

## Guest and expert panel selection as a determinant of political bias in broadcast programs in Nakuru County, Kenya

John Maingi Wambui<sup>1</sup>  
Kennedy Njasi Simiyu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[mjms202461786@mylife.mku.ac.ke](mailto:mjms202461786@mylife.mku.ac.ke)

<sup>2</sup>[ksimiyu@kibu.ac.ke](mailto:ksimiyu@kibu.ac.ke)

<sup>1</sup>Mt Kenya University, <sup>2</sup>Kibabii University, <sup>1,2</sup>Kenya

<https://doi.org/10.51867/ajernet.7.1.29>

### ABSTRACT

It is essential to choose the correct guests and specialists for political broadcast shows to make sure they are fair, neutral, and ideologically balanced. Even while the media in Kenya is getting better, there are still concerns about partisan representation and a lack of different points of view, especially in devolved areas like Nakuru County. This study examined the influence of guest and expert panel selection on political bias in television shows in Nakuru County. Agenda-setting theory and the political economy of media theory informed the analysis of how guest selection practices contribute to political bias in broadcast programming. The study employed a descriptive research design, concentrating on broadcast journalists, editors, producers, and consumers of political information. The study employed purposive sampling to generate a group of 74 media professionals as the participants. Data was collected by structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, later analysed using SPSS (Version 30) for descriptive statistics, while thematic analysis was utilised for qualitative data. The findings showed that using the same political pundits over and over, favouring guests with similar political views, and not letting dissenting views be heard all strongly encourage political prejudice. Qualitative findings also emphasised the influence of ownership, political lobbying, and the lack of unbiased specialists as essential structural factors affecting biased panel membership. On the other side, choosing people based on their competence, which is based on their academic credentials, professional experience, and lack of political bias, made conversations more believable and fairer. The study concluded that the selection of individuals for political talk programs significantly influenced the framing of conversations and the ideological direction of televised debates. When shows repeatedly use the same commentators, especially those with known political views, the conversations tend to be slanted in a predictable way. The study recommends that to reduce political bias in broadcast programming, visitors need to be chosen in a clear, diversified, and merit-based fashion. The study also recommended using defined standards for appointing panellists, rotating panellists, and putting up independent expert registers to make political media material fairer and more trustworthy.

**Keywords:** Broadcast Programming, Expert Panels, Media Diversity, Nakuru County, Political Bias

### I. INTRODUCTION

Political broadcasts are particularly significant for changing people's political beliefs, affecting public opinion, and helping people comprehend issues relating to local and national governance. One of the most significant decisions an editor has to make is who to call as guests and experts on these kinds of shows. The people who are invited to speak influence which points of view are stressed, which topics are most important, and how political events are understood. Political analysts, commentators, journalists, and invited specialists are authoritative characters who influence discussions for audiences (Bennett et al., 2018). This makes the makeup of the panel an important part of making sure that political communication is fair and diverse.

International study increasingly demonstrates that political bias in broadcast material rarely stems from overt editorial directions; instead, it emerges insidiously through conventional journalistic operations, particularly the strategies utilized for selecting and rotating guests and experts. Scholars assert that while overt censorship or directive prejudice has waned in various democracies, structural biases embedded in journalism practices continue to shape the ideological orientation of political programming. Cagé et al. (2025) underscore that invited specialists profoundly shape the interpretation of political issues by offering authoritative viewpoints perceived as reliable and informed. When these experts have similar ideological perspectives, even unintentionally, the discourse tends to align with those perspectives, resulting in a pattern of unconscious bias. Susánszky et al. (2022) similarly demonstrate that inadequate panel diversity limits the spectrum of viewpoints presented to audiences and intensifies political polarization. When there are no dissenting or alternative voices, people only hear the same perspectives on political events over and over again. This makes their convictions stronger and makes it impossible for them to have a fair debate. International studies jointly underscore that panel membership is not only a logistical or administrative decision but a crucial process through which broadcasters shape public understanding and political discourse. These observations highlight

the imperative for deliberate, transparent, and diversity-oriented panel selection methodologies to ensure fairness and mitigate structural bias in broadcast media.

