

## ASSESSMENT ON NEWSPAPER REPORTAGE ON JULIUS NYERERE HYDROPOWER PROJECT: A CASE OF MWANANCHI AND HABARILEO NEWSPAPERS

### Abstract

Despite the richness of daily newspapers reporting government-established Strategic Development projects, there remains a lack of comprehensive awareness among citizens about the Julius Nyerere Hydropower project. This situation highlights that newspapers have yet to fully satisfy the public's thirst for understanding this particular project. The focus of this study was to delve into the underlying issues contributing to this phenomenon. The study aimed to assess newspaper reportage on Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project. Specifically, it sought to analyse the topics covered in relation to the project, explore the prevalent media frames employed when discussing Julius Nyerere, and examine the sources of information used by newspapers in reporting on the project. Guided by framing theory, the study employed content analysis as its method of data collection. This involved reviewing content published in Mwananchi and Habarileo from June 1st to August 31st, 2019. The collected data underwent both qualitative and quantitative analysis, with data interpretation provided through descriptive expression and presented through tables and figures. The research revealed that newspapers covered seven distinct issues concerning the project: the project's launch, its developmental stages, historical context, tourism implications, budget and funding details, project security considerations, and employment opportunities linked to the project. Within the reporting, three primary media frames were identified: attribution of responsibility, environmental concerns, and economic consequences. The study also identified five types of sources utilized by newspapers in their coverage: government officials, experts, official reports/documents, ordinary citizens, and political leaders. The study findings indicated that newspapers predominantly reported on project-related issues in alignment with government events, suggesting a lack of independent issue identification by the media. However, newspapers effectively employed suitable media frames to present information about the Julius Nyerere Hydropower project, thereby delivering messages that resonated with the readers. Nonetheless, the research unveiled an imbalance in the utilization of news sources, with a bias toward government sources in the reporting process.

**Key words:** Episodic framing, Thematic framing, Media, News, Newspaper, Reportage,

Broadcasting, Government Project.

### Introduction

The media plays a significant role in shaping public awareness and opinions within local communities regarding national development projects and policies. This influence is achieved through the careful framing of media content (Entman, 1993). In Tanzania, the media has historically played a crucial role in various periods, including pre-independence, during the nationalization era, and after Tanganyika's independence and subsequent union with Zanzibar to form Tanzania. Particularly notable was its role during the Kagera War, where the media framed the conflict until Tanzania's victorious conclusion.

During the initial stages of the conflict in October 1978, Radio Tanzania was the dominant media outlet, refraining from reporting on the conflict, while Radio Uganda incorrectly reported a Tanzanian invasion and intense border clashes (Avirgan & Honey, 1983). Once the

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Kagera invasion became public knowledge, Radio Tanzania launched an intensive propaganda campaign to reap public support for the war. The station retold stories of atrocities committed within Tanzanian territory and depicted the Ugandan attack as a self-serving endeavor by Amin to enhance his own image (Brown, 2001).

Another instance highlighting the power of media framing in Tanzania was the portrayal of COVID-19 in different frames during different time periods. Under the late President John Pombe Magufuli's rule, the media framed COVID-19 as an economic weapon wielded by Western countries against developing nations. The media supported the government's traditional methods and downplayed the severity of the disease, discouraging vaccinations. However, during President Samia Suluhu Hassan's tenure, the media shifted its framing to emphasize the danger of COVID-19 and advocate for vaccinations as the primary safeguard against the disease (Lusekelo, 2023). These instances highlight the media's role in consolidating information to influence audiences. By selecting, emphasizing, and omitting specific ideas, emotions, and values, news frames guide the audience's perceptions and conclusions on various phenomena.

The Tanzanian government's ambition to construct a major power station dates back to the 1960s. This dam, set to become Africa's fourth largest and the world's ninth largest, will also be the largest in East Africa. The arch-shaped concrete dam will stand at 134 meters tall, creating a massive 100-kilometer-long lake covering 1,200 square kilometers. This project, managed by Tanzania Electric Supply Company (TANESCO), aims to produce 5,920 billion units of power annually.

Both national and private media sources, such as Tanzania Standard Newspapers and Mwananchi Newspaper, published updates on the project's progress, informing the public and influencing their perceptions. However, the researcher noted a lack of awareness about the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project, raising questions about the media's coverage. This led to a keen interest in assessing newspaper reportage on this particular project (Manda, 2019).

