

## Influence of Media Ownership on Political Bias Among Broadcast Programmes in Nakuru County

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### Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the influence of media ownership on political bias among broadcast programmes in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study was guided by the political economy of media theory. The study employed a descriptive research design to include a census of 69 media professionals working in five local radio and television stations and a sample of 242 viewers and listeners obtained using the Krejcie and Morgan table and stratified random sampling. Structured questionnaires and interview schedules were employed to obtain primary data, and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics, thematic analysis, correlation, and regression using SPSS version 26. The findings showed that there was a significant positive relation between media ownership and political bias. From the findings, the study recommended that the broadcast institutions in Nakuru County need to enhance the editorial autonomy by shielding newsrooms against direct ownership interference. The research concluded that political bias in broadcast programmes in Nakuru County is dependent on media ownership. The findings of this study are significant to media regulators, policymakers, and broadcast institutions, as they provide empirical evidence on how media ownership structures influence political bias in broadcast programmes. Additionally, the results offer practical insights for media practitioners and civil society organisations seeking to promote editorial independence, media credibility, and informed democratic participation, particularly during election periods.

**Key Words:** Broadcast programs, diversity of ownership, media ownership, political affiliation of owners, political bias.

## INTRODUCTION

Media ownership is a predetermined factor of editorial autonomy and content balance in broadcast programs, with the impacts on the selection of information, its frame and the information dissemination to form an opinion and political discussion of the people (Elejalde et al., 2021). The various media ownership arrangements are the key to pluralism, accountability, and equal reporting in a democratic society where the control of the narrative falls into the hands of a limited number of organisations (Kelly, 2019). On the other hand, concentrated or politically attached ownership tends to create one-sided coverage where editorial choices in favour of owners would favour the interests of the proprietors at the expense of objectivity in news coverage, which leads to distorted political coverage and a lack of popular confidence (D'Angelo, 2002).

Media ownership has been found to be a major influence in political bias in broadcast journalism around the globe, and the ownership patterns have been found to be influenced by larger economic and ideological factors. In the USA and the United Kingdom, where media conglomerates, such as Fox News and CNN, are common, conservative or liberal perspectives are often linked to the two media companies, which creates echo chambers and consolidates viewpoints among the audience (Jamieson & Cappella, 2008). Outlets owned and controlled by a select few were accused of bias during politically charged matters such as the Brexit referendum, which highlights the difficulty of remaining neutral in polarised spaces (Moore & Ramsay, 2017). Conversely, state-owned media, such as in Russia and China, threaten individual points of view and suppress the quantity of opinions by producing narratives that support government agendas and restricting access to alternative viewpoints (Yablokov, 2020; Shirk, 2011).

In Africa, the media is frequently reflective of colonial histories and post-independent politics of power, a combination of privately-owned enterprise and state intervention and promotion. Political affiliation in ownership in South Africa has resulted in the selective reporting that promotes particular agendas at the expense of journalistic integrity (Wasserman & Garman, 2012). In the same situation, in Nigeria, the

media houses owned by the elites lead to partisan reporting of political events, as the interests of the owner determine the priorities of the editorial coverage and compromise balanced discussions (Ojebode, 2018). Such trends emphasise the fact that ownership concentration intensifies bias, especially in young democracies, where regulatory frameworks are ineffective, and, therefore, this lowers media pluralism and increases the threat of propaganda (AfDB, 2021).

Media control in Kenya has a strong influence on the broadcast content as the private, state-owned, and community stations are marked by an amalgamation of commercial and political interests under a comparatively free but polarised media environment (Ogola, 2021). Partisan reporting has been associated with the ownership affiliations, particularly during elections, when outlets such as Royal Media Services and Nation Media Group have been accused of being biased towards a particular candidate or group (Mwangi, 2020; Kariuki, 2024). State-owned media like KBC have traditionally preferred governmental accounts, and private organisations tend to follow the political connection of their owners, which causes biased framing and lower authority (Oranga & Situma, 2025). Such processes undermine trust in society and strengthen echo chambers, as surveys have shown that the majority of the population is biased (Media Council of Kenya, 2023).

Media ownership in Nakuru County determines local broadcast shows in a dynamic but politically aggressive setting, where media outlets such as Sauti ya Mwananchi and Ghetto Radio are affiliated with powerful actors, adding bias to the narrative and propagation of propaganda (Kariuki, 2024). Video ownership can sometimes determine editorial decision-making, with the promotion of supportive politics and marginalisation of divergent voices polarising societies and compromising journalistic impartiality (Otieno, 2024; Nakuru Media Watch, 2024). It is also crucial to have a regulated and diversified ownership system to provide an equitable political discussion and increase the role of the media in democratic leadership. The question of how media ownership is affecting political bias is a vital issue in supporting ethical journalism, regulatory changes, and accountability to the populace in localised media ecosystems. The present study thus aims at

investigating how media ownership affects political bias in broadcast programs in Nakuru County in Kenya, with the intention of offering evidence-based information as a means to diversify media ownership, enhance editorial autonomy, and enhance the overall integrity of political broadcasting in the devolution setting.

## Statement of the Problem

The media stations are preferably expected to be neutral channels that offer balanced and objective information to the masses so that the viewers or listeners can make informed choices, especially in the political arena. They are supposed to apply journalistic principles of fairness, accuracy and impartiality, provide multi-faceted opinions and promote healthy public discussions (Entman, 2007). Objectivity of the media houses is essential to propagating democratic principles in society and bringing balance in broadcasting without political interference. Nonetheless, manipulation of broadcast programs through political influences is still a major problem in Kenya. In certain cases, such as on a national scale, the owner of Royal Media Services was openly supporting the candidature of Raila Odinga in the 2017 general elections, which the critics claim affected the objectivity of the media. These examples illustrate how the editorial policies may be influenced by ownership interests, which result in biased news coverage to benefit some political actors. The same has been reflected in Nakuru County, where the local media houses like Sauti ya Mwananchi and Ghetto Radio have displayed the propensity to side with the powerful political figures. These stations have been accused of being mouthpieces to certain political parties, propagating propaganda that misleads the masses at the expense of the media as a source of information at all costs. Therefore, the study sought to determine the role of media ownership on political partisanship among broadcast programs in Nakuru County, Kenya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

#### Political Economy of Media Theory

The research was grounded on the theory of Political Economy of Media, which was initially presented by Herman and Chomsky (1988) and developed by other theorists like Mosco (2009). The theory analyses the

connection between the economic forms, ownership forms, and political authority in influencing content and the activities of media. It has stressed that the media industries operate according to capitalism with profit motives, elite interests, and governmental pressures determining editorial agendas and framing of content. The Political Economy of Media is more specifically applicable in describing the role of media ownership in political bias on broadcast programs in Nakuru County. The concentration of ownership creates the presence of formal control and influence mechanisms, which connect the owners to editorial decision-making, whereby the content is not based on societal interest.

