

# Selection of News Stories of Opposition Parties Presidential Candidates Covered in 2020 Zanzibar Presidential Election Campaign by Al-Noor and Hits FM

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## Abstract

This article evaluates the selection of news stories covering the opposition presidential candidates during the 2020 Zanzibar presidential election. The article was specifically guided by three objectives: to examine news story content, identify news sources for opposition party presidential candidates, and determine to what extent editors selected stories about opposition presidential candidates during the 2020 Zanzibar election campaign. Three theories were used: the framing theory, the gatekeeping theory, and the agenda-setting theory. The data collection was done through news bulletin content analysis, and it was analyzed thematically in accordance with the aforementioned objectives and presented in themes and tables. The finding has verified that the editor's selection included all contents of the opposition presidential candidate that encouraged the citizens to be united and in solidarity, to vote in large numbers, and all stories that emphasized peace and security. The sources of news stories were the meeting ground, the party itself, and other media. The results have demonstrated that the editors selected news stories about opposition presidential candidates that encouraged positive themes and avoided all negative issues. In short, the findings show that most private radios editors needed to give citizens crucial and accurate information, but frequently neglect to air balance news stories from campaigns to all political parties due to a fear hash conditions from government or ruling party leaders. As a result, biased media outlets such as public or state radios are frequently covered. The study made the following suggestions: Government officials should standardize the situation to enhance press freedom and the atmosphere for private radio in the nation. To promote democracy and the rule of law. Private radio editors should work as watchdogs, consider the equity of parties, and prevent bias and factionalism in their news story selection.

**Keywords:** News stories • Media • Broadcasting

## Introduction

Wojtasik W defines elections as procedures typical for democratic systems, but systems that do not respect the principles of democracy often employ them [1]. Mare, et al. define an election as "free" when it reflects the full expression of the political will of the people concerned, which involve the ability to participate in the political process without intimidation, coercion, discrimination, or the abridgment of the rights to associate with others, to assemble, and to receive or impart information. Therefore, election is a selection made through a vote by citizens who may either be candidates or voters, or election is a process, procedure, rule, or law that enables a person to select or be selected to be a leader of a certain group or society to represent them in decision-making places.

According to Lengauer, et al. (as in Takens J, et al.), news coverage is defined in the media as a greater emphasis on individual politicians and a lesser emphasis on parties, organizations, and institutions [2]. According to Mare, et al. news is defined as an event that has elements of immediacy, freshness, proximity, and interest. Thus, news is information about a recent event or a collection or reporting of news coverage in a political campaign as a result of news values and format requirements that media use to attract news consumers.

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Hofmeister W and Grabow K define political parties as a special form of social organization [3]. Teshome W defines political parties as "an organized association of people working together to compete for political office and promote agreed-upon policies" [4]. So, private radio is a radio owned by an individual, group, or company whose aim is to give information and education to the public for business purposes.

Ronoh BO and Ogunkunle DO defines private radio as owned by a wide range of entities, including individuals, holding companies, and institutions, or private or commercial radio stations that treat the audience as a commodity they intend to sell to sponsors [5]. Ojebuyi RB and Damola O define private media as essentially profit-oriented, which informs their pursuit of securing a large percentage of listenership to stay afloat in the business [6].

Johnston defines a campaign as the period right before citizens make a real political choice. Or, campaigns are defined as propaganda to attract voters, parties, and the media. Hadziabdic I defines an election campaign as the period of 30 days prior to Election Day during which a political subject, in a manner established by law, informs constituents and the public about his or her program and candidates for the forthcoming elections [7].

## Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study was a mixed-methods approach, which combines text and numbers, simply combining the qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Researchers used this approach to collect information through interviews and news bulletin content analysis. This study used a case-study research design. Because case studies use in-depth investigation. The study used Hits FM and Al-Noor FM as cases on how they selected news stories about opposition party candidate during the 2020 presidential election campaign. A case study research design fits this study since it was a way of seeking in-depth information in the data collection about the opposition parties in the election campaign in Zanzibar. Data from two private radio stations (Al-Noor FM and Hits FM) in Zanzibar were collected for the study using a content analysis, a questionnaire, and interviews. The target

populations of this study were top managers, assistant directors, journalists, and people who were viewed as respondents. Also, the target audience included newscasts from August 26th to October 27th, 2020-24 hours before election day-broadcast on Al-Noor FM and Hits FM.