The study

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The study aimed to assess newspaper reportage on Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project. Specifically, it sought to analyse the topics covered in relation to the project, explore the prevalent media frames employed when discussing Julius Nyerere, and examine the sources of information used by newspapers in reporting on the project. Guided by framing theory, the study employed content analysis as its method of data collection. This involved reviewing

content published in Mwananchi and Habarileo from June 1st to August 31st, 2019. The study holds significance by providing insights into reported issues, media frames, and news sources related to the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project. Understanding these aspects is crucial for assessing public awareness, project impact, media bias, communication strategies, credibility of information, and stakeholder influences on the project's narrative and public perception

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## Literature review

### Issues reported by media concerning government projects

Within the context of government projects, environmental considerations revolve around their potential impact on the natural environment, ecosystems, and ecological balance. Initiatives involving infrastructure development, urban planning, or resource extraction can result in profound ecological consequences that warrant careful evaluation. Addressing these concerns is pivotal for ensuring sustainable development, preserving biodiversity, and safeguarding the well-being of current and future generations (Willoughby, 2004)

Habitat destruction and alteration stand out as primary environmental concerns in government projects. The construction of roads, buildings, dams, and other infrastructure often leads to significant habitat loss. This habitat fragmentation resulting from development can isolate populations, disrupt migration patterns, and contribute to the decline of vulnerable species. Research underscores the fragmentation caused by road development, emphasizing the importance of environmental assessments and strategies for mitigation (Conservation Biology, 2003).

Pollution and contamination represent additional environmental apprehensions. Government projects can exacerbate pollution through emissions, waste disposal, and runoff. Pollutants can compromise air, water, and soil quality, posing risks to both human and wildlife health. Extractive industries like mining introduce pollutants that disrupt natural processes. The United Nations Environment Programme advocates for regulations and cleaner production methods to mitigate pollution (UNEP Report, 2018).

Media reporting goes beyond surface concerns and delves into the broader ecological implications. By considering ecosystems, public health, and long-term sustainability, journalists highlight the potential effects on local biodiversity, water sources, and air quality. Environmental scientists and stakeholders provide valuable insights in interviews, enriching the reporting process. Through this coverage, the media raises awareness of ecological risks

inherent in government projects and advocates for their sustainable development (World Economic Forum, 2010)

Furthermore, the media scrutinizes transparency and accountability in government projects. Transparency involves the availability of information about actions, processes, and decisions, while accountability holds officials responsible. Both elements are essential for maintaining public trust and effective governance (Fishman, 1980). Journalists delve into transparency levels, governance practices, and mechanisms for public participation, oversight, and checks and balances (Rauchfleisch, 2017)

Instances of public opposition emerge when citizens, communities, or stakeholders dissent due to perceived threats or exclusion from decision-making processes. Media reports on these protests amplify voices, explore motivations, and advocate for increased public engagement (Fishman, 1980). Journalists delve into the reasons behind opposition, conduct interviews with participants and experts, and provide comprehensive coverage to encourage open discourse (Born & Prosser, 2001)

Conflicts of interest within government projects occur when decision-makers' personal or financial interests compromise impartiality. Such conflicts can lead to biased decisions, favouritism, and a erosion of public trust (Fishman, 1980). Media coverage highlights instances of conflicts, examines their implications, and supports measures to prevent undue influence (Born & Prosser, 2001)

The influence of political considerations and partisanship on project decisions and resource allocation can potentially compromise transparency and accountability. Political factors may lead to biased project selection and inefficient allocation Sørensen, et al. (2020). Journalists uncover instances of influence, analyse their effects, and advocate for transparent governance (Tella, & Franceschelli, 2011)

Moreover, the role of media coverage is pivotal in government development projects. Development communication fosters dialogue between implementers and recipients, empowering people through information exchange (Hayashi et al., 2012). Media's function in reporting on development projects extends to analysing their socio-economic impact, facilitating public discourse, and influencing policy decisions .