The Political Economy of Media theory is relevant to this study because it explains how ownership structures, economic interests, and power relations influence media content and editorial decisions. The theory posits that media organisations do not operate in isolation but are shaped by the interests of their owners, advertisers, and political elites, which can affect the objectivity and balance of broadcast programmes. In the context of Nakuru County, where media houses are often owned or influenced by individuals and groups with political affiliations, the theory provides a useful framework for understanding how ownership interests may shape political narratives and lead to biased coverage. Therefore, the theory helps to systematically analyse the link between media ownership and political bias, aligning directly with the study's objective of examining how ownership influences broadcast content.

### Empirical Review

Marcus (2019) examined the effects of ownership concentration on product differentiation in the American markets of daily newspapers. Using a quantitative research design, Marcus used the evidence of reporter assignments between 2010 and 2015. Sampling was done in different newspaper markets in the U.S., with industry records being used to gather the data. Regression models were also analysed to determine the relationship that exists between ownership concentration and content variety. The descriptive results showed that high concentration was associated with high product differentiation. The hypothesis that mergers might help to increase the content variety was supported by

inferential analysis. The article concluded that, as opposed to the assumptions of antitrust, the consolidation could be beneficial to the consumer due to the enhancement of content diversity. The study directly informs the current research by highlighting the role of ownership in shaping political content and influencing editorial decisions. Similar to the Nigerian context, the present study examines how ownership interests affect political bias in broadcast programmes in Nakuru County, Kenya.

Okwuchukwu (2020) investigated how media ownership and control affected the agenda-setting in Nigeria. The study followed a qualitative research design and used in-depth interviews as a method of the research carried out on media professionals who were sampled using cluster and purposive sampling techniques. Interviews were used to gather data, which was thematically analysed. The descriptive results indicated that the political elite's ownership affected news agendas. Inferential knowledge implied that these ownership arrangements stood in the way of independent agenda-setting. The researchers concluded that the ownership structure of the media in Nigeria undermines the independence of journalism. This study is closely linked to the current research as it provides evidence from the Kenyan media environment on how ownership-related pressures affect journalistic practice. While the study focuses on ethical decision-making at the organisational level, the present study builds on this by examining how such pressures manifest as political bias in broadcast

programmes. This underscores the relevance and necessity of investigating media ownership influences in Nakuru County.

A study by Maweu (2020) examined the ways in which journalists in Nation Media Group, Kenya, are under economic and political pressure to make their ethical choices. The economic and political pressures were the independent variables, and ethical decision-making was the dependent variable. The qualitative research design was used, and the research data were gathered via semi-structured interviews. The purposive sampling was focused on journalists in the organisation. Descriptive evidence revealed the problem of meeting the ethical standards. The knowledge, which represented an inference, indicated that journalistic ethics are harmed by outside influences. The research established that ethical journalism in Kenya is affected by economic and political factors. The study is closely linked to the current research as it provides evidence from the Kenyan media environment on how ownership-related pressures affect journalistic practice. While the study focuses on ethical decision-making at the organisational level, the present study builds on this by examining how such pressures manifest as political bias in broadcast programmes. This underscores the relevance and necessity of investigating media ownership influences in Nakuru County.

## Conceptual Framework

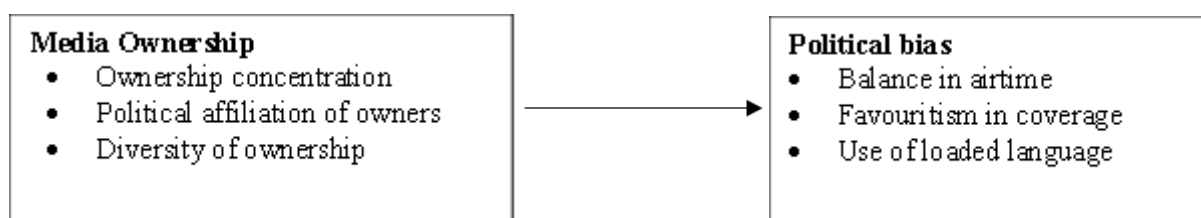


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 depicts the relationship between media ownership and political bias in broadcast programmes in Nakuru County, Kenya. Media ownership is conceptualised as the independent variable, encompassing aspects such

as ownership structure, level of ownership concentration, political affiliations of owners, and degree of owner control over editorial decisions. Political bias in broadcast programmes is the dependent variable and is reflected through indicators

such as unequal political coverage, partisan framing of news, selective reporting, and preferential airtime allocation to specific political actors.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population comprised 5 heads of radio and television stations, 10 editors, 16 producers, and 38 news reporters and presenters from 5 local radio and television stations, along with 5 officers from the Media Council of Kenya Nakuru Chapter and an estimated 473,000 viewers and listeners within Nakuru City. Given the small and manageable size of the media professionals' population, a census technique was employed to include all 69 individuals. For viewers and listeners, the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table was applied to determine a sample size of 242 respondents, selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across demographic segments. The study relied on primary data, which was collected through structured questionnaires administered to media professionals using a drop-and-pick method and interview schedules for viewers and listeners. A pilot study was conducted among 20 media practitioners and 30 audience

members from neighbouring Uasin Gichu County to test the reliability and validity of the research instruments. Quantitative data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods, with results presented through tables, figures, and narrative explanations. Qualitative data were analysed thematically and reported narratively. The study adhered to ethical guidelines, obtaining informed consent from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and no personal identifiers were included in the analysis or reporting of the data.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Response Rate

The researcher distributed 74 questionnaires to (the heads of radio and TVs, chief editors, producers, news reporters, and presenters working for local radio and television stations). 62 questionnaires were correctly filled and returned, resulting in a response rate of (84%). Additionally, 242 interviews were conducted among listeners and viewers of local radio and tv stations in Nakuru. From the 242 questionnaires, 168 were duly filled out and returned. This resulted in a response rate of 70 per cent.

**Table 1: Response Rate**

Category	Frequency	Complete	Percentage (%)
Media Practitioners	74	62	84
Audience	242	168	70

### Pilot Test Results

The pilot study was conducted in Kericho with 7 questionnaires being administered to the selected heads of radio, editors and reporters from the local stations representing approximately (10%) of the intended sample size, as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2008). Analysis of the pilot data

produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.812, which, according to George and Mallery (2019), signifies good internal consistency ( $\alpha \geq 0.7$ ). Therefore, the questionnaire was deemed reliable and suitable for use in the main study. The results are summarised in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Reliability Test Results**

Variable	No	Cronbach's Alpha Value
Media Ownership	7	.874
Political bias	7	.899

From the findings, all variables recorded Cronbach's Alpha coefficients exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.7, indicating satisfactory reliability. Specifically,

the coefficients were 0.874 for Media Ownership and 0.899 for political bias. George and Mallery (2019) state that a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 or

above indicates acceptable internal consistency among items measuring a similar construct. Accordingly, all constructs in the instrument exhibited sufficient reliability, suggesting that the questionnaire was internally consistent and suitable for use in the main study.

