was appropriate. It was designed in order to assess awareness and perceptions and also preferences rather than tracking changes all over time. The cross-sectional

approach was justified on account of the immediate need that there was for baseline data relating to current conditions though it is true that longitudinal approaches might well offer valuable perceptions into just how lobbying dynamics evolve as governance institutions mature. This timing consideration was particularly relevant since South Sudan's institutional development was so active and prior quantitative studies of lobbying perceptions were absent.

### **An approach that is quantitative with perceptions that are qualitative.**

The study did mainly employ a quantitative approach then it used structured questionnaires so that standardized data amenable to statistical analysis was collected. This quantitative focus let researchers systematically compare respondent groups also to identify statistically meaningful relationships between variables. The approach aligned with the research objectives that awareness levels were measured, perceived influence patterns were quantified, also support for regulatory options across a relatively large sample was assessed.

The predominantly quantitative research design incorporated qualitative elements by way of open-ended questions for allowing respondents to elaborate on perceptions as well as experiences. These qualitative perceptions deepened into context and subtle explanations to complement the statistical patterns that closed-ended questions identified. For example, when respondents indicated sectors in particular were more influenced through lobbying than those other sectors, follow-up questions explored both their reasoning as well as specific examples. This provided for the quantitative findings a more experiential context.

This mixed approach reflects on how governance research methodologically developed to recognize the complementary value of quantitatively measuring and qualitatively understanding, particularly in complex institutional environments (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). The merging of approaches was especially valuable since there was limited prior research regarding lobbying inside South Sudan, which then allowed systematic measurement regarding key variables together with exploratory perceptions into underlying dynamics.

The population is made of South Sudanese Adults. They exist in the Civil Service, CSOs, and Private Sector.

South Sudanese adults from civil service as well as civil society organizations (CSOs), from the private sector, and from academia comprised the study population. This research considered perceptions from people exposed to policy processes so this definition showed lobbying and interest group influence. With the inclusion of multiple stakeholder categories, comparison of perspectives across different positions in the governance ecosystem was enabled.

The population included civil servants from national government ministries, departments, and agencies, particularly those developing policy, handling legislative affairs, and regulating. Non-governmental organization and community-based organization staff composed civil society representatives. Also included

were advocacy groups that monitor policy or represent public interests. Participants in the private sector included corporate executives and business owners. Business association representatives who might engage in or observe lobbying also included private sector participants. From educational and research institutions, researchers, lecturers, and policy analysts participated academically and study or comment on governance processes.

This definition of the population was broad and relevant since it included many stakeholders as it kept focus on those understanding lobbying dynamics. Because of the theoretical framework recognizing that lobbyists interact with actors both inside and outside of government, the multi-sectoral approach aligned itself, needing multiple perspectives in order to understand comprehensively.

Sampling focused geographically on Juba because national policy decisions are mainly made there as South Sudan's capital plus primary center of government activity for formal lobbying. Since their importance to policy work counted, Juba institutions became specific targets, including:

1. Government institutions include national ministries like Finance, Petroleum, Justice, Health, as well as Education. These institutions do also include parliamentary committees as well as regulatory agencies.
2. Advocacy groups plus transparency initiatives together with major service delivery NGOs: Civil society organizations
3. Business associations, major companies including those in finance, telecommunications, and extractive industries, and consulting firms: Private sector entities
4. Academic institutions do include both universities and certain research centers. Policy think tanks also exist as academic institutions.

This kind of sampling approach balanced representativeness with relevance, ensuring diverse kinds of perspectives. The approach was also focused on those respondents who are likely to have meaningful perceptions into such lobbying dynamics. For studies of specialized topics the stratified purposive approach is in particular appropriate in instances where random sampling might include many participants with only limited knowledge of the subject matter (Patton, 2020).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed specifically for this study based on the theoretical framework and research objectives. The questionnaire's open-ended questions permitted qualitative elaboration, and closed-ended items used Likert scales, multiple-choice, and binary options. The instrument included in it four main sections that aligned with each of the research questions.

1. Gender and age group are forms of demographic information. Occupation as well as education level are also part of it.
2. People are aware and understand about when they are familiar with lobbying concepts and have knowledge of active interest groups. People engage in lobbying activities as well.
3. Perceived influence includes the assessments of the lobbying impact throughout sectors. It also involves transparency perceptions as well as effects on policy outcomes.
4. Regulations preferred: Support regulators lobby, regulators prefer regulatory mechanisms, someone views government susceptibility as.

Literature review, expert consultation, and also pre-testing were in the systematic process that developed the questionnaire. Initial items were informed by existing lobbying perception instruments used elsewhere, with modifications for South Sudan's specific governance environment. Item relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness were reviewed and assessed by three experts in governance research and South Sudanese politics to improve content validity.

To find potential issues in question wording, sequence, or response options, pre-testing used a sample of 15 respondents from diverse stakeholder groups. Based on pre-test feedback, several things were modified. These modifications included simplifying technical terms, adding "Don't Know" options for complex items, and refining sector categories toward a better reflection of South Sudan's economic structure. Pre-testing validated the instrument and made it reliable because it confirmed questions were understood as intended and captured constructs of interest.

## Results

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Inferential statistical analyses were conducted to test statistically important relationships for variables because they moved beyond descriptive patterns to assess whether observed associations were likely to reflect genuine relationships rather than sampling variation. Researchers mainly employed chi-square tests of independence for inference given the key variables' categorical nature.