Political capture, ownership-driven editorial influence, and insufficient institutional safeguards are just a few of the factors that affect how guests and experts are picked for political shows on African media. Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Ghana are only a few African countries where the media has grown a lot and the law has changed to protect press freedom. But the way things truly function in newsrooms frequently makes it hard for real pluralism to happen. Political elites frequently exert direct or indirect influence on media corporations, leveraging ownership connections, advertising clout, or regulatory coercion to alter program content. Kiflu et al. (2023) conducted research in Ethiopia and Nigeria that illustrate how broadcasters frequently rely on pundits connected to political authorities or ruling parties, so perpetuating state or elite narratives. These kinds of things make political shows less ideologically diverse and push out people who disagree or are critical. Henshaw (2024) assert that despite the superficial diversity of Africa's media landscape, established patterns, such as the reliance on prominent, politically secure panellists, obstruct genuine diversity in political discourse. Newsrooms may choose well-known people who share the interests of owners or advertisers, which might hurt independent researchers, civil society members, or community leaders who could give more unbiased analysis. Because of this, political talks on African TV stations often show that just a tiny group of people have power, although in fact everyone should have it. These tendencies show that African political broadcasts need to have more different voices. To accomplish this, it is necessary to enhance editorial independence and establish transparent selection procedures.

Over the past thirty years, the media in Kenya has been more open. This has resulted to a large expansion in the number of private, community, regional, and national radio and TV stations. This expansion has made it easier for people to learn about politics and has made public discourse more interesting. Despite these improvements, concerns regarding political bias, particularly in the selection of visitors and experts, continue to prevail in academic and public discourse. Ndonye (2019) discovered that numerous individuals frequently regarded as political analysts or commentators possess explicit affiliations with political parties or prominent leaders. So, their involvement often shows that they are loyal to one party instead of doing their own research and making decisions based on data. Torotwa (2023) further adds that these trends are stronger during election cycles, when media corporations fight for viewers' attention and often use well-known or controversial partisan characters to accomplish so. These kinds of activities assist create ideological echo chambers, when the same analysts keep appearing on multiple shows and pushing tales that suit with certain political agendas. This recurrence makes it harder for people to see things from alternative or opposing points of view.

In locations like Nakuru County, political television shows have become quite significant weapons for defining the agenda. Nakuru is a growing political and economic hub with a lot of people who vote. Many community, regional, and national broadcasters call it home. But some are unhappy about how often particular pundits are used, how visitors seem to agree with the host's views, and how few other points of view there are. Even with these worries, there isn't enough localized empirical study looking into how choosing guests and experts affects political bias in the county's television shows. This study investigates the influence of guest and expert panel selection on political bias in broadcast shows within Nakuru County. The study seeks to generate evidence that can improve fairness, transparency, and credibility in political broadcasting by analysing the criteria for selecting panellists, the level of ideological diversity, and the structural variables affecting panel composition.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the centrality of political talk shows in informing and shaping public opinion, concerns continue to arise regarding fairness and diversity in panel composition. Broadcast programs in Nakuru County often rely on recurring guests who possess identifiable political affiliations, limiting the variety of voices represented. This creates an environment where discussions reflect predetermined ideological positions rather than balanced, evidence-based analysis. Existing research in Kenya highlights that expert selection is frequently influenced by media ownership patterns, political interests, and newsroom routines (Ndonye, 2019), yet little localized empirical research has focused specifically on counties such as Nakuru. Despite these documented concerns, localized empirical studies focusing specifically on county-level broadcast media remain scarce. Nakuru County, being a politically competitive and populous region, provides a unique context where panel selection decisions may have heightened influence on local political attitudes. Yet scholarly work examining how these guest-selection patterns manifest within county-based stations, many of which operate with limited editorial independence and heavy reliance on local political networks, is largely absent (Torotwa, 2023). This gap limits both academic understanding and practical interventions aimed at improving the quality and neutrality of political broadcasts at the grassroots level.