## Demographic Information

The researcher sought to determine the demographic information of this study, including gender, age and level of education of the respondents.

## Gender

The researcher aimed to establish the gender distribution of the respondents in the study. The findings are indicated in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Gender**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	37	60
Female	25	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings showed that (60%) of the respondents were male, while (40%) were female, indicating that men constitute a larger proportion of individuals working in broadcast media roles such as editors, producers, reporters, and presenters within the sampled radio and television stations in Nakuru County. Although both genders are represented, the findings point to a gender imbalance within the industry, with men occupying a majority of positions related to news production and dissemination. However, while such an imbalance may potentially influence newsroom dynamics and content

production, this study did not empirically examine the effect of gender on political coverage; therefore, any implications for the selection or framing of political information should be interpreted with caution and may require further investigation supported by empirical evidence.

## Age

The researcher sought to assess the age groups of the respondents in the study. The findings are indicated in Table 4.

**Table 4: Age**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-24 years	11	18
25-34 years	17	27
35-44 years	15	24
45-55 years	9	16
Above 55 years	10	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings indicated that (18%) of respondents were aged 18–24 years, (27%) were aged 25–34 years, (24%) were aged 35–44 years, (16%) were aged 45–55 years, and (15%) were above 55 years. The data revealed that most respondents were below 45 years of age, with the highest proportion (27%) falling within the 25–34-year age bracket. The age composition of respondents is a crucial factor in understanding the dynamics of political bias in broadcast programs, as it influences

both operational practices and perceptual orientations within media institutions. A predominantly youthful demographic typically reflects a workforce and audience segment that is highly adaptive to new communication technologies, particularly digital media platforms that shape political discourse. Younger media professionals and consumers tend to exhibit greater openness to innovation, faster uptake of emerging broadcasting tools, and active engagement

with social media as a news source, all of which affect how political narratives are produced and interpreted.

## Frequency of Political Broadcasts Watched or Listened To

The researcher sought to determine how frequently respondents watched or listened to political broadcast programs. The findings are indicated in Table 5.

**Table 5: Frequency of Political Broadcasts watched/ listened**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	23	37
Several times a week	26	42
Weekly	7	11
Rarely	6	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings indicated that (37%) of respondents watched or listened to political broadcasts daily, (42%) did so several times a week, (11%) weekly, and (10%) rarely. This shows that a significant majority (79%) engaged with political broadcasts regularly, reflecting strong audience interest and continuous interaction with political content in Nakuru County. Frequent exposure suggests that both media practitioners and audiences are highly engaged in political discourse, which enhances awareness of ongoing political developments but also increases the likelihood of being influenced by recurring narratives or subtle editorial biases.

selective story coverage, or biased guest representation, which are central indicators of political bias. However, regular exposure may also reinforce partisan perspectives, especially when stations repeatedly frame issues along ideological lines. Conversely, those who consume such broadcasts less frequently may remain relatively neutral but less informed about media bias trends. Overall, the findings highlight the pervasive influence of broadcast media on political perception in Nakuru County and underscore the need for balanced and ethical reporting to prevent distortion of public opinion.

The frequency of engagement is vital in understanding how media framing and agenda-setting affect public perception. Respondents with higher exposure levels are more likely to identify patterns of favouritism,

## Language Preference

The researcher sought to determine the language of preference for the consumption of political media content among the listeners and the viewers. The findings are indicated in Table 6.

**Table 6: Language Preference**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
English	22	35
Kiswahili	26	42
Vernacular	14	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

From the findings, the most favoured language in terms of consuming political media content was Kiswahili, with (42%) of the respondents responding to the same. This observation implies that Kiswahili is an efficient tool in reaching more people because it is national and easier to comprehend by people of different ethnicities. About (35%) of the respondents

spoke English, which showed that a significant number of the audience listens to politically oriented programs aired in English, maybe because of their education or because they prefer to listen to a more formal and analytical presentation.

Meanwhile, (23%) of the participants expressed that they wanted vernacular languages to be used, and this aspect demonstrates the persistence of ethnic and local-language media sources in terms of political information distribution. This may be explained by the emotional and cultural attachment of the listeners to their native languages and the confidence that they have in the local media personalities who speak dialects that they can easily understand. All in all, the results imply that though Kiswahili has been the leading language in the consumption of political media, the English and vernacular radio stations are

also key determinants of political discourse by the different categories of audiences.

## Descriptive Analysis on Media Ownership

The first objective of the study was to assess the influence of media ownership on political bias in broadcast programs in Nakuru County, Kenya.

## The Type of Media Mostly used to Follow Political Broadcasts

The study sought to determine which stations the listeners and the viewers listen to or follow political broadcasts. The results are represented in Figure 2.

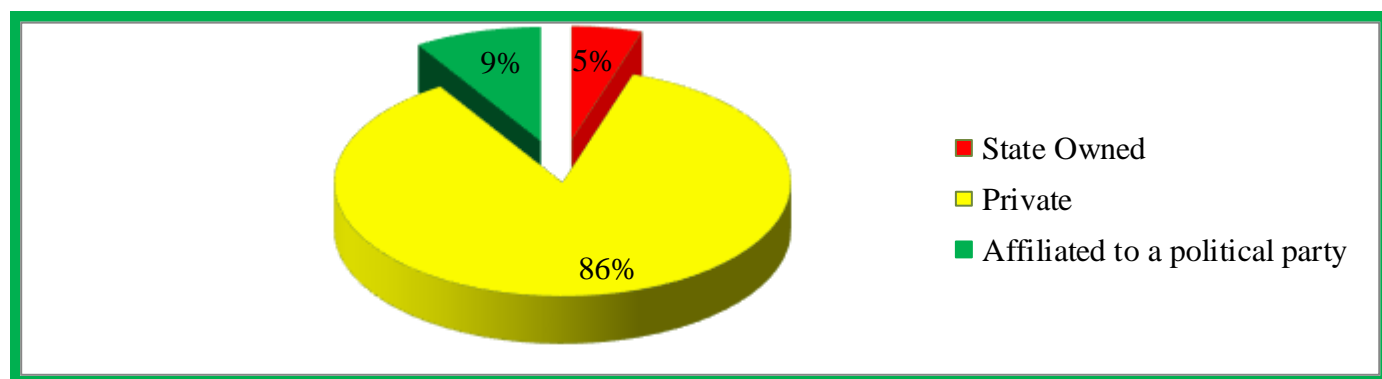


Figure 1: Media Types Mostly used to Follow Political Broadcasts

The findings revealed that respondents followed political broadcasts from a variety of media ownership types, including state-owned, privately owned, and politically affiliated stations. The majority of listeners and viewers (86%) reported that they mostly relied on privately owned stations to access political content, while (14%) followed state-owned and party-affiliated media outlets. This pattern suggests that private media dominate the political communication landscape in Nakuru County, reflecting public preference for outlets perceived to offer broader coverage and more dynamic discussions.

disproportionate influence over political framing and agenda-setting. Secondly, the relatively lower reliance on state-owned and politically affiliated stations suggests declining confidence in media perceived as overtly partisan or propagandistic. Yet, audiences who depend solely on private broadcasters risk exposure to corporate or ownership-driven bias that may subtly shape political perceptions.