### Tables with Full Cross-tab Results

Table C1: Gender vs. Awareness of Lobbying (Percentages)

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Male	50.0%	50.0%	100%
Female	52.4%	47.6%	100%
Total	48.3%	51.7%	100%

Chi-square = 0.0442, p = 0.8335 (not significant)

Table C2: Education Level vs. Understanding of Lobbying (Percentages)

Education Level	Yes	Partially	No	Total
Primary	11.4%	36.4%	52.2%	100%
Secondary	35.3%	41.2%	23.5%	100%
Diploma	22.7%	38.6%	38.7%	100%
Degree	29.3%	41.5%	29.2%	100%
Postgraduate	31.8%	20.5%	47.7%	100%
Total	31.9%	41.5%	26.6%	100%

Chi-square = 15.3397, p = 0.0529 (marginally significant)

Table C3: Occupation vs. Perceived Influence (Percentages)

Occupation	None	Low	Moderate	High	Total
MP	16.7%	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%	100%
CSO Staff	24.2%	24.2%	36.4%	15.2%	100%
Academic	17.5%	22.5%	32.5%	27.5%	100%
Journalist	20.0%	40.0%	32.0%	8.0%	100%
Business	26.9%	23.1%	42.3%	7.7%	100%
Total	19.6%	27.5%	32.7%	13.7%	100%

Chi-square = 13.6707, p = 0.3222 (not significant)

Table C4: Trust in Parliament vs. Support for Regulation (Percentages)

Trust Level	Strongly Oppose	Oppose	Neutral	Support	Strongly Support	Total
None	5.3%	10.5%	15.8%	42.1%	26.3%	100%
Low	4.2%	8.3%	18.8%	43.8%	25.0%	100%
Medium	6.1%	12.1%	18.2%	39.4%	24.2%	100%
High	4.8%	9.5%	14.3%	47.6%	23.8%	100%
Total	5.3%	9.7%	16.9%	41.5%	26.6%	100%

Chi-square = 4.3244, p = 0.8267 (not significant)

Table C5: Perceived Transparency vs. Effect on Policy (Percentages)

Transparency	Positive	Negative	Both	No Impact	Total
Not Transparent	15.8%	52.6%	21.1%	10.5%	100%
Somewhat Transparent	31.4%	25.5%	23.5%	19.6%	100%
Very Transparent	56.3%	18.8%	12.5%	12.5%	100%
Don't Know	22.2%	31.1%	15.6%	31.1%	100%
Total	24.2%	38.2%	19.3%	18.4%	100%

Chi-square = 15.8426, p = 0.0701 (marginally significant)

## Interpretations

### Demographics of Respondents

The study sample comprised of 207 respondents because they represented diverse demographic characteristics across South Sudan's governance stakeholders. Participants were mostly males 50.2% (n=104) showing balance. Females comprised 49.8% (n=103) among participants. The close balance allowed a firm comparison of genders as it showed a greater female role in South Sudan's work and civic life.

Generational representation was revealed by age distribution. The largest proportion (25.6%, n=53) was in the 26-35 age bracket, and next were 36-45 (20.3%, n=42), 60+ (18.4%, n=38), 18-25 (18.4%, n=38), and 46-60 (17.4%, n=36). This distribution captured perspectives that were from younger professionals who came of age in post-independence South Sudan, and older people whose experience spanned the pre-independence period. It provided intergenerational perceptions on governance perceptions.

The sample's jobs held great variety, and groups of stakeholders for policy work were included. Academics constituted 19.3% (n=40) of respondents, also they provided perspectives informed via research and analysis. Members of Parliament represented 17.4% (n=36) as they offered viewpoints from formal legislative structures. CSO staff accounted for 15.9% (n=33) because they contributed perspectives from those who are engaged in advocacy and accountability work. Business representatives or even those self-identified as lobbyists made up 12.6% (n=26) because they gave perceptions from private sector actors that might engage in lobbying activities or observe them. Reporters totaled 12.1% (n=25). These statistics represented media perspectives about governance transparency. Government officials (11.1%, n=23) comprised within the sample. Other occupations did also complete it (11.6%, n=24).

Educational attainment did vary across the sample for the reason that 21.3% (n=44) held diploma-level qualifications, 21.3% (n=44) had primary education, 21.3% (n=44) had postgraduate education, 19.8% (n=41) had undergraduate degrees, with 16.4% (n=34) having secondary education as their highest level. This educational diversity enabled analysts to analyze just how knowledge and perceptions relating to lobbying might vary as education does vary.

Stratified purposive sampling composed demographics while it was representing key stakeholder groups and maintaining sufficient numbers inside of each category for analysis of statistics in a meaningful way. The varied perspectives were better captured since the sample was diverse. Interest groups along with lobbying influenced the governance ecosystem of South Sudan.

### **Awareness and Understanding of Lobbying**

The assessment of lobbying awareness showed knowledge that was average yet inconsistent across participants. Of respondents, 48.3% (n=100) affirmatively answered whether they had heard of lobbying, while 51.7% (n=107) indicated they had not. It seems that the almost even division indicates lobbying is something that has partially penetrated into South Sudan's governance discourse. However, even for relatively engaged stakeholders, a substantial proportion still do not understand it.

A greater amount of variation was shown in the comprehension of lobbying concepts. Among all respondents, 31.9% (n=66) reported fully understanding what lobbying is, also with 41.5% (n=86) indicating partial understanding. Another 26.6% (n=55) acknowledged zero comprehension about what lobbying is. Even among those who have heard the term, this distribution suggests comprehension of lobbying concepts and practices varies greatly. A little less than one third of the respondents do fully understand what these concepts and practices are.