### **1.2 Research Objective**

To determine the influence of guest and expert panels selection in promoting political bias among broadcast programmes in Nakuru County.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

#### 2.1.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

The Agenda-Setting Theory, initially introduced by McCombs and Shaw, asserts that the media does not determine audience opinions but rather steers their attention towards particular subjects and viewpoints (Entman, 2010). The guests and expert panellists on political talk shows are particularly crucial for selecting which political stories get greater attention. When media firms keep having the same pundits on, they push specific viewpoints of political events, which influences how people perceive and talk about politics (Entman, 2010). This process is very significant for the Kenyan media because political panels often have the same persons on them over and over again, which makes the discussions predictable and biased.

Agenda-setting proceeds to the second level, framing. This is where specialists who are invited not only decide how important an issue is, but also how people understand political events. Cagé et al. (2025) contend that professional commentators function as interpretive authorities, with their perspectives being seen credible, so reinforcing the frames they express. When broadcast panels are made up of people with the same political views, they produce a consistent way of looking at things, which limits the political views that people can see. This pattern aligns with existing studies indicating that insufficient diversity in panels contributes to increased political polarization (Susánszky et al., 2022).

The argument is particularly relevant to the Kenyan setting, where research shows that political analysts often have clear ties to political parties. Ndonye (2019) found that political networks are widely used by expert commentators in Kenya. This affects agenda-setting by choosing and interpreting subjects that are in line with political interests. In Nakuru County, where local broadcasters play a big role in moulding political debates, people's attitudes can be dramatically swayed by depending on partisan experts over and over again. So, Agenda-Setting Theory is a wonderful method to start figuring out why people could conclude that television programs are politically biased when they pick guests and experts.

#### 2.1.2 Political Economy of Media Theory

The Political Economy of Media Theory says that the content of the media is shaped by the economic and structural dynamics that affect media companies. Decisions regarding what to show and who to invite to speak are based on things like ownership structures, political alliances, the power of advertising, and commercial forces. Kartinawati et al. (2020) assert that media ownership and political networks directly influence editorial processes, including the selection of guests for political discourse. These pressures may covertly or blatantly impact the choice of invited experts, favouring individuals who align with the political or commercial objectives of media owners.

In many African media settings, political and economic forces have a bigger effect on the makeup of panels than they should. Research in Ethiopia and Nigeria (Kiflu et al., 2023) shows that political leaders have power over media companies, which means that they hire commentators that back the state's or elite's views and ignore those that disagree. This leads to structural bias, not because journalists change the text on purpose, but because systemic influences affect ordinary editorial choices. In hybrid media systems, where there is legal pluralism but not much in practice because of political involvement, these kinds of things happen a lot.

Kenya has the same kinds of challenges. Agarwal (2022) assert that in Kenya, media ownership is frequently associated with political patronage, compelling newsrooms to host guests who align with the objectives of their proprietors. Torotwa (2023) asserts that at politically sensitive times, such elections, these ownership pressures increase, affecting the makeup of panels and the dominant views in public discourse. In Nakuru County, where local stations operate in politically heated situations, the selection of visitors may be influenced by the dynamics among station owners, sponsors, and political figures. Political Economy of Media Theory provides an essential framework for examining the structural dynamics, beyond individual journalists, that shape political bias in the selection of broadcast guests.

### 2.2 Empirical Review

Global empirical research demonstrates that the choice of guests and experts significantly impacts political debate and cultivates views of media bias. Cagé et al. (2025) found that newsrooms don't usually pick specialists at random. Instead, they are often influenced by their political beliefs, professional networks, and editorial preferences. Their study showed that the repeated use of certain specialists creates predictable patterns in political discourse, which strengthens some points of view while pushing others to the side. Susánszky et al. (2022) similarly demonstrated that the absence of diverse perspectives on political panels increases perceptions of bias in broadcasts, as a lack of varied viewpoints constrains the depth and equilibrium of the analysis.