## Political Media Outlet Ownership

The study further sought to determine whether the viewers and listeners were aware of the owners of the political media outlets they followed. The findings are indicated in Table 7.

The findings imply that the concentration of audience attention on privately owned stations grants them

Table 7: Political Media Outlet Ownership

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	26	42
No	17	27
Not sure	19	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

The results showed that (42%) of those interviewed knew who owns the majority of the political media houses they subscribe to, 27 per cent said they did not know, and 31% said they could not tell. It demonstrates that under half of the population in Nakuru County has a clear knowledge of ownership structures in the media, as a large percentage of the population is either uninformed or confused. The findings indicate that society is not very aware of the existence of ownership transparency in the local broadcast media, even though ownership is a very important factor in terms of editorial orientation and partisanship.

The results suggest that the failure to provide transparency in ownership compromises accountability and the audience's ability to make informed media decisions. It is also symptomatic of a greater lack of media literacy, in which consumers are

not sceptical of the source or motivation behind the political content they are exposed to. This state of affairs increases the risk of partisan persuasion that is being hidden under the guise of objective reporting. Thus, the media ownership responsibility could be increased with the help of civic education, a compulsory disclosure policy, and available licensing documentation, the ability of the audience to think critically of political broadcasts, and eventually the role of ownership-based bias on the media environment of Nakuru County.

## Importance of Media Ownership in Influencing Political Reporting

The study further sought to determine how important media ownership is in influencing how politics is reported. The results are represented in Figure 3

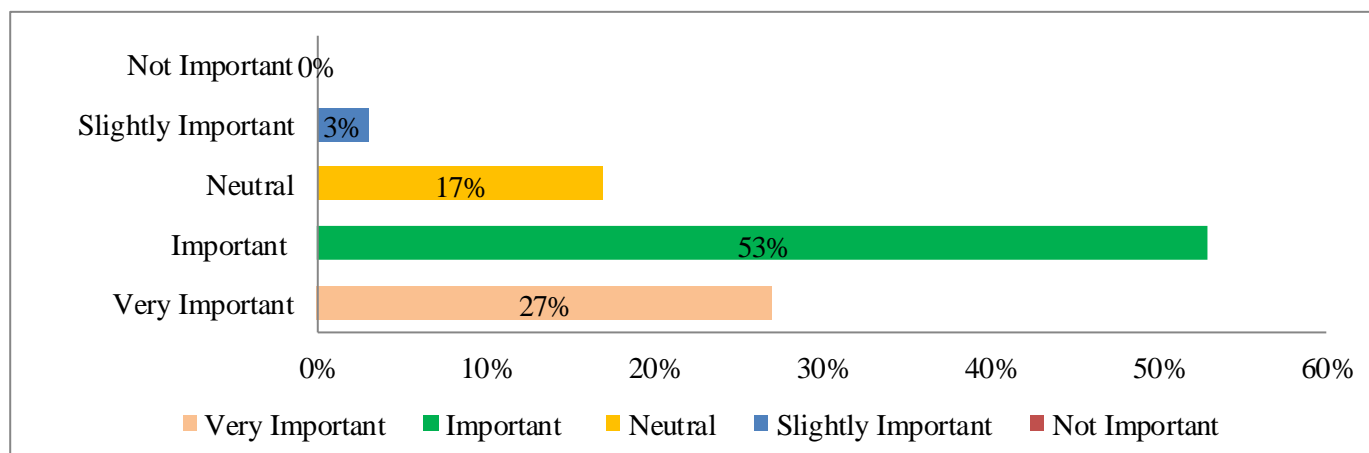


Figure 2: Importance of Media Ownership in Influencing Politics Reporting

The findings indicate that (53.0%) of respondents considered media ownership as important in influencing political reporting, (27.0%) considered it very important, (17.0%) were neutral, (3.0%) considered it slightly important, and none considered it not important. This suggests that most respondents perceive media ownership as a critical factor in shaping the reporting of political content. The implications of these findings are far-reaching. Ownership-driven influence limits diversity of opinion, promotes selective coverage, and weakens the role of the media as an independent watchdog of power. It also fosters public scepticism toward political

broadcasts, as audiences increasingly perceive news content as a reflection of ownership interests rather than objective journalism. The findings agree with Baum and Zhukov (2019) who observed that media ownership strongly affects editorial decisions, story framing, and the political leanings of broadcast programs.

## Influence of Media Ownership on Political Bias

The researcher sought to assess the level of agreement of the respondents on media ownership and political bias in broadcast programs in Nakuru County, Kenya. The findings are as indicated in Table 8.

**Table 8: Media Ownership**

Media Ownership	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Mean	Std
State-owned media stations often favor the ruling party in their political coverage.	18	64	6	12	0	3.8800	.84853
I believe state-owned broadcasters promote government agendas more than independent reporting.	22	32	22	24	0	3.5200	1.09246
Private broadcasters in Nakuru County cover political issues more neutrally than state-owned ones.	30	40	18	12	0	3.8800	.98229
Private stations selectively report political events based on ownership interests	42	30	16	12	0	4.0200	1.03982
Some stations clearly support specific political parties in their broadcasts	36	34	18	12	0	3.9400	1.01840
I can predict a station's political angle based on its known affiliations.	44	28	16	12	0	4.0400	1.04900
<b>Overall</b>						<b>3.8800</b>	<b>1.00508</b>

**Key:** SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

The findings indicate that (18.0%) of respondents strongly agreed that state-owned media stations often favour the ruling party in their political coverage, (64.0%) agreed, (6.0%) were neutral, (12.0%) disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, with a mean of 3.8800 and a standard deviation of 0.84853. This suggests that most respondents consider state-owned media as favouring the ruling party in their political coverage. The findings also show that (22.0%) of respondents strongly agreed that state-owned broadcasters promote government agendas more than independent reporting, (32.0%) agreed, (22.0%) were neutral, (24.0%) disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, with a mean of 3.5200 and a standard deviation of 1.09246. This implies that while respondents recognise government agenda promotion by state-owned broadcasters, the perception may not be uniform across all media stations.