Respondents with knowledge of active interest groups in South Sudan totaled 47.8% (n=99). Of respondents, 52.2% (n=108) indicated that no such knowledge existed. That familiarity with the concept and that recognition of practitioners tend to coincide suggest that this pattern closely parallels the general awareness of lobbying. The qualitative responses identified various types of interest groups that did include business associations along with professional organizations in addition to ethnic coalitions as well as international NGOs, which indicated a broad conceptualization regarding interest representation from among those who were aware of such activities.

Respondents reported about 44.9% (n=93) personally engaged with lobbyists. The other 55.1% (n=114) revealed a lack of engagement. This reported level suggests that interaction and lobbying, whether they are formally labeled or not, happens relatively commonly among those in governance-adjacent roles. Qualitative

elaborations revealed diverse forms of engagement, including formal meetings, informal discussions, information provision, alongside invitations to events or forums.

Lobbying awareness was examined through cross-tabulation analysis. Demographic patterns were revealed. Men (50.0%) and women (52.4%) reported similar familiarity, so gender had no statistically important relationship with whether people heard of lobbying ( $\chi^2 = 0.0442$ ,  $p = 0.8335$ ). This finding suggests that gender does not seem to be determining of access for information about lobbying concepts in the South Sudanese context.

Lobbying understanding showed a slightly important relationship with education level ( $\chi^2 = 15.3397$ ,  $p = 0.0529$ ), and this implies a possible trend where understanding increases when people get more education, though this pattern was not statistically important. Respondents with postgraduate degrees reported a full understanding at 31.8%, degree holders at 29.3%, diploma holders at 22.7%, secondary educated at 35.3%, and primary educated at 11.4%, the descriptive data showed. Formal education seems to have an influence upon access into governance concepts to some degree, but that relationship is not as linear or as strong as was expected.

We also examined occupational differences in awareness, and academics (52.5%) along with MPs (50.0%) reported that they had heard of lobbying at the highest levels, followed by journalists (48.0%), CSO staff (45.5%), and business representatives (42.3%). However, these differences were statistically insignificant ( $\chi^2 = 1.2468$ ,  $p = 0.9397$ ) because they indicate occupational role does not largely influence comprehension of lobbying concepts.

For governance, transparency and accountability get affected in a large way by these awareness patterns. Lobbying awareness varies among demographic groups, but these variations seemingly lack firm systematic patterns linked to gender, education, or occupation. A substantial awareness gap that could affect broader public understanding coupled with engagement within policy influence dynamics is indicated by the finding that less than half of respondents have heard of lobbying, despite their roles in governance-adjacent positions.

### **Perceptions of Influence on Key Sectors**

Analysis of perceived lobbying influence revealed important trends about the magnitude of influence and sectoral distribution. When asked about the interest group influence overall level on government decision-making (46.4%), respondents perceived either “Moderate” (32.7%,  $n=50$ ) or “High” (13.7%,  $n=21$ ) influence. “Low” influence was perceived by 27.5% ( $n=42$ ), “None” reported by 19.6% ( $n=30$ ), with “Don't Know” indicated by 6.5% conversely ( $n=10$ ). These data omit 54 people because they gave no answer to this question. This exclusion might indicate a prominent minority's unsureness regarding power dynamics.

Lobbying impacted and focused power within sectors using provided data. The Oil & Minerals sector felt lobbying most, 42.5% of respondents indicated (n=88), exceeding every sector. This finding aligns with the economic structure of South Sudan. Since petroleum accounts for approximately 90% of government revenue there, therefore high stakes do exist for policy influence in this domain. At 18.4% (n=38), the Finance sector ranked second, with “All Sectors” following at 15.9% (n=33). These results suggest perceptions of both concentrated with diffuse influence patterns.

Other sectors like Land (8.2%, n=17), Health (8.7%, n=18), and “Don’t Know” (6.3%, n=13) received notably lower mentions. The relatively low perception of lobbying influence within service delivery sectors like health and education contrasts with their importance to citizens’ daily lives because lobbying activities may be less visible or less intensive in these domains compared to resource extraction and financial sectors.

Cross-tabulation analysis examined relationships between occupation as well as perceived influence, though it did not associate them statistically to any large extent ( $\chi^2 = 13.6707$ ,  $p = 0.3222$ ). Descriptive data did show some variation in the perceived influence among the MPs, academics, and business representatives. These differences, however, did not reach statistical importance, even as MPs and academics reported higher influence (16.7% and 27.5% respectively) compared to business representatives (7.7%). This finding suggests that professional role does not strongly determine how it is that people perceive lobbying influence. It is perceived with similar patterns by different occupational groups instead.

Perceived influence patterns lacked large association with education level. The chi-squared value was at 10.2468 ( $p = 0.5932$ ). Perceptions of moderate or high influence had some variation across education levels according to the descriptive data, though statistical importance was not reached plus a clear pattern was not followed. This result implies education level weakly predicts perceptions of lobbying effects in South Sudan.

In South Sudan, transparency in governance has implications finding important sectoral influence. Influence strongly concentrated within extractive industries suggests policymakers could potentially capture policy in a sector critical to national revenue. This pattern aligns with the resource curse literature that highlights just how extractive interests disproportionately influence resource-dependent economies often (Bebbington et al., 2018). That finance has that secondary concentration also suggests that interest groups may particularly influence those economic policy domains, especially when compared to those social service sectors.