Studies from several locations demonstrate that structural components of media systems result in biased panel composition. Miller (2019) found that in South Africa, the removal of certain specialists and the intentional inclusion

of politically favourable commentators led to skewed political interpretations in broadcast news programs Agarwal (2022) noted that in several African contexts, editorial decisions, such as guest selection, are shaped by ownership dynamics, leading to broadcasts that reflect the ideological preferences of media proprietors. These trends show that political prejudice is a systemic problem, meaning that it goes beyond the actions of individual journalists and reflects larger demands on institutions.

Studies show that East African media still has challenges with objectivity and political intervention. Kiflu et al. (2023) found that Ethiopian broadcasters often relied on pundits who were affiliated with the government, especially during times when politics were delicate. This helped to quiet dissenting viewpoints. Henshaw (2024) noted similar patterns in Nigeria, where broadcasters frequently selected panellists connected to dominant political leaders, thereby limiting the representation of alternative or critical viewpoints. These findings indicate that guest selection processes in African broadcast media frequently reflect structural political circumstances, consequently reducing the likelihood of balanced political discourse.

Kenyan empirical researches have documented analogous concerns with the neutrality of political guest selection. Ndonye (2019) examined expert selection in Kenyan news broadcasts and concluded that most of the analysts included were intimately linked to political parties, often appearing on different stations as partisan surrogates instead of as impartial experts. Torotwa (2023) also discovered that Kenyan political shows often had the same commentators on them over and over again, and many of them had apparent political loyalties. This led to broadcasts that portrayed biased opinions instead of objective analysis. Salamon (2024) contends that political capture and ownership power inside Kenyan media institutions aggravate biased guest selection, as editorial decisions often prefer perspectives that fit with the economic and political objectives of media proprietors. These empirical data illustrate that political bias in Kenyan radio programming is not incidental but results from consistent and predictable guest selection tendencies.

These studies from Kenya, the region, and the world indicate that political bias is directly linked to who broadcasters choose to invite as guests. There are apparent trends of the same people being on the panel again and over again, pundits with political links, and not enough people with different points of view. These trends are strongly connected to how unjust the audience thinks political programming is. The literature study shows that the choice of guests and experts has a big effect on political narratives and ideological framing. This shows how important it is to have clear and varied selection criteria. These findings offer substantial empirical evidence for investigating the occurrence of such patterns in Nakuru County and their influence on political bias in local broadcasting.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in Nakuru County, one of the fastest-growing cities and political hubs in Kenya. The county has a lot of mainstream and regional TV stations that often offer political talk shows, news bulletins, panel debates, and other election-related content. Because there are so many diverse individuals in Nakuru and the political culture is so dynamic, it is a wonderful area to look at patterns of political bias in broadcast programming. Community radios, religious broadcasters, privately owned stations, and regional offices of large national networks are all part of the county's media landscape. This allows for a complete assessment of the selection process for guests and specialists.

#### 3.2 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design, appropriate for assessing the elements that affect political bias in broadcast programming. This design enabled the researcher to systematically document existing habits, perceptions, and patterns without altering any factors. The design also allowed for the use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitative tools allow the researcher to figure out how widespread, frequent, and powerful perceived bias was. Qualitative interviews, on the other hand, give a lens on how editorial decisions are made, how ownership impacts them, and how experts are picked. The integrated methodology produced extensive, contextualized insights that facilitated the examination of political communication trends.

#### 3.3 Target Population and Sample Size

The research employed purposive sampling to identify editors, producers, and political program hosts directly engaged in the selection of guests and experts. The research concentrated on those directly involved in the creation and viewing of political broadcasts in Nakuru County. These included: News editors, Producers, Talk-show hosts, Political reporters, Technical staff involved in programming decisions, Media regulators or specialists familiar with political broadcasting.