In addition, (30.0%) of respondents strongly agreed that private broadcasters in Nakuru County cover political issues more neutrally than state-owned ones, (40.0%) agreed, (18.0%) were neutral, (12.0%) disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, with a mean of 3.8800 and a standard deviation of 0.98229. This indicates that private stations are generally perceived

to report political issues more neutrally compared to state-owned stations. The findings further reveal that (42.0%) of respondents strongly agreed that private stations selectively report political events based on ownership interests, (30.0%) agreed, (16.0%) were neutral, (12.0%) disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, with a mean of 4.0200 and a standard deviation of 1.03982. This suggests that respondents consider ownership interests as influencing editorial decisions in private media.

Moreover, (36.0%) of respondents strongly agreed that some stations clearly support specific political parties in their broadcasts, (34.0%) agreed, (18.0%) were neutral, (12.0%) disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, with a mean of 3.9400 and a standard deviation of 1.01840. This indicates that respondents perceive partisanship in political coverage among certain stations. Finally, (44.0%) of respondents strongly agreed that they can predict a station's political angle based on its known affiliations, (28.0%) agreed, (16.0%) were neutral, (12.0%) disagreed, and none strongly disagreed, with a mean of 4.0400 and a standard deviation of 1.04900. This finding implies that respondents strongly associate media ownership and affiliations with the political bias of broadcast programs. The overall mean of 3.8800 and standard

deviation of 1.00508 show that respondents generally perceive media ownership as a significant determinant of political bias, although differences exist in how consistently ownership influences editorial decisions across the media stations. These findings align with the Political Economy of Media Theory, which posits that ownership and financial interests shape editorial direction and news framing. The results imply that while private broadcasters may appear relatively neutral, ownership affiliations, whether political, corporate, or familial, continue to determine content priorities and slant, thereby perpetuating selective political representation in Nakuru's broadcast media landscape.

The study further sought to assess the influence of media ownership on political bias among broadcast programmes in Nakuru County. Respondents highlighted that the ownership of media stations greatly shapes how political news is presented. One participant observed, "Media owners often influence editorial decisions to favour the political leaders or parties they support, especially during election periods." Another respondent stated, "Some stations clearly push the agenda of their owners' preferred politicians, while giving limited airtime to opposing views." These suggest that ownership structure directly affects the balance and neutrality of political reporting. This implies that when ownership is politically aligned, editorial independence is compromised, resulting in biased narratives that may mislead the public. Consequently, there is a need for stronger policy frameworks that ensure media outlets maintain autonomy from ownership interference to safeguard objectivity in political reporting.

When asked to describe instances of perceived bias, several participants recalled situations where specific stations favoured certain political parties or candidates. One listener mentioned, "During campaigns, you could tell which station supported which party by the tone and the amount of coverage they gave." Another added, "Some stations ignored stories that painted their preferred leaders negatively." These indicate that media ownership may create an environment that encourages selective reporting aligned with political interests. The implication is that political bias in news coverage can distort voter perceptions, unfairly influence

democratic processes, and undermine equal access to media platforms for all political players. This highlights the importance of regulatory oversight to ensure fair coverage and content diversity across broadcast stations.

On whether knowing who owns a media outlet affects trust in its political coverage, most respondents agreed that ownership transparency influences their trust levels. A viewer explained, "When I know the owner has political ambitions, I become sceptical about the fairness of their news." Another respondent noted, "Ownership details help me judge whether the content is biased or balanced." These imply that audiences associate ownership transparency with credibility and fairness in political broadcasting. The implication is that public awareness of ownership structures empowers audiences to critically assess information sources. Therefore, promoting transparency in media ownership could enhance accountability, audience media literacy, and public trust in the broadcast sector.

Respondents also emphasised the importance of diverse media ownership in reducing political bias. One participant noted, "When ownership is concentrated in a few hands, the same political voices dominate; diversity brings balance and fairness." Another observed, "Different owners bring different perspectives, which helps minimize propaganda." This underscores the public's belief that pluralism in media ownership enhances democratic discourse and reduces one-sided political narratives. The implication is that a more diverse ownership landscape promotes healthy competition, multiplicity of views, and equitable representation of political interests. Policy efforts aimed at preventing ownership monopolies and encouraging community-based media could thus strengthen pluralism and inclusivity.

Regarding the role of media owners in ensuring impartial coverage, participants suggested that owners should maintain ethical boundaries and uphold journalistic independence. A respondent stressed, "Owners should let editors and journalists do their work without political interference." Another added, "They should promote professionalism and objectivity rather than pushing personal agendas." These responses highlight the expectation that media

proprietors should act as custodians of integrity rather than as political actors. The implication is that adherence to ethical leadership by owners directly influences the credibility and social responsibility of media institutions. Strengthening internal governance structures and enforcing professional codes of conduct could therefore limit unethical editorial interference.

Finally, when asked how they feel about media stations that openly support political leaders or parties, most respondents expressed discomfort and distrust. One viewer remarked, “When a station clearly supports one side, I stop taking their news seriously.” Another stated, “Such open bias undermines the purpose of journalism.” These perspectives reveal that

overt political alignment by media stations diminishes public confidence and questions their role as neutral information providers. These imply that media credibility is contingent upon perceived impartiality. Therefore, upholding neutrality in content delivery is crucial not only for maintaining audience trust but also for strengthening the role of the media as a pillar of democracy.

## **Descriptive Analysis for Political Bias Among Broadcast Programs Suspected Political Bias**

The study sought to determine whether the respondents ever suspected political bias in news or talk shows in the political media broadcasts. The findings are indicated in the table below.