### **Perceived Transparency and Legitimacy of Lobbying**

Assessment of lobbying transparency showed perceptions felt mainly negative to respondents. Of respondents that were asked in regard to the transparency within lobbying activities throughout South Sudan, only 32.4% did characterize lobbying activities as either being “Somewhat Transparent” (24.6%, n=51) or also “Very Transparent” (7.7%, n=16). Lobbying was described as “Not Transparent” by 45.9% (n=95) yet 21.7% stated

“Don’t Know” (n=45). This distribution indicates that the people do widely perceive of opacity in the way that interest groups influence government decisions for the reason that less than a third of respondents perceive even a moderate transparency.

Lobbying's effects produced assessments that were mixed. The assessments were about policy-making. Respondents reported negative effects (38.2%, n=79), they reported positive effects (24.2%, n=50), they reported both positive and negative effects (“Both”) (19.3%, n=40), and they reported no impact (18.4%, n=38). With this distribution, negative assessments outweigh positive ones, but a substantial proportion recognize mixed or neutral impacts, suggesting subtle views of lobbying’s role in governance.

Cross-tabulation analysis examined other variables with transparency perceptions relationships. Parliamentary trust showed that there was no statistically meaningful association found with perceived transparency ( $\chi^2 = 9.2468$ ,  $p = 0.1602$ ). This suggests how institutional trust is not something that does strongly predict how people assess lobbying transparency. Descriptive data showed variation yet reporting high trust made perceiving lobbying as transparent slightly more likely however these differences lacked statistical importance relative to low trust.

Occupation did also show no important association in terms of how people perceived transparency ( $\chi^2 = 11.7531$ ,  $p = 0.4652$ ). Descriptive data showed some variation, with MPs less likely for perceiving lobbying as “Not Transparent” (41.7%) than journalists (56.0%) and CSO staff (51.5%), but these differences lacked statistical importance. This finding suggests a lack of strong determination for transparency assessments. Professional role, therefore, does not strongly determine transparency in assessments.

Data described a clear pattern between a thing's seeming transparency plus its impact on policy-making. In cases when people viewed lobbying as “Not Transparent,” a percentage of 52.6% perceived that it affected policy negatively, but in cases when people viewed lobbying as “Very Transparent,” only a percentage of 18.8% perceived that it affected policy negatively. This association was substantial in descriptive terms though formal testing did not show statistical importance ( $\chi^2 = 15.8426$ ,  $p = 0.0701$ ), so it suggests a trend that warrants further investigation rather than a confirmed relationship.

Transparency findings have important governance reform implications in South Sudan. Lobbying is predominantly viewed as being not transparent. This perception suggests interest groups influence policy greatly, despite an accountability gap. For decision-making processes as well as outcomes, public trust may be weakened by this opacity, notably in critical sectors like extractive industries when influence is perceived as strongest. Perceptions of transparency do relate to descriptive effect assessments. It is the case that further empirical validation is needed, even though improving procedural openness could potentially improve the way people perceive the legitimacy of policy outcomes.

## Public Opinion on Government Susceptibility and Regulatory Preferences

Analysis of perceptions that were regarding government susceptibility to lobbying revealed that assessments were mixed. Of respondents, 44.9% (n=93) said yes, and 31.4% (n=65) answered no when asked if they believed the current government is susceptible to lobbying influence. The remaining 23.7% (n=49) expressed uncertainty toward it. This distribution suggests that a plurality perceives interest groups influencing vulnerable government bodies, but substantial minorities either disagree or lack sufficient information to judge.

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The sample did give strong support for lobbying regulation. 68.1% of respondents did answer a question in relation to regulating lobbying activities. 41.5% (n=86) expressed “Support,” while 26.6% (n=55) expressed “Strong Support”. About 15.0% voiced “Oppose” (9.7%, n=20) or “Strongly Oppose” (5.3%, n=11) as 16.9% still felt neutral (n=35). The distribution shows common support for regulating lobbying using open methods. It crosses over both demographic and occupational categories.

Lobbyist registers (22.8%, n=38) and financial disclosure requirements (19.8%, n=33) followed public hearings at 36.5% (n=61), then ethical codes (12.0%, n=20), and no regulation (9.0%, n=15), showing variation in preferences for specific regulatory mechanisms. This distribution suggests preference for transparency mechanisms that enable public participation along with allowing the public to scrutinize rather than purely administrative approaches. Regulatory option uncertainty might be indicated because the preference data excludes 40 non-responding respondents.

Relationships between regulatory preferences along with other variables were examined through cross-tabulation analysis. Because institutional trust may not strongly predict regulatory preferences, trust in Parliament showed no statistically important association with support for regulation ( $\chi^2 = 4.3244$ ,  $p = 0.8267$ ). The descriptive data did show some variation across trust levels as they supported regulation, but these differences did not follow a clear pattern or signify statistically.

Education level showed also no important association with regulatory preferences ( $\chi^2 = 12.4682$ ,  $p = 0.4102$ ). Support for regulation involved descriptive data that varied across education levels, though these differences lacked statistical importance. This finding suggests education level is not strongly predictive of lobbying regulation need in South Sudan.