## Findings

The following are a selection of news stories passed by editors about the opposition presidential candidate during the 2020 Zanzibar presidential election campaign:

Table 1 above presents the selection of stories that are done by editors. Private radio reporting on the proposed policies of presidential candidates is at the core of electoral reporting to inform citizens and guide their choices. The analysis assesses whether the content of policy for Zanzibar presidential candidates reveals a bias covered largely by private radio. The ruling party's candidate for president's policy content was mainly covered in many more stories than the opposition's candidates. This coverage raises a question of fairness for the candidates. The disproportionate coverage is also evident in the content of the policies. The finding showed a strong imbalance between the ruling and opposition parties. Dr. Husein A. Mwinyi, the CCM presidential candidate, benefited greatly from private radio coverage. This is a clear indication that private radio stations preferred broadcasting CCM issues rather than those of opposition parties. Private radios showed clear bias during the campaign period. CCM Candidate Dr. Husein A. Mwinyi got 80% in each of the 20 news items. Out of 20 items, 16 were broadcast in favor of the CCM flag bearer against 4 items reserved for the ACT-Wazalendo candidate, the late Maalim Seif SH. Hamad. On the other hand, the number of stories covering policy issues is small. Findings showed that eliminating negative campaigning has an ambiguous effect on voter welfare (Table 1).

While it is sometimes possible to improve election outcomes by not allowing negative campaigning, in some other cases, eliminating the negative option can hurt superior candidates. The ACT-Wazalendo presidential candidate used a negative campaign due to voters' preconceptions about political candidates, their preferred dimensions, and the candidates' character traits. That caused editors to block some stories about opposition party candidates from airing.

The findings revealed that the opposition party's news and live election programs were significantly less than those of the ruling party in the 2020 Zanzibar election campaigns broadcast by private media. That appeared due to various reasons, such as inappropriate language of the opposition candidate, such as insults and sarcasm, fear of repressive laws, pressure from the government and ruling party leaders, lack of funds for coverage campaigns, especially in rural areas, and to some stories that do not consider the journalism code of ethics and principles like balance, fairness, accuracy, and minimizing harm; editors forbade transmission of all news with content that endangered the national peace and security; all news stories went against policies, rules, and laws of the country; and the fear of having their radio licenses deleted or revoked by the appropriate government authorities.

Remember that the ACT-Wazalendo party's leader preached with passion and frequently urged the Zanzibaris and his followers to be prepared for anything and to guard their votes from being stolen in their polling places. Editors grant or deny access to news, status, or positions, which includes screening to

determine the suitability of a news story for people and assignment to a specific category. The processes of selection used by editors, reviewers, and the news media to identify works to be aired and disseminated to candidates to control conflict, exclusion, or civil war.

Also, editors are often associated with the power to define how a field of study progresses or what items are newsworthy, regulating information coming from politicians and its distribution in order to protect the country and its residents, a particular type of protection being: Mediating and controlling information for the sake of preserving a community's core values, norms, and continuity, and an editor usually appears as a specific type of facilitator-distributing internal and external sources of information to members of society-the main value here is the distribution itself.

## Discussion

The editors' selection of news stories in bias, many time they do not follow journalism code of ethics and principles. Journalists do not consider balance, fairness, accurate and minimize harm. Zanzibar Democracy on Shaky Foundations, (2000) stated that the single state-owned radio and television station on Zanzibar admittedly gave the ruling party significant advantages in the 1995 Zanzibar election. Chiepe G noted that there was bias, as evidenced by the media coverage [8]. CCM shifted their own rally to the morning two days before the scheduled rallies and was able to fill the airtime on both Zanzibar Television and Radio against opposition CUF. All these show that editors from these media give priority to the ruling party and its candidates.