**Table 9: Suspected Political Bias**

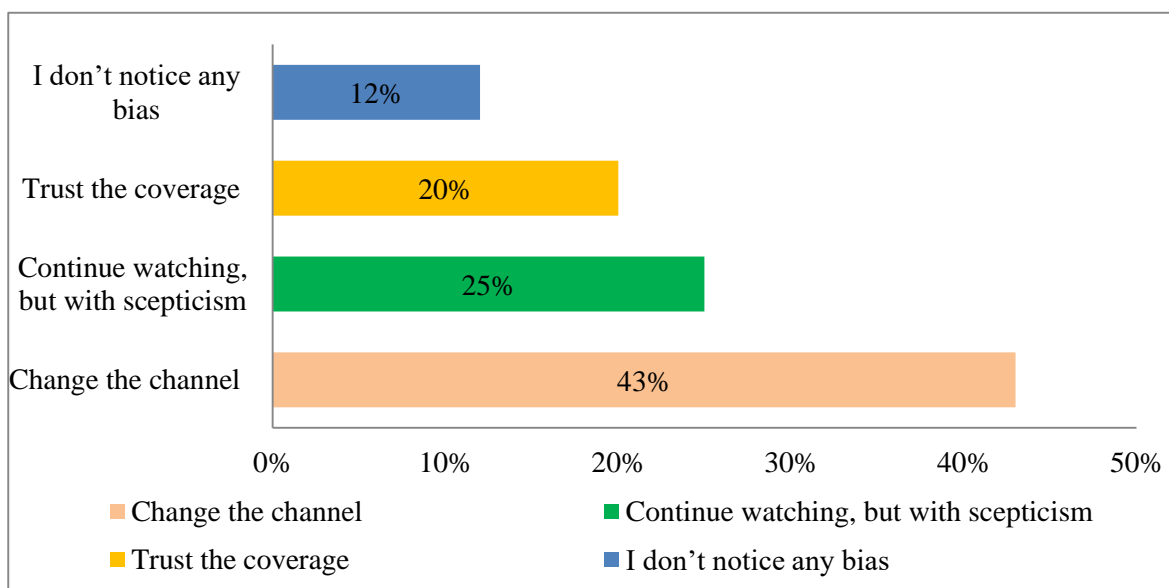
Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	38	56
No	18	34
Not sure	6	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings indicated that (56%) of respondents admitted to having suspected political bias in news or talk shows within Nakuru County, (34%) stated they had not, while (10%) were not sure. This demonstrates that more than half of the audience perceives political bias as a prevalent feature of local broadcast content. The high percentage of affirmative responses highlights growing public awareness of partiality in how news and political discussions are framed,

delivered, or moderated. The findings imply that local broadcast stations may inadvertently or deliberately project political leanings through story prioritisation, tone, or the ideological alignment of their panellists.

## **Reaction to Perceived Media Bias**

The study also assessed the perception of the respondents on media biasness. The findings are shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 3: Reaction to Perceived Media Bias**

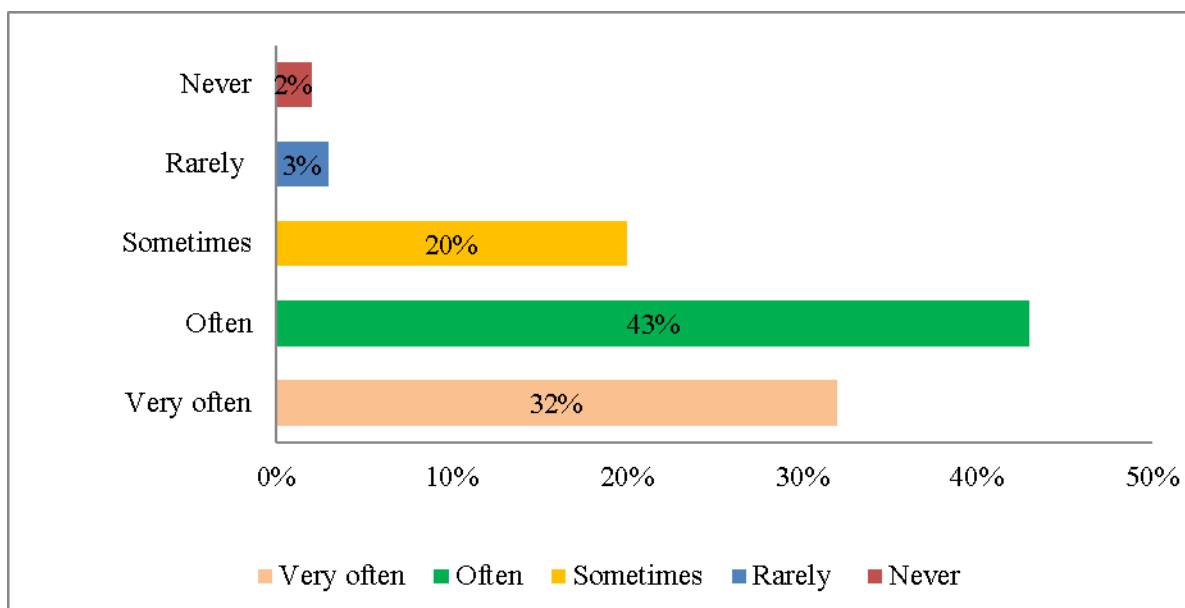
The results showed that (43%) of respondents switch channels upon perceiving bias, while (25%) continue watching but remain sceptical. Meanwhile, (20%) reported trusting the coverage, and (12%) indicated that they do not perceive any bias. These findings suggest that a majority of the audience (68%) is conscious of potential media bias and adjusts their viewing behaviour accordingly. This highlights the growing audience awareness of partiality in media reporting and the potential impact such perceptions have on media consumption patterns and audience loyalty.

This implies that perceived bias directly shapes audience behaviour and trust toward broadcast

programs. To maintain credibility and engagement, media outlets must adopt transparent editorial standards, present balanced perspectives, and actively demonstrate impartiality in their coverage. Upholding these principles would not only preserve audience loyalty but also strengthen the role of broadcast media as a trusted and accountable pillar of political communication in Nakuru County.

### **Political Figures Being Treated More Favourably on Air**

The study further sought to determine how often the respondents witness political figures being treated more favourably on air. The results are indicated in Figure 5.



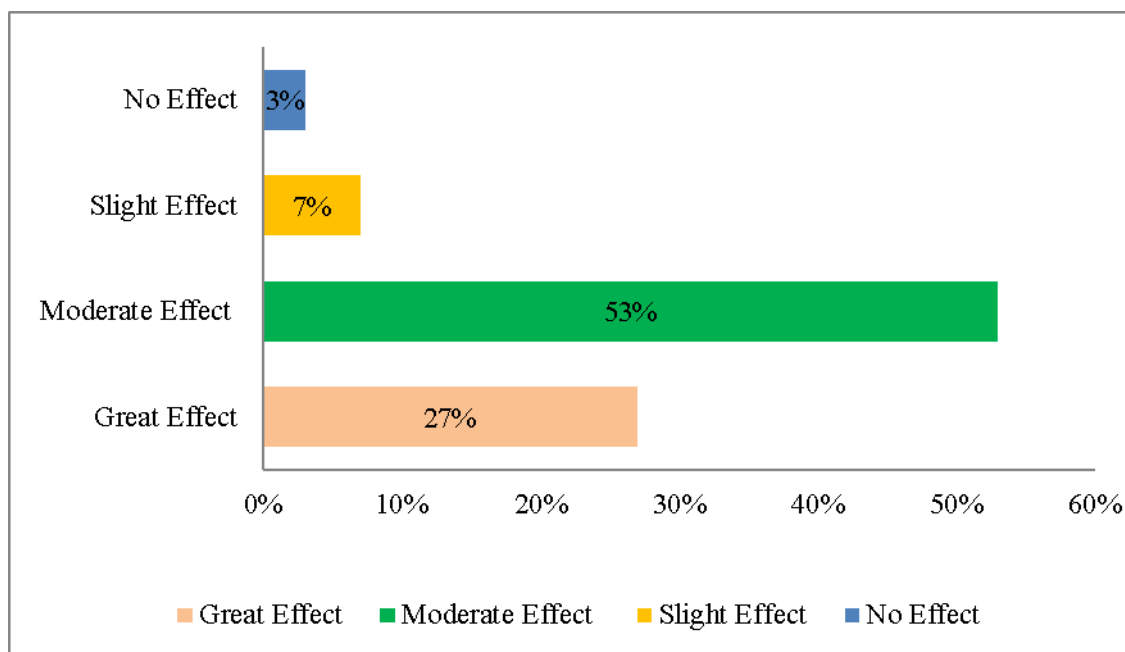
**Figure 5: Political Figures Being Treated More Favorably on Air**