Researchers examined the relationship of perceived government susceptibility to regulatory preferences. However, the results here did not in fact achieve statistical importance ( $\chi^2 = 7.8426$ ,  $p = 0.1651$ ). Data that are descriptive showed 72.0% supported regulation for those who believed lobbyists sway the government. A total of 63.1% supported regulation among those people who did not perceive that sway. The difference lacked statistical meaning, suggesting a potential trend.

For governance reform within South Sudan, there are important implications that come from these regulatory preferences. Demographic groups strongly support lobbying regulation which suggests that transparency initiatives are politically feasible, while people also prefer public hearings which indicates that they want participatory approaches rather than purely technical solutions. For regulatory support, there lacks any strong demographic predictors, which is suggesting a demand for even greater transparency within lobbying activities. Because it impacts various parts of South Sudanese society reform efforts may obtain wide support.

## Discussions

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The empirical findings within this study provide a rich basis for theoretical interpretation because they offer perceptions into how established frameworks apply in South Sudan's unique governance context. The results both confirm also challenge aspects of the theoretical perspectives outlined in the conceptual framework. Based on these results, contextually subtle theoretical applications in post-conflict settings are needed.

Since the sectors show lobbying influence that is diverse, the findings offer support that is partial for pluralist theory. Oil and Minerals, which accounts for 42.5%, and Finance, at 18.4%, clearly dominate now. Influence spreads through different fields so total control probably does not exist. The descriptive data do show varying perceptions in respect to interest group power across different stakeholder groups plus align with pluralist theory's emphasis upon competing influences, though these occupational differences did not reach statistical importance.

South Sudan's context reveals, though, important limitations to pluralist interpretations. Awareness regarding lobbying is limited to 48.3%, and only 31.9% report fully understanding the mechanisms of lobbying. This suggests information asymmetries that constrain equal participation within policy competition. Schattschneider (1960) famously noted that "The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent." Our findings, however, showed only a marginally meaningful relationship between education as well as lobbying understanding ( $p=0.0529$ ). The descriptive patterns suggest some variation among educational categories also, so investigation warrants further examination.

Elite theory receives more support based on empirical results especially with sectoral concentration of perceived influence. Elite theory stresses how economic power translates into political influence, especially in resource-dependent economies, and aligns with Oil & Minerals' dominance. That 58.9% of respondents believe interest groups threaten equity finds support beyond elite theory's concern with power imbalances. Mills (1956) claimed that policy choices in these situations usually show the aims of a "power elite" instead of democratic contest, a scheme tied to South Sudan's governing ground.

Lobbying comprehension relates to education only a little ( $p=0.0529$ ). This is some tentative support that is for elite theory suggesting education stratifies knowledge about governance processes somewhat. This

possible information gap connects to Lukes' (2005) “third face of power” concept. Elite interests succeed via direct influence and via control of issues people see as influenceable. Lower education awareness about lobbying suggests this power aspect may function in South Sudan, though initial statistical support is weaker.

Findings show mixed support toward the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). Since different demographic groups do strongly support lobbying regulation (68.1% either “Support” or “Strongly Support”), they do suggest coalescence around transparency values that can form the basis for an advocacy coalition. Coalition-building seems to be constrained mostly by those limited interaction opportunities however, in addition to limited lobbyist engagement (only 44.9% reporting such engagement). Furthermore, low trust for Parliament (46.3% reporting “Low” or “None”) indicates that very few trust in Parliament, and this thing may make formal policy venues stressed in ACF of less relevance in South Sudan’s context, where informal coalition-building may be seen as more effective.

The empirical findings do appear to be most consistent with the proposed hybrid theoretical approach in this conceptual framework. For strong regulatory support suggests an approach to coalition-based reform that is recognizing of sectoral influence patterns obvious within elite capture dynamics. The hybrid framework can also accommodate all of the contextual factors that are specific for South Sudan since external actors do play a role, conflict has left its legacy on institutional trust, and both formal and informal governance structures coexist.

## **Relationship Between Demographic Groups and Awareness/Perception**

The study reveals interesting patterns as demographic characteristics do relate to both awareness of lobbying and perceptions of its influence, though most of these relationships did not achieve statistical importance. These patterns show the way social position relates to the governance knowledge and also the way that people view influence patterns in South Sudan’s context.

Men and women reported similar levels of concept familiarity ( $p=0.8335$ ). Gender does not appear to greatly affect the concept of lobbying awareness; men reported 50.0% familiarity while women reported 52.4%. This finding challenges assumptions regarding gender disparities for people access governance information plus suggests women and men, at least among the relatively engaged stakeholders within our sample, remain comparably exposed to lobbying concepts. It is a positive sign that awareness involves gender parity. However, gender inequalities persist throughout public life's many domains.

Education level shows a relationship with lobbying understanding that is marginally important ( $p=0.0529$ ), and this suggests a potential trend in which understanding may vary as people attain more education, even though this pattern was not statistically important. Descriptive data do show some variation in full understanding across different education levels: at primary (11.4%), at postgraduate (31.8%), and at notably

non-linear secondary (35.3%). This complex pattern suggests formal education contributes toward governance knowledge. Informal learning opportunities or specific professional experiences probably play key roles in governance too.

Awareness and also perception occupational differences were descriptively observed without any statistical importance. MPs (50.0%) and academics (52.5%) reported somewhat higher levels of having heard about lobbying compared to other groups, while journalists and CSO staff showed a greater tendency to perceive lobbying as non-transparent. Professional exposure as well as roles might lead to these descriptive patterns, but large within-group variation with overlapping perspectives across occupational categories explain the lack of statistical importance.