The role of media reporting and analysis is crucial in raising awareness, holding authorities accountable, and promoting sustainable development (McPhail, 1987). Diverse media content

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nurtures democratic debate and understanding, and communication strategies contribute to informed citizen participation (Franklin & Carlson, 2011). The diversity of media content is influenced by ownership structures and media profiles, shaping public awareness and discourse (Born & Prosser, 2001)

### **Sources used by media on government projects reporting**

In terms of news sources used by the media to report on government projects, effective journalism draws on a diverse array of sources to provide a well-rounded perspective. Government officials, as emphasized by Sigal (1986), serve as instrumental sources offering official statements, context, and insights into project progress. Their contributions illuminate project objectives and significance, assisting journalists in presenting accurate and well-informed narratives.

Experts also play a pivotal role by providing technical analyses that deepen understanding of the projects. Through interviews and consultations, their expertise sheds light on feasibility, economic impacts, and social considerations. This enriches the reporting process by offering comprehensive insights into various dimensions of the projects. (Gandy, 1982).

The authentic voices of ordinary citizens significantly contribute to news coverage. By sharing personal experiences and perspectives, they humanize complex projects and highlight their real-world effects (Turner, (2010). Gathering input from those directly impacted by government initiatives, such as infrastructure development, adds authenticity and relatability to reporting, ensuring a connection between policies and people's lives.

Official documents also stand as crucial sources of accurate information. Project proposals, feasibility studies, and budget reports provide verifiable data, enabling journalists to corroborate facts, analyze project details, and deliver well-informed reporting. These documents also provide context to projects within legal frameworks, financial allocations, and potential challenges, enhancing transparency and accountability (Alterman, 2003).

Politicians, as highlighted by Franklin and Carlson (2011), offer valuable insights as elected representatives and decision-makers. Their perspectives provide a political lens through which journalists can understand project motivations, objectives, and implications. Incorporating politicians' viewpoints enriches reporting by showcasing how projects align with policy priorities, budget allocations, and broader government strategies.

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By skillfully combining insights from government officials, experts, citizens, official documents, and politicians, journalists create comprehensive and nuanced coverage of government projects that informs the public and fosters a deeper understanding of these initiatives.

### **Prevalence of media frames**

In terms of the prevalence of media frames, literature that focuses on media frames related to fuel and energy plantation projects is limited, as mentioned by Ileri who cited Blair et al. (2015) and Potterf (2014). This review thus draws upon available literature on energy projects and other social-political studies to analyse five media frames: economic consequences, energy policy, environmental concern, human interest, and attribution of responsibility.

The attribution of responsibility in news reporting refers to how problems are presented and who is identified as causing or being able to address them (Semetko [and](#) Valkenburg, 2000). Similar to assigning blame to children for a messy room, news can place responsibility on specific entities or individuals. Iyengar's research (1987) illustrates how news content influences our perception of blame and solutions, akin to how movies shape our opinions of characters.

News frequently employs conflict framing, highlighting disagreements to capture our curiosity (Semetko [and](#) Valkenburg, 2000). This is akin to stopping to watch kids argue on a playground. McManus (1994) suggests that conflicts and disagreements are key drivers of news coverage, making it exciting and attention-grabbing, much like action in movies or games. These conflicts become news triggers, showcasing tension and discord.

Scholars like Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) have identified several common ways news stories are framed, including attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic consequences, human interest, and moral values. In their study of 2601 newspaper stories and 1522 TV news stories during a European leaders' meeting, they found that attributing responsibility was a prevalent frame. This often involves spotlighting the government's role in addressing problems. Conflict framing, on the other hand, taps into our curiosity about disputes.

News also frequently highlights economic consequences, illustrating how events impact finances (Semetko [and](#) Valkenburg, 2000). By linking issues to gains and losses, news makes topics relatable, helping editors decide which stories to share based on their importance (Graber, 1993). Potterf's study (2014) explored newspaper coverage of oil and gas

development, observing that discussions were dominated by economic consequences and environmental concerns. Evensen, Clarke, and Stedman (2014) focused on natural gas development, finding the 'environmental concern' frame to be prevalent.

The 'human interest' frame adds a personal touch, resonating emotionally with readers (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Additionally, the 'international interest' frame emerges when global communities intervene to resolve conflicts (Guo, 2009). News framing varies based on the audience's interest and news outlets' priorities. Luther and Zhou (2005) contrasted Chinese and US news coverage of the SARS virus, revealing different emphases due to cultural factors.