The study further sought to determine how often respondents witnessed political figures being treated more favourably on air. The findings revealed that (32%) of the respondents indicated very often, (43%) stated often, (20%) reported sometimes, while (3%) and (2%) indicated rarely and never, respectively. These results show that a majority of respondents (75%) observed instances where political figures were treated more favourably during broadcast programs. This suggests the presence of preferential treatment and possible editorial bias in the portrayal of certain politicians or parties, which may undermine the principles of fairness and impartiality in political reporting. The findings imply that favourable

treatment of some political figures undermines the principle of fairness and distorts the competitive balance in political communication. It diminishes audience confidence in journalistic neutrality and fosters scepticism toward media institutions. Over time, perceived favouritism may polarise audiences, entrench propaganda, and erode the watchdog function of the press.

### **Effect of Perceived Media Bias on Trust in Broadcast Programs**

The study sought to determine the effect of perceived media bias on listeners' and viewers' trust in broadcast programs. The results are indicated in Figure 6.



**Figure 6: Effect of Perceived Media Bias on Trust in Broadcast Programs**

The findings revealed that (27%) of the respondents indicated that perceived media bias had a great effect on their trust, while (53%) reported a moderate effect. Additionally, (7%) of the respondents perceived a slight effect, whereas (3%) stated that perceived media bias had no effect on their trust in broadcast programs. The results suggest that most respondents (80%) felt that perceived media bias undermines audience trust. This highlights the importance of fairness, objectivity, and balanced reporting in preserving credibility and maintaining viewers' confidence in broadcast journalism.

These responses demonstrate that perceived bias erodes the foundational relationship between the media and its audience trust. When audiences believe that broadcasters are politically compromised, they begin to question the integrity of all content, even non-political programming. The implication is that persistent bias not only damages the reputation of

individual stations but also weakens the credibility of the broader media industry. In the long term, this fosters audience cynicism, selective exposure (where people only consume content aligning with their beliefs), and declining public reliance on traditional news sources.

Overall, the findings underscore that maintaining audience trust depends heavily on perceived impartiality. The greater the suspicion of bias, the lower the perceived legitimacy of the broadcaster. Therefore, Nakuru County's media houses must actively safeguard editorial independence, ensure balanced representation, and demonstrate transparency in content production. Upholding these principles is essential to rebuilding trust, enhancing civic engagement, and sustaining the integrity of broadcast journalism as a pillar of democratic communication.

**Table 10: Political Bias Among Broadcast Programs**

Political Bias	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Mean	Std
Political discussions are often one-sided.	36	30	20	10	4	3.8400	1.14927
I regularly observe partial reporting in political news segments.	36	36	14	12	2	3.9200	1.08496
Bias in political content affects my trust in the media.	26	34	24	14	2	3.6800	1.07741
Media houses give unequal airtime to political parties.	44	32	10	12	2	4.0400	1.10583
Opposition leaders are often portrayed negatively	32	50	8	8	2	4.0200	.95810
Media presents some leaders as heroes while others as villains.	46	34	10	2	8	4.0800	1.17526
<b>Overall (Mean &amp; SD)</b>						<b>3.9800</b>	<b>1.0918</b>

**Key:** SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

The findings indicate that (36.0%) of respondents strongly agreed that political discussions are often one-sided, (30.0%) agreed, (20.0%) were neutral, (10.0%) disagreed, and (4.0%) strongly disagreed, with a mean of 3.8400 and a standard deviation of 1.14927. This suggests that most respondents perceive political discussions in broadcast programs as lacking balance. The findings agree with Baum and Zhukov (2019), who observed that one-sided discussions in the media reinforce partisan perspectives and limit audience understanding.

The findings also show that (36.0%) of respondents strongly agreed that they regularly observe partial reporting in political news segments, (36.0%) agreed, (14.0%) were neutral, (12.0%) disagreed, and (2.0%) strongly disagreed, with a mean of 3.9200 and a standard deviation of 1.08496. This implies that respondents recognise partial reporting as a common feature in political news coverage. The findings agree with Mwakabwale (2025), who highlighted that biased reporting reduces media credibility and misleads the public.

In addition, (26.0%) of respondents strongly agreed that bias in political content affects their trust in the media, (34.0%) agreed, (24.0%) were neutral, (14.0%)

disagreed, and (2.0%) strongly disagreed, with a mean of 3.6800 and a standard deviation of 1.07741. This indicates that perceived bias has a noticeable impact on audience trust. The findings agree with Olayinka and Odunayo (2024), who noted that media bias erodes public confidence in news outlets and their reporting.

The findings further reveal that (44.0%) of respondents strongly agreed that media houses give unequal airtime to political parties, (32.0%) agreed, (10.0%) were neutral, (12.0%) disagreed, and (2.0%) strongly disagreed, with a mean of 4.0400 and a standard deviation of 1.10583. This suggests that respondents perceive disproportionate coverage as contributing to political bias. The findings agree with Ireri and Ochieng (2020), who observed that unequal airtime reinforces favouritism toward specific political parties. Moreover, (32.0%) of respondents strongly agreed that opposition leaders are often portrayed negatively, (50.0%) agreed, (8.0%) were neutral, (8.0%) disagreed, and (2.0%) strongly disagreed, with a mean of 4.0200 and a standard deviation of 0.95810. This indicates that respondents perceive biased framing of political figures in broadcasts. Finally, (46.0%) of respondents strongly agreed that media presents some leaders as heroes while others as villains, (34.0%) agreed, (10.0%)

were neutral, (2.0%) disagreed, and (8.0%) strongly disagreed, with a mean of 4.0800 and a standard deviation of 1.17526. This finding implies that respondents perceive selective glorification and vilification of leaders as a form of political bias. The findings agree with Mwakabwale (2025), who emphasised that such biased representations shape public perceptions of political leaders.