Descriptive data reveals detailed links to views on lobbying. These relationships also show age. Descriptive patterns suggest some variation across age cohorts in regulatory preferences also transparency assessments. Yet statistical importance for awareness or other key variables was unreached. These generational differences, in fact, may reflect varying experiences that were had with governance institutions both before and after independence. More study is needed for an in-depth look at these trends.

For South Sudan, governance transparency in addition to accountability do have demographic pattern implications, even without statistical relationships. Awareness distributes relatively evenly across gender and occupational groups, suggesting knowledge of influence mechanisms, while overall limited, does not strongly concentrate within particular demographic segments. From the perspective of equity, this finding is encouraging because it suggests that efforts for improving governance transparency would not have a need to overcome extreme disparities of knowledge across major demographic divides.

Descriptive patterns that relate to education as well as understanding lobbying, though only marginally meaningful, suggest the potential value in efforts to educate the public about lobbying and policy influence. Through such initiatives, accessible formats and non-technical language could reach those with varying formal education levels. Because these perceptions lack any strong occupational differences, the cross-sectoral dialogue becomes important so perspectives on patterns of influence can be shared across professional boundaries.

## **How Findings Relate to Existing Literature: Confirm, Extend, or Contrast**

The empirical findings do confirm existing literature on lobbying and on interest group influence and do extend it, offering some perspectives in contrast with South Sudan's post-conflict context. The generalizability of certain governance patterns is highlighted through these relationships to earlier research. South Sudan's situation's contextual uniqueness is also highlighted by each of them.

Lobbying influence seems concentrated in extractive industries thus strongly affirming the resource curse literature ("Oil & Minerals" most influenced at 42.5%). Bebbington et al. (2018) found extractive sector multinational corporations influence regulatory environments. These corporations leverage various influence strategies within resource-rich developing nations. Our findings do empirically validate these patterns in South Sudan, where oil dominates the economy as it also appears to influence policy. Finance's secondary concentration (18.4%) aligns further with literature on how economic policy domains influence disproportionately more often than social service sectors do (Mahoney & Baumgartner, 2020).

Lobbying activities have limited transparency with 45.9% describing lobbying as "Not Transparent" and that confirms observations by Tiitmamer and Awolich (2020) in regard to the lack of documentation of who influences legislative processes in South Sudan. Our findings extend this literature through quantifying public perceptions of this opacity and exploring its relationship to assessments of lobbying's policy effects. While perceiving transparency as well as assessing effects did not reach statistical importance ( $p=0.0701$ ), the descriptive pattern suggests a potential trend that truly warrants further investigation.

Education and lobbying understanding exist in a marginally meaningful relationship ( $p=0.0529$ ) that partially aligns with patterns recent African lobbying research identified. Olanya (2019) and also Adetula (2020) found that the educated elites located in Kenya and Nigeria are very much aware of formal lobbying mechanisms, and that this creates representation gaps. These data offer statistical support for this trend. However, it is these qualitative studies that suggest such a strong relationship. Established governance systems in other African countries as well as South Sudan may show contextual or methodological difference variations.

Khadiagala (2020) documented similar findings from Ghana along with South Africa, wherein there was increased public demand for lobbying disclosure requirements. This demand followed governance failures, and it mirrors the strong support toward lobbying regulation (68.1%). This parallel suggests poor governance experiences may catalyze reform sentiment within different African contexts. These results build on prior work through identifying precise regulatory desires, and public hearings (36.5%) were the most favored method, showing interest in engaged approaches instead of just technical fixes.

The findings on sectoral influence patterns confirm and extend literature about donor and NGO influence in South Sudan. Government decision-making feels donor conditionality's effects per Hemmer and Grinstead (2022). Sectors greatly depend on international funding in this case especially. This understanding is extended by our sectoral analysis showing perceived external influence varies across policy domains; health reveals comparatively high perceived influence relative to service sectors (8.7%) since international organizations probably have a key role in health service delivery.

Due to the fact that 46.3% reported “Low” or “None,” this confirms what de Waal (2019) observed: that formal institutions in South Sudan’s political marketplace have limited legitimacy. Our discoveries broaden the existing research as we analyze institutional trust’s relation to governance views. Important statistical relationships were not found by us for transparency perceptions plus trust and regulatory support. However, the descriptive patterns suggest complex dynamics of further investigation merit.

Our findings from some areas contrast with established democracies' literature. Crepez and Chari (2021) documented the trends that are toward the formalization of lobbying through regulatory frameworks in developed democracies since influence channels are now becoming institutionalized. Only 32.4% of South Sudanese respondents perceive lobbying as “Somewhat Transparent” or “Very Transparent” in contrast with this trend. This suggests that it is the case that despite global movements toward greater formalization, South Sudan’s lobbying landscape remains predominantly informal and also opaque.

## **Implications for Governance and Transparency in South Sudan**

The empirical findings have important implications for governance and transparency in South Sudan because they provide perceptions that may shape theoretical knowledge plus actual improvement attempts. These implications are defined by institutional design, regulatory approaches, public engagement, and capacity development domains.

First, extractive industries need sector-specific transparency initiatives now. The perceived lobbying influence concentration also shows Oil & Minerals are viewed as most influenced by 42.5%. Though broad lobbying rules may be useful, specific transparency tools for the oil industry might ease sharp worries over unfair influence. The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) models potentially, though our findings suggest adaptation to South Sudan’s specific context would be necessary, particularly given the low trust in formal institutions.