De Vreese, Peter, and Semetko (2001) studied Euro introduction coverage, observing a focus on conflicts and economic consequences across multiple countries. Overall, news framing influences our perception of responsibility and solutions, guiding how we interpret events.

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## Methodology

The study utilized a case study design, focusing on Mwananchi and Habarileo newspapers to analyze their coverage of the Julius Nyerere hydropower project in Tanzania. A mixed method approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In the qualitative phase, content analysis was used to interpret and describe the newspaper stories, while the quantitative phase involved analyzing the number and percentage of stories, media frames, and news sources.

The study's population comprised all copies of Mwananchi and Habarileo newspapers published in 2019. A total of 184 newspaper copies from June to August 2019 were analyzed (92 from each newspaper). Purposive sampling was employed, selecting both a private-owned (Mwananchi) and a government-owned (Habarileo) newspaper to ensure a comprehensive perspective. This period was chosen due to the project's construction launch.

Content analysis was employed as a method of data collection to study the project's coverage, involving the examination of stories in the selected newspapers. The researcher used coding sheets during document reviews for data collection. The unit of analysis was paragraphs, where each paragraph was assessed for media frame occurrence, issue coverage, and news sources. If multiple frames, issues, or sources appeared in a paragraph, they were coded individually.

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The collected data was presented and analyzed according to sub-topics aligned with the study's objectives. Qualitative data was described using a descriptive approach, while quantitative data was presented using tables and figures.

### Findings

A total of 184 copies of newspapers published in those three months were reviewed, 92 copies from Mwananchi newspaper and 92 copies were from Habarileo newspaper. 19 stories were published concerning Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project. Habarileo newspaper published 11 stories within those three months while Mwananchi published 5 story in the particular period of time.

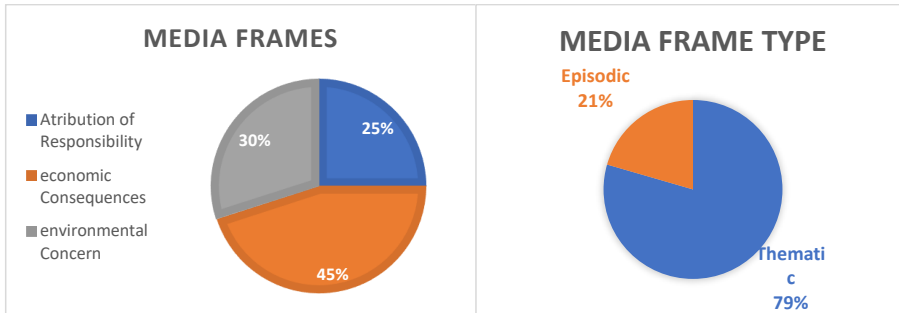
**Table 1. Issues reported about Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project**

S/N	Reported issues	Number of reportages	Mwananchi	Habarileo	Percentage
1	Launch of the project	11	4	7	28.20%
2	Development of the project	2	0	2	5.12%
3	History of the project	8	3	5	20.51%
4	Tourism	3	2	1	7.69%
5	Budget and funding of the project	7	3	4	17.94%
6	Project security	4	2	2	10.25%
7	Employment	4	1	3	10.25%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: research findings, 2023

**Fig 1. Prevalence of media frames used to report Julius Nyerere**

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source: Research findings, 2023

**Table 2. News sources used by on reporting about Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project.**

S/N	Type of source	Number of coverages	Percentage
1	Government officials	11	61%
2	Expert	2	11.115%
3	Ordinary people	2	11.11%
4	Official reports/documents	2	11.11%
5	Political leaders	1	5.55%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: research findings, 2023

## Discussion

### Issues reported by newspapers

The findings show that the newspapers reported 7 issues while covering Julius Nyerere hydropower project, those 7 issues are Launch of the project, development of the project, history of the project, tourism, budget and funding of the project, Project security and employment in the project.

Launch of the project issue was the leading issue to be reported, that was because the project was at the earliest stage of the beginning, that's why we found that sub-issues like signing of

contracts, handing over the land from the government control to the constructors, building of roads to the project area and other preparation measures were reported in high extent.

The study reviewed content published in June, July and August 2019, while the project was officially launched in July 2019, hence, most of the stories published in that period would inform people on establishment of project, history of the project in which the newspapers published story on how late president, Julius Nyerere had the idea of establishing a huge hydropower project which would guarantee the availability of electricity services in the country.