**Table 1**  
*Target Population Distribution*

Category	Head of Radios and TVS	Editors	Producers	News Reporters and Presenters	Total
Radio Amani	1	2	3	7	13
Sauti ya Mwananchi	1	2	3	8	14
MBCI	1	2	3	9	15
Egerton Radio	1	2	4	6	13
Kass FM	1	2	3	8	14
Media Council Officials					5
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>74</b>

### 3.4 Data Collection

Data for this study were collected using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews to capture both measurable patterns and contextual explanations regarding guest and expert panel selection in political broadcast programs in Nakuru County. The use of multiple data collection tools enabled methodological triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

#### 3.4.1 Structured Questionnaires

Structured questionnaires were administered to broadcast journalists, editors, producers, presenters, and selected media practitioners involved in political programming. The questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data on respondents' perceptions of guest selection practices, frequency of panellist rotation, ideological diversity, transparency of selection procedures, and perceived influence of guest selection on political bias. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), to allow for systematic comparison and statistical analysis.

The questionnaires were distributed both in person and electronically, depending on the availability of respondents. Prior to the main data collection, the instrument was pre-tested on a small group of media practitioners outside the study sample to assess clarity, relevance, and reliability. Necessary adjustments were made to improve wording and ensure alignment with the study objectives.

#### 3.4.2 In-Depth Interviews

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with purposively selected key informants, including senior editors, producers, and program hosts directly involved in guest and expert selection decisions. The interviews aimed to generate deeper insights into editorial routines, ownership influence, political pressures, availability of neutral experts, and other structural factors shaping panel composition.

An interview guide with open-ended questions was used to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility for probing and clarification. Interviews were conducted at mutually convenient locations or via telephone, depending on respondent preference. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and was conducted with the informed consent of participants. To protect confidentiality and uphold ethical standards, respondents were identified using participant codes rather than real names.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methodologies for data analysis to attain a comprehensive understanding of the influence of guest and expert panel selection on political bias in broadcast shows. The data was categorized and put the quantitative data acquired from structured questionnaires into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 30). It was analysed and simplified to frequencies, percentages, averages, and standard deviations, which effectively illustrated the respondents' perceptions on panel selection, perceived neutrality, and indications of political bias. These descriptive measures enabled the study to discern common trends and quantify the extent to which specific behaviors affected audience perceptions of bias, in alignment with the recommendations of Cagé et al. (2025).

The study employed both descriptive and inferential methods to examine the relationships among major factors. Cross-tabulations were employed to examine responses across diverse respondent categories, including journalists, producers, and consumers of political information. This methodology enabled the discovery of potential relationships between respondent characteristics and their perceptions of political bias, consistent with similar analytical frameworks employed in prior media bias studies (Susánszky et al., 2022). The amalgamation of descriptive and inferential statistics increased the validity of the findings and provided deeper insights into the structural drivers affecting expert and guest selection in Nakuru County.

The study utilized thematic analysis to look at the qualitative data from the interviews. Responses were first transcribed and underwent several evaluations to identify repeating patterns, developing themes, and notable variances



in participant opinions. Thematic coding was done by hand, following the processes laid forth by Kiflu et al. (2023), which emphasis locating important bits of information and organizing them into groupings based on themes. These issues included views on editorial independence, how often political pundits who come back to the show engage with each other, and the structural or political constraints that affect panel selection. The thematic approach was appropriate since it enabled the study to acquire nuanced explanations and contextual insights that quantitative measures alone could not sufficiently capture.

Combining quantitative and qualitative data gives a clear and complete picture of the research problem. Quantitative findings provide measurable proof of audience and practitioner perceptions, while qualitative insights enriched the analysis by revealing underlying variables, motives, and experiences related to panel selection. This mixed-methods analytical approach ensured that the study produced reliable, triangulated results that might inform academic discourse and practical initiatives aimed at improving neutrality in political broadcasting.

#### IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

##### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics on Guest and Expert Selection

The study used a 5-point Likert scale to score a series of statements to find out how people felt about guest selection bias. The table shows the average scores and standard deviations for important things like how many times a panellist has been on the show, what political party they belong to, how open the selection process is, how well they represent opposing views, and how much they think guest selection affects political bias. The 5-point Likert scale was meant to show the overall patterns in how viewers and media professionals evaluated fairness and neutrality in the composition of broadcast panels.

**Table 1**  
*Descriptive Statistics for Guest Selection Bias (n = 362)*

Statement	Mean	SD
The same political commentators are repeatedly invited	3.92	0.84
Most panellists have identifiable partisan affiliations	3.78	0.89
Guest selection lacks transparency	3.67	0.97
Opposing viewpoints are inadequately represented	3.85	0.91
Guest selection influences political bias	4.03	0.76

The findings indicate that a significant number of individuals perceive guest selection processes as having a substantial impact on political bias. The statement "guest selection influences political bias" garnered the highest level of consensus among respondents (M = 4.03, SD = 0.76), indicating a prevalent agreement that the selection of panellists impacts ideological framing. The high mean scores for repeating commentators (M = 3.92) and insufficient opposing opinions (M = 3.85) show that people think there isn't enough diversity in political conversation. Additionally, the fact that majority of the panellists have clear political links (M = 3.78) implies that individuals perceive that party concerns play a role in expert selection. The descriptive statistics collectively suggest that audiences view guest selection as neither neutral nor transparent, thereby validating concerns that political broadcasts in Nakuru County are primarily shaped by recurring, politically aligned voices that obstruct balanced discourse.

##### 4.2 Frequency Distributions

This section displays how many respondents who answered the question thought that political TV shows change their panellists fairly. The idea is to see how much people in the media and the audience notice changes in the diversity of panel members over time. Changing the panellists is a good sign that the editing is fair. It also makes it less likely that individuals will become stuck in their own thoughts by making sure that each episode and show has a variety of points of view.

**Table 2**  
*Frequency Distribution on Panellist Rotation*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	124	34.3%
Agree	132	36.5%
Neutral	42	11.6%
Disagree	38	10.5%
Strongly Disagree	26	7.2%

The frequency distribution demonstrates that most of the people who answered think that rotating panellists isn't enough. A total of 70.8% (34.3% Strongly Agree and 36.5% Agree) indicate they are worried that the same persons are being called to political programs too often. Only 17.7% (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) believe that



panel rotation is done equitably. This suggests that the absence of rotation is a structural component that causes political bias because the same voices may keep pushing the same partisan stories. The fact that so many people agreed with the remark suggests that many people think that guest selection is not only monotonous, but also unfairly favours certain political ideas. This makes political broadcasts less diverse and balanced.

### 4.3 Causes of Political Bias in Broadcast Programs

The table below displays the percentage of participants who believed that different structural and editorial elements affect how unbiased political panels are selected. Understanding what causes these flaws helps comprehend the bigger issues that make Nakuru County's broadcast media prejudiced when it comes to politics.

**Table 3**  
*Perceived Causes of Guest-Related Political Bias*

Cause of Bias	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Politically aligned guests	59.90%
Repetitive panellists	54.80%
Lack of qualified experts	48.30%
Owner influence	41.60%
Inadequate opposing voices	72.40%

The data suggest that the main reason for political bias is that there aren't enough people who disagree (72.4%). This supports what the descriptive statistics say: that not having a lot of different ideas is a big reason why people see things the way they do. Politically aligned guests (59.9%) and recurring panellists (54.8%) expose additional structural inadequacies in the selection process, suggesting an intentional or regular reliance on partisan pundits. Owner influence, mentioned by 41.6% of respondents, highlights the political economy factors involved in editorial decision-making, as media owners exert pressure on guest selection. The fact that 48.3% of individuals think that a lack of competent experts leads to bias shows that television programs may use political players who are easy to discover instead of subject matter experts. These results indicate that political bias stems from a combination of ownership influence, editing practices, and a scarcity of impartial experts.