Second, strong support exists for lobbying regulation among demographic groups (68.1% either “Support” or “Strongly Support”). Political feasibility for transparency reforms is indicated by that support despite South Sudan’s difficult governance environment. Transparency initiatives may gain traction even in a context of limited institutional trust since this broad-based support suggests it. These should especially be seen as safeguards from unfair sway instead of formal governmental changes. Public hearings (36.5%) are preferred here, suggesting that participatory approaches might gain more public support than administrative solutions like registries alone.

Third, education as well as lobbying understanding do marginally relate ( $p=0.0529$ ), which does suggest public education initiatives will have potential value alongside formal regulatory changes. The relationship is just not quite as strong as was initially hypothesized. Descriptive patterns indicate how people understand

lobbying concepts is somewhat affected by educational background. Accessible public information regarding lobbying processes, influence channels, as well as monitoring opportunities could help address potential information asymmetries and enable broader participation in governance oversight.

Lobbying awareness gender parity challenges some assumptions here. Additionally, access to all of governance information does not show gender disparities in the way it was previously thought. For maintaining of and strengthening of this equality through gender-sensitive approaches, transparency initiatives do need to address not extreme gender gaps in the baseline knowledge. It remains important in inclusive governance that women can ensure they have equal opportunities so they participate in transparency oversight mechanisms, particularly because South Sudan committed itself to gender equality in its transitional constitution as well as peace agreements.

Low Parliament trust (46.3% report “Low” or “None”) shows reforms for transparency need more legislative oversight. Our findings suggest independent monitoring bodies with civil society participation might enjoy greater public confidence while parliamentary committees might play a role within lobbying regulation. Civil society organizations are trusted even more, and it suggests that they can play important roles. Roles such as third-party monitors or even public educators are examples that exist in transparency initiatives.

Sixth, the description of perceived transparency related to effect assessments, while it was not achieving statistical importance ( $p=0.0701$ ), suggests a trend where procedural openness might relate to the way people perceive the legitimacy of policy outcomes. Such a pattern, despite needed validation from researchers, shows transparency reforms might improve governance beyond just accountability, possibly implementing and legitimizing policy.

Finally, it is a lack of strong occupational differences that means people are aware and perceive, thus highlighting the reason why cross-sectoral dialogue should make governance transparent. As different professional groups perceive lobbying influence in a broadly similar way, multi-stakeholder forums where government officials, civil society representatives, business leaders, academics, and journalists meet could help people to understand influence dynamics as well as reform influence. Dialogue like that could address common concerns our analysis revealed across categories.

## **Lobbying in Fragile Settings vs. Mature Democracies**

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The study findings enable some valuable comparisons between the lobbying dynamics that are documented in more mature democracies and South Sudan’s fragile governance context. These comparisons highlight theoretical as well as practical adaptation that requires context-specific variations with universal patterns in interest group politics.

Awareness represents a key point in time. Formalization provides contrast. Mature democracies with professional associations, regulatory frameworks, and public discourse widely recognize lobbying as a concept, but our finding that only 48.3% of South Sudanese respondents have heard of lobbying indicates much less concept penetration. Such missing awareness implies less clear designation defines South Sudan's influence area. Lobbying is institutionalized as a recognized practice inside established democracies, thus they formalize more.

An important divergence shows the transparency mechanisms. Mature democracies have adopted with increasing frequency formal transparency requirements that do include lobbyist registration and the disclosure of contacts and the reporting of expenditures (Crepaz & Chari, 2021). Our finding that 45.9% of respondents describe lobbying as “Not Transparent” shows South Sudan's mechanisms are incomparable instead. Interest group influence operates in different environments because of this transparency gap, also South Sudan's unclear setting may enable influence that transparent systems would scrutinize.

Both similarities and differences show such sectoral patterns. Extractive industries perceive influence to be concentrated (42.5%) as well as parallel patterns in some mature democracies, in which resource sectors often exert disproportionate influence (Mahoney & Baumgartner, 2020). However, the extreme concentration in South Sudan's case, so Oil & Minerals far exceeds other sectors, suggests sectoral imbalance is more pronounced than typically found amid diversified economies having multiple competing interests.

Institutional trust and lobbying relate. Those differences feel curious as that link emerges. Transparency in lobbying is often positioned in such a way as to improve institutional legitimacy within mature democracies. Accountability achieves this enhancement through effort (Bauhr & Grimes, 2022). In South Sudan, low Parliament trust (46.3% reported “Low” or “None”) with strong lobbying regulation support (68.1%) shows a unique dynamic. Transparency may be valued despite institutional skepticism instead of as a means to build institutional trust there.

Information asymmetries seem somewhat present in South Sudan's context but are less pronounced than expected. Even though education and lobbying understanding related with only marginal importance ( $p=0.0529$ ), descriptive patterns do suggest some variation across educational backgrounds. This pattern may reflect that both the public knows little about governance processes and they can't access education, plus that creates knowledge disparities that differ from those in mature democracies where education is universal and political information is more accessible.

Important distinctions show about the role of informal networks. Though political systems rely on personal connections, our findings show poor transparency. South Sudan informal networks might have a more dominant role than mature democracies, since high influence is perceived despite few formal lobbying

structures using influence channels. De Waal's (2019) characterization about South Sudan's political marketplace aligns with this informality operating through monetized loyalty rather than formal institutional processes.