Other issues reported that indicate the beginning of the project at that time is development of the project in which government officials visited the project area to find out how the beginning steps of project constructions are taking place.

Those issues mentioned above together with tourism issue are not familiar in the literatures conducted on the reportage of the government project and could not be reported by some scholars including Fishman, (1980) Rauchfleisch, (2017), Born [and](#) Prosser, (2001), Tella, [and](#) Franceschelli, (2011), (Franklin & Carlson, 2011) who explored about the issues reported by media on the reportage of the government policy and projects.

Issues like project security, budget and funding the project shown in findings are consistent with findings of previous research (Jan, 2007 and Marc, 1996) and other scholars who explored the issues published by media on the strategic development project conducted by the governments.

There are some crucial issues which were reported by some scholars like Fishman (1980). Rauchfleisch (2017) and Born & Prosser (2001), could not be reported by Mwananchi and Habarileo newspaper on the coverage of this project. Some of those issues are Habitat destruction and alteration, Pollution and contamination, public opposition, Conflicts of interest within government projects, influence of political considerations and partisanship on project decisions, Public Health and Safety Concerns. People want to hear them so as to measure accountability of their governments.

According to Franklin, [and](#) Carlson, (2011), people want to hear a kind of issues that critique the government because they tend to uphold accountability and protect public fund from misuses and enhance public trust. By reporting those kind of issues people contribute to ensure

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that public officials and institutions are held accountable for their actions and use public resources respectively.

#### **4.3.2 Prevalence of media frames**

The findings reveal three media frames presented in while reporting about Julius Nyerere Hydropower project, namely attribution of responsibility, environmental concern and economic consequences.

In attribution of responsibility media showed who are responsible to the certain activities or responsibilities in order to make sure that the project is accomplished as planned. Most of the responsibilities attributed in these two newspapers were of earlier stage and were intended to keep clear environment for the project to begin.

Such responsibilities included funding the project attributed to the government, keeping secure environment and protect project building material attributed to police force and ensuring that the project is completed in a proposed time, this was attributed to the government of Egypt.

In economic consequences newspapers reported about how the government, public and industries would economically benefit from the project once it is completed and start to produce enough electricity services. The availability of such enough services would enhance both micro and macro economy to the country.

Environmental concern. This media frame had two sides and fortunately media reported this media frame in a balanced manner by reporting both sides, supporting side and opposing side. Opposing side was claiming that the project would bring about negative impacts insisting that cutting trees at construction area would destruct environment.

Supporting side was led by the government officials including late president Maguuli and minister for energy responding the opposing side that the project would conserve environment by transforming the left area into conservation area and protect trees from theft as it was before.

The reportage of the strategic energy projects in terms of attribution of responsibility economic consequences and environmental concern is constant with findings of previous research conducted to explore the prevalence of media frame on development project as it was revealed by various researchers including Dimitrova and Stroback (2005); Guo (2009) and Semetko and Valkenburg (2000)

Also, the same results were obtained by Ileri, Chege and Kibabara (2019) while analyzing the framing of newspaper coverage of Kenya's Oil Exploration in the Post-2012 Discovery Era when they found that Attribution of responsibility was reported 949 times and took 27.6%, Economic consequences was reported 898 times and took 26.2% and environmental concern was reported 21 times and took 0.6%.

The predominant thematic framing observed in the two newspapers aligns with Zhang and Jin's (2017) findings, which indicated that national publications tend to focus on large-scale public, government, and policy-based programs. This trend is common in national newspapers due to their extensive coverage. Another reason for this thematic-heavy approach could be linked to macro-level factors in collectivistic cultures, where collective welfare takes precedence over individual needs and interests. In contrast, Western media, influenced by individualistic cultures, often adopt an episodic approach, emphasizing direct consequences on individuals (Kim, Carvalho, and Davis 2010).

#### **News sources used by newspaper on reporting about Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project.**

From the finding we learnt that there are five types of sources used by newspaper to report on Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project, those sources are Government officials, Experts, official reports/documents, ordinary people and political leaders.

We see that the government officials is leading source of the news used by both newspaper, it makes 61% of all news sources covered by newspapers, it is because most of the stories covered were from the government official who participated in launch of the project and signing of the contracts.