### 4.4 Expertise-Based Selection

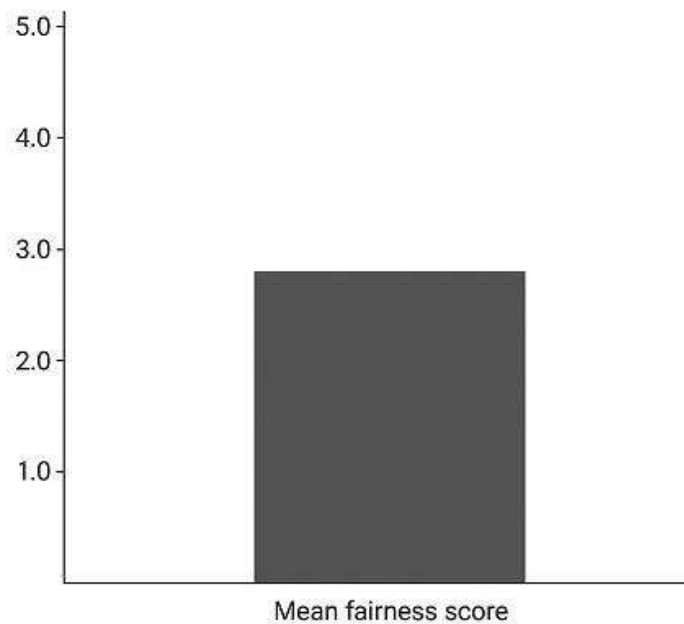
The table below shows how participants assessed the relevance of academic credentials, professional experience, and not being biased when choosing a panellist. Figure 1 and the table demonstrate how participants answered the question about how significant they think these characteristics apply.

**Table 4**  
*Expertise Relevance Ratings*

Criterion	Very Important	Important	Not Important	Total %
Academic qualifications	52.2%	33.7%	14.1%	100%
Experience in political analysis	64.1%	28.5%	7.4%	100%
Non-partisan reputation	71.3%	20.2%	8.5%	100%

The results suggest that most individuals agree with making decisions based on competence. 71.3% of the persons who answered claimed that being non-partisan and having experience in political analysis (64.1%) were "very important." This suggests that the panellists are expected to be fair and knowledgeable. 52.2% of participants also stated that having a good education was extremely important. The quantity that goes with these evaluations shows that individuals really want to be fair and knowledgeable. This suggests that people worry more about how credible the analysis is than about who they vote for or how funny it is. These results suggest that audiences choose panellists who offer impartial, knowledgeable, and professional observations rather than biased opinion. The deficiencies found in earlier sections, such the lack of neutral experts and the fact that panellists keep coming back, suggest that the way people choose panellists right now is not what they want from political conversation that is based on expertise.

Figure 1 displays the overall score that people assigned to the fairness of the processes used to choose experts for political broadcast programs. Along with the descriptive data in Table 4, this is what it says. The figure shows what people think about how fair, open, and based on merit the guest selection process is. It shows how quickly people can tell if the panel is fair. The table illustrates the average fairness score on a five-point scale. This shows how well current selection procedures reflect what the audience wants from political programming: participation based on competence and not on political bias.



Mean fairness score for expert selection processes ( $M = 2.44$ )

### Figure 1

#### Fairness Score

The mean fairness score of 2.44 is considerably below the neutral midpoint of 3.0 on the five-point scale, as seen in Figure 1. The people who answered the question thought that the way experts are chosen is typically unfair, not clear enough, and not based on merit. The low fairness score, when compared to Table 4, which demonstrates that the public strongly likes academic qualifications, analytical experience, and non-partisanship, shows that what the audience values is substantially different from what broadcasters are doing presently. Most people who answered said that factors based on competence, such as neutrality (71.3%) and professional experience (64.1%), are the most important. However, they don't think that these standards are always used when choosing a panel. The figure shows that the way guests are chosen presently doesn't satisfy audience expectations and makes people think that broadcast programs are biased toward one political party.