According to NDI, MISA-Tanzania has repeatedly demonstrated a blatant bias in favor of the ruling party in its coverage of Zanzibar. The media continued to favor the ruling party during the 2005 election. UPR noted that Zanzibar's media freedom was a major problem during the election campaign in October 2010 [9]. Because the government still controlled Television Zanzibar and the radio station Sauti ya Tanzania-Zanzibar. Also private radios showed clear bias during the campaign period. CCM Candidate Dr. Husein A. Mwinyi got 16 in each 20 news item, against 4 items reserved for ACT-Wazalendo candidate, the late Maalim Seif SH. Hamad.

Kipobota C, et al. states opposition parties and the public in Zanzibar complained a lot about the media coverage of the 2015 Zanzibar campaign for being biased and unfair [10]. Public media outlets including ZBC, TBC, and the Zanzibar Leo newspaper, as well as some privately owned outlets like Star TV and Zenji FM radio, were determined to be biased since they focused more on covering CCM campaign rallies than those of other political parties. While in the 2020 election, Al-Noor and Hits FM gave the CCM candidate 80% of the vote, with the remaining 20% reserved for the ACT-Wazalendo candidate.

Katunzi A and Christoph S ZBC-Radio were very weaker in balancing poll coverage of the opposing parties, with 69% favoring CCM and 5% for the opposition [11]. ZBC-TV had CCM at 33% and the opposition at 21%. Collord M claimed that Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC) restrictions on election observation and media coverage limited the information available [12]. But also the editors of Al-Noor FM and Hits FM failed to maintain balance in the news stories that aired between the opposition candidate and the ruling party candidate.

**Table 1.** The editor's pick for news story coverage during the 2020 Zanzibar election campaign.

Editors' Selection	Types of Content
	The candidate encouraged
	i. Unity and solidarity
	ii. Promote economic development of the nation.
	iii. Improve social welfare
	iv. Committed to establishing a good system for those with special needs and equitable leadership for all genders.
	v. Preserve peace and security
	vi. motivate the people to vote
	vii. Promised to change Zanzibar to be wealthy.
	viii. Give voter education

Urowali AO said that radio as a tool for political participation derives from the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate and the opportunity to register as a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government [13]. Political participation extends beyond parties. Although the role of private radio in campaigning gives candidates an equal chance to balance the story, the editors of private radio failed because they broadcast and were elected with a preference for one political party. This was the worst situation because it could lead the country into a dangerous situation, including civil war.

NCERT expressed that in election campaigns, political parties try to focus public attention on some big issues. They want to attract the public to that issue and get them to vote for their party on that basis [14]. Yankem C stated that according to the findings, 76% of sampled respondents agreed that radio had a role to play in mobilizing the voters to vote for certain presidential candidates while 24% did not think that the medium had any influence [15]. But private radio performed well during the 2020 Zanzibar election campaign, the majority of respondents were 33.3% in agreement, 23.3% strongly in agreement, and 16.6% unsure.

Frederic NO stated that as in any presidential election, each candidate has the right to present himself/herself on public television channels to address and enlighten the people, the channels gave the campaign an important place in their programs, thus helping to enlighten citizens on the stakes of the election [16]. Each channel, the effect of competition, presented its political program, often daily. While this study found that the 2020 Zanzibar presidential election campaign was carried out. Private radio editors selected news stories that were important or good to air for the benefit of voters, but it did not provide the opposition candidate with a sufficient chance in their radio.

## Conclusion

According to the study's findings, the editor's selection of news stories about opposition presidential candidates encouraged positive themes while avoiding all negative issues that went against the government and ruling party. Positive topics to encourage citizens include unity and solidarity, large-scale voting, and maintaining peace and security before, during, and after elections. In short, the findings show that while most private radio editors needed to provide citizens with critical and accurate information, they frequently neglected to air news stories from campaigns to all political parties out of fear of retaliation from the government or ruling party leaders. As a result, private radio was biased such as public or state radios are frequently covered.

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The study made the following suggestions: Government officials should standardize the situation to enhance press freedom and the atmosphere for private radio in the nation. To promote democracy and the rule of law. Private radio editors should work as watchdogs, consider the equity of parties, and prevent bias and factionalism in their news stories.

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