There were only two stories reported on the ordinary people who were Kisumu residents expressing their expectations on the project, they make only 11.115% of the news source used by newspaper at that time.

According to Baum, and Gussin (2008), using government officials as dominant source of news in a certain issue or policy make ordinary people keep least concentration on that matter because people believe that government officials have vested interests in promoting specific policies, agendas, or outcomes. When their perspectives dominate news stories, it can lead to biased information being presented to the public, potentially distorting the truth and limiting the diversity of viewpoints.

Baum, and Gussin argues that Government officials may be inclined to withhold certain information or manipulate facts to protect their reputation or advance their political interests. This lack of transparency can hinder the public's ability to fully understand an issue and make informed. Focusing on government officials in news stories might neglect the perspectives of ordinary citizens or other stakeholders directly impacted by policies or events. This lack of representation can result in a less comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand

The above statement provided by Herman supporting the finding of this study where we found that government officials were given privilege and ordinary people were neglected by newspaper resulted to only two stories covered their perspectives.

Turner (2010) insist that, people like to hear from themselves, stories become more relatable and impactful when they feature real people and their emotions. By including ordinary people in news stories, the human element is emphasized, making the events or issues being reported be more immediate and personal.

This humanization fosters empathy and understanding among readers or viewers. By knowing that their voices are heard, people may be more motivated and eager to know and participate on particular activity or advocating for change.

Moreover, findings show that important sources of news like experts and official document were also neglected they also were used only twice each. neglection of these sources makes people miss important information on particular issue.

According to Gandy (1982), Experts bring specialized knowledge and expertise to the table, when they are featured in news stories, it adds credibility and accuracy to the information being presented. Their qualifications and experience lend weight to the information being reported, helping the audience to trust the news source. While Incorporating official reports and documents in news stories allows journalists to present in-depth analysis from credible sources, enhancing the public's understanding of complex issues.

## **Conclusion**

The study's findings indicate that newspapers primarily reported issues related to the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project based on events planned by the government. This suggests that the media relied on government-prepared events and did not proactively investigate or highlight their own concerns about the project. Several crucial issues, such as the project's cost,

contractor selection process, inadequate consultation, social displacement, public health, safety concerns, corruption, and mismanagement, were overlooked by the media. These are vital aspects identified by researchers like McPhail (1987) that the public is keen to know about regarding government projects and policies. This limitation highlights a gap between the audience's information needs and the topics covered by the newspapers.

On a positive note, Mwananchi and Habarileo newspapers effectively employed appropriate media frames to convey messages about the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project. Various scholars, including Dimitrova and Strobach (2005), Guo (2009), Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), and Ileri, Chege, and Kibarabara (2019), have noted the consistent use of specific media frames across different media outlets when reporting on development, power, and energy projects.

However, the study also revealed an imbalance in the use of news sources. Government officials dominated the coverage, accounting for 61%, while other essential sources such as experts, official documents, and ordinary people were underrepresented. Consequently, the public missed out on diverse perspectives, in-depth analysis from experts, and detailed information available in documents, including contracts. This disparity underscores the limited scope of voices and viewpoints presented in the news coverage, indicating a need for more comprehensive and varied reporting approaches

## 5.2 Recommendations

Media outlets should proactively identify public interest issues when reporting on strategic development projects, rather than relying solely on government-planned activities. The study highlighted overlooked concerns like delays, corruption, social displacement, and community resistance. Newspapers are urged to include these neglected issues in their coverage, fostering a more comprehensive understanding and holding the government accountable.

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Balanced reporting is crucial. Currently, government officials and political leaders dominate news coverage, leaving out ordinary people and diverse perspectives. Newspapers should actively seek input from the public, ensuring their concerns are accurately represented. Moreover, media outlets should broaden their sources, including experts, various political leaders, and directly affected individuals. This diverse range of perspectives will provide a more comprehensive and balanced view of the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project.

Experts should actively engage with media to share their knowledge and experiences related to public issues. Media institutions must provide in-depth analysis, delving into various aspects of the project such as environmental impacts, economic benefits, social implications, and long-term sustainability. This thorough analysis will enable readers to gain a deeper understanding of the project and its broader implications, empowering them with knowledge beyond surface-level information.

### **5.5 Further study.**

The results of this research recommend that a further study to be taken should conduct a comparative research between government and private owned media on reporting about government strategic projects.

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