The overall mean of 3.9800 and standard deviation of 1.0918 show that respondents generally perceive political bias as prevalent in broadcast programs, although variations exist in how bias manifests across different media outlets. These findings align with Framing Theory, which posits that the way media present information influences audience perceptions of political actors and issues. The results imply that local broadcast stations continue to exhibit uneven representation of political interests, often reinforcing partisan narratives and shaping public opinion in favour of specific parties or leaders. Strengthening editorial independence, implementing balanced airtime policies, and fostering ethical reporting practices are therefore critical in reducing political bias and restoring media credibility within the county's broadcasting landscape.

The study sought to assess the extent and nature of political bias among broadcast programmes in Nakuru County. Listeners and viewers observed that airtime allocation across political parties was largely unequal, with dominant parties or influential leaders receiving significantly more exposure. One participant explained, "Some stations dedicate most of their political programs to one side while giving minimal attention to others." Another respondent noted, "During campaign periods, you can almost predict which station will focus on which candidate based on how much airtime they get." These responses reveal a consistent pattern of disproportionate coverage favouring well-connected or resourceful political actors. This implies that airtime imbalance reinforces existing power hierarchies, allowing established political figures to dominate public discourse while sidelining smaller parties and independent candidates. Consequently, such unequal representation distorts democratic competition and denies audiences access to a comprehensive political perspective.

When asked to share examples where political coverage appeared biased either in favour or against a particular party, respondents cited numerous instances tied to election periods and local political rivalries. One listener mentioned, "Some local radio stations were openly promoting certain candidates, airing their events live, and ignoring opponents completely." Another remarked, "I noticed one TV station would always highlight opposition mistakes while glorifying government achievements." These statements demonstrate how selective coverage and framing can be weaponised to manipulate audience perception. The implication is that editorial choices in both inclusion and exclusion of stories act as subtle mechanisms of political persuasion. Such bias erodes the watchdog role of the media and transforms it into an instrument of propaganda, thereby compromising journalistic ethics and public trust.

On how the language used by broadcasters influences perceptions of political news, respondents emphasised that tone, word choice, and framing strongly shape audience interpretation. One participant observed, "When a reporter uses words like 'embattled' or 'controversial' for one leader but 'visionary' or 'respected' for another, it shows clear bias." Another added, "Even without saying it directly, the language they use tells you which side they favour." These responses highlight that linguistic framing serves as a powerful tool in constructing political narratives. The implication is that biased diction and tone subtly influence emotional reactions and cognitive judgments among audiences, reinforcing either support or hostility toward specific political actors. This aligns with the Framing Theory, which posits that media not only report facts but shape reality through narrative emphasis. Therefore, neutral, precise, and contextually balanced language is vital for maintaining fairness and integrity in political reporting.

Finally, when asked about their overall confidence in the impartiality of local broadcast programs, most respondents expressed scepticism. One viewer stated, "It is hard to trust that any station is neutral anymore; they all seem to push one political agenda or another." Another explained, "You have to listen to several stations to get the full picture because each one tells the story differently." These sentiments reveal widespread public disillusionment with the credibility

of political broadcasting. The implication is that perceived bias weakens the legitimacy of media institutions as arbiters of truth and undermines their democratic function as watchdogs of power. Restoring public confidence requires broadcasters to adopt stronger editorial guidelines, implement content audits, and foster transparency in coverage

decisions. Upholding impartiality, equitable airtime, and ethical reporting is therefore essential for safeguarding the credibility of broadcast media and ensuring informed political participation in Nakuru County.

## Inferential Statistics

**Table 11: Correlation Analysis**

		Political Bias
Media Ownership	Pearson Correlation	.0.654
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	62

The study found that there is a strong and positive statistically significant relationship between media ownership and political bias among broadcast programmes in Nakuru County ( $r = 0.654, p = 0.002$ ). This finding implies that the nature of media ownership significantly influences the level of political bias in broadcast content. Media outlets owned or controlled by politically affiliated individuals or groups are more likely to shape news coverage and programming in favour of specific political interests. This aligns with the observations of Mutua and Gathara (2020), who noted that ownership

concentration in Kenyan media often leads to biased political reporting to safeguard proprietors' interests. Similarly, Olick (2021) found that editorial independence is compromised in privately owned media houses with political affiliations, leading to skewed narratives during election cycles. These findings support the argument by Mwakabwale (2025) that ownership structures determine not only the editorial policies but also the ideological leanings of broadcast stations, thereby influencing political discourse.

**Table 12: Regression Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.564	.145		.389	.796
	Media Ownership	.766	.107	.548	7.159	.023

a. Dependent Variable: Political Bias

$$Y = 0.564 + 0.766X_1 \dots \dots \dots 4.1$$

From the findings, a unit increase in Media Ownership ( $X_1$ ) would lead to a 0.766 increase in political bias. This indicates that ownership structures exert the strongest influence on bias levels across broadcast programs. The finding suggests that privately or politically affiliated media houses are more prone to editorial partiality, as ownership interests shape news agendas and determine political framing. These results align with Oketch and Otieno (2022), who observed that ownership concentration and political patronage among Kenyan broadcasters often lead to favourable

reporting toward allied political entities, thus undermining neutrality and journalistic integrity.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that political bias in broadcast programmes in Nakuru County is significantly influenced by media ownership, thereby directly addressing the study's main objective of examining the influence of media ownership on political bias. The findings confirm that media owners play a central role in shaping editorial policies, news framing, and programming decisions, especially where

ownership is politically or economically aligned, leading to biased coverage that serves owners' interests. Consistent with the Political Economy of Media theory, the study demonstrates that power relations and ownership control within media institutions shape media content, often at the expense of journalistic impartiality, ethical standards, and diversity of viewpoints. Consequently, politicised ownership structures undermine balanced reporting, transparency, and accountability in broadcast journalism, reinforcing the theoretical argument that media output reflects underlying ownership and economic interests.

**Recommendations:** The research suggests that broadcasting organisations in Nakuru County ought to enhance editorial autonomy by separating newsrooms from direct interference by ownership. The media proprietors ought to embrace open governance systems that will encourage ethical reporting and

discourage political propaganda, which is done through the stations. Stricter regulations on disclosure of ownership affiliations to create accountability and protect the trust of the populace should also be enacted by the Media Council of Kenya (MCK). Also, systems must be put in place to enhance pluralism in the broadcasting industry in Kenya by diversifying media ownership and diluting the concentration of control, as well as limiting political connections to the editorial content. The results of the research also led to the conclusion that the efficacy of the current media policies and regulatory schemes in dealing with the issue of ownership effects and political interference needed to be determined in future research as well. Due to the media environment in Kenya, which is more liberalised, it is necessary to determine whether the existing laws and institutional frameworks provide sufficient protection of editorial freedom and encourage news emergence on a balanced basis.

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