External actors exert influence. This divergence occurs because of them. Even though international influences affect all of the countries, the people perceive lobbying influence rather highly in the sectors in which donors greatly involve themselves (like health at 8.7%), indicating that external actors may play much more direct roles in South Sudan's policy processes than in mature democracies that insulate sovereignty more. This trend is mirrored by the aid dependency for South Sudan plus the prominent delivery role for international organizations.

Both theory along with practice are affected by these important comparisons. In theory, they suggest models for interest group politics that were developed in mature democracies must adapt greatly to account for what is characteristic of fragile settings like South Sudan informality, opacity, extreme sectoral concentration, as well as external actor roles. Practically, they do indicate that various transparency initiatives must properly address both informal influence networks dominating South Sudan's governance landscape and formal lobbying activities.

## **Acknowledgement of Study Limitations**

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While this research provides valuable perceptions into lobbying as well as interest group influence in South Sudan, several limitations must be acknowledged when considering their implications or interpreting the findings. These limitations constrain the sampling approach along with challenging measurement, contextualizing constraints, and framing the cross-section.

The sampling approach was designed in order to capture different diverse perspectives. However, intrinsic limitations can affect generalizability. The stratified purposive sampling had its main focus be stakeholders based in Juba in roles adjacent to governance, potentially overlooking perspectives coming from ordinary citizens without formal connections to policy processes, rural areas, and states outside the capital. Due to this elite as well as urban bias, the findings may not fully represent the broader awareness plus perceptions of the South Sudanese population. The sample size of 207 respondents limits statistical power, though it is sufficient for the analyses conducted, when detecting small effects or subgroup analyses.

South Sudan's context presents measurement challenges because of lobbying's complex, often informal nature. The questionnaire did rely on the subjective comprehension by respondents of lobbying concepts, which they may understand in different ways given lobbying is not formally recognized as a distinct practice. Key concepts were possibly interpreted inconsistently given only 31.9% reported full lobbying understanding. Furthermore, self-reported perceptions regarding influence may reflect what respondents happen to perceive

in place of objective measures concerning actual lobbying impact because assessing it would require quite different methodological approaches.

## **Recommendations**

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Based on the empirical findings of this study, designing a thorough lobbying regulation framework is recommended as a priority for governance reform in South Sudan, which showed strong public support for lobbying regulation (68.1%) alongside perceptions of limited transparency (45.9% describing lobbying as “Not Transparent”). This framework should be established to improve transparency while acknowledging the unique contextual challenges of South Sudan’s governance environment.

Since the research identified an awareness gap where only 48.3% of respondents had heard of lobbying, the regulatory framework should begin through clear legal definitions of lobbying activities as well as interest groups. These definitions should be sufficiently broad to capture formal and informal influence attempts because they recognize that within South Sudan’s context, much lobbying occurs through informal channels rather than registered professional lobbyists. The framework should explicitly include domestic as well as international actors because it acknowledges external influences do play a meaningful role within South Sudan’s policy landscape.

To increase public scrutiny, open sessions for input on draft laws should improve committee proceedings’ accessibility. The research, which actually found public hearings had been the most popular regulatory mechanism (36.5%), suggests appetite for much more visible legislative deliberations. The default approach should be transparency, and security concerns or sensitivity concerns may justify closed sessions occasionally, with justifications that are published required for exceptions. The committee schedules and the agendas along with the participant lists should be published in advance. Interested stakeholders can participate in or then watch related proceedings.

Legislators are to systematically document external inputs into legislation as well as make them available publicly. A stakeholder consultation record must document which interest groups offered input by way of what channels with what specific recommendations for each key law. This documentation will tackle the identified transparency deficit while showing analysis of influence patterns over time. The record should include both formal submissions as well as summaries of informal consultations. It is of importance to acknowledge both of these channels in South Sudan’s context.

Civil society organizations should have training programs developed on lobbying monitoring methodologies for them. These programs should include techniques for tracking influence attempts with analyzing policy outcomes with documenting relationships between interest group activities and decision-making. These programs should be designed in such a way that they accommodate organizations that have varying resource

levels and technical capacities and that they have modules ranging all the way from basic monitoring approaches up to advanced influence analysis. Since CSO staff descriptively found they perceived lobbying as “Not Transparent” (51.5%), such training would address recognized information needs for the sector.

For documenting and analyzing lobbying activities, monitoring toolkits should be created and distributed to civil society organizations because they provide standardized frameworks. Toolkits must include methods to connect lobbying with policy results, with advice about accessing and reading public records plus forms to record attempts at influence. Standardizing monitoring makes data aggregation across organizations a less difficult task. A more thorough picture in terms of influence patterns of South Sudan would be built as a result of that.

Civic education curricula must be developed for both formal education settings and community-based learning, and also the curricula must introduce concepts of policy influence, interest representation, and citizen oversight in more accessible terms. Curricula should suit various educational stages from primary schools to universities plus address education's connection to lobbying possibly ( $p=0.0529$ ). By reinforcing concepts after introducing them early throughout educational pathways, the curricula could help narrow knowledge gaps, identified in the research.

Information campaigns including all genders should use the finding that lobbying awareness has gender parity ( $p=0.8335$ ) and make sure men and women still access information equally concerning governance processes. These campaigns should access diverse audiences through channels as well as formats and potentially include community associations, conduct market-based outreach, or integrate with public services to reach broad audiences. Content should stress that citizens have rights to information about governance processes as well as highlight how citizens can participate in policy oversight because lobbying transparency connects to broader equality objectives.

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