### 4.5 Qualitative Insights

The qualitative interviews revealed several underlying processes that affect the choice of guests and experts in political broadcasts. A common subject that came up was how ownership affects editorial decisions. Many producers complained that station owners were exerting direct pressure on them to choose who should be on political panels. A producer said, "*We are sometimes told to bring in certain voices, especially those that are in line with the owner's interests (Participant 6, September 12, 2025).*" This fits with other research that says that ownership structures often affect the editorial direction and political representation of broadcast programs (Agarwal, 2022). Political economy ideas say that media proprietors can alter political discourse (Kartinawati et al., 2020). This form of influence backs those beliefs.

Another popular belief was that people who might be on the panel were utilizing smart lobbying. Editors noted that some political actors or experts try to get on political shows by leveraging their networks. One editor said, "*Some panellists really push to be on the show; sometimes it feels like they are campaigning for airtime instead of offering expertise (Participant 3, September 12, 2025).*" This is similar to what Ndonye (2019) say, that many people who appear as "analysts" are actually connected to political actors and use media exposure to push political narratives instead of giving neutral commentary. The interviews show that the makeup of the panel is affected by both the editor's choice and outside political factors.

The third subject was how hard it is to locate neutral, certified experts to be on political shows. Producers were anxious that there weren't enough experts who could help without being very politically connected. One person who took part in the interview said, "*Finding someone who understands the issues but isn't politically aligned is very hard, so we go back to the same people (Participant 1, September 12, 2025).*" This is similar to what Cagé et al.

(2025) say, which is that guest selection often defaults to familiar commentators because they are seen as reliable or readily available, even when they aren't neutral. These inclinations reinforce the patterns of repeating panellists observed in the quantitative results.

Lastly, persons who were questioned indicated that certain visitors were picked not because they were good at their occupations, but because they could make people laugh or catch their attention. One producer commented, "*Sometimes we choose people because they are lively and controversial, not because they are experts (Participant 10, September 12, 2025).*" This is comparable to what Bruchmann et al. (2023) say, media corporations typically aim to balance instructional purposes with entertainment value, especially when politics are involved. Putting fun ahead of expertise makes political talks less analytical and more likely to be prejudiced or sensational.

The qualitative insights corroborate the quantitative findings by illustrating how ownership influence, lobbying conduct, restricted expert availability, and entertainment-driven selection methods collectively contribute to political bias in broadcast shows. These dynamics highlight the imperative of establishing clear, expertise-based criteria for guest selection to bolster the neutrality and credibility of political journalism.

#### 4.6 Discussion

This study's findings closely align with those of previous research, indicating that the selection of appropriate guests and experts for a panel significantly influences the portrayal of political narratives in broadcast media. The research shown that featuring the same ideologically aligned visitors repeatedly results in predictable ideological patterns. This is a trend that has been witnessed in media systems throughout Africa and around the world. Ndonye (2019) similarly found that Kenyan political broadcasts always have analysts that are linked with a party. This leads to talks that show partisan biases instead of balanced, issue-focused debate. This pattern was clearly evident in the current study, when respondents reported they were unsatisfied with how unbiased the broadcast panels were. The low fairness score of 2.44 out of 5 shows this.

The tendency for panellists to be the same and repeat themselves makes perceived bias much stronger. Cagé et al. (2025) contend that the selection of experts significantly influences the ideological framing of political information, given that commentators function as interpretive authority for audiences. This backs up the assumption that the simplest way to identify if someone is prejudiced is to not have a lot of different points of view. 72.4% of the people who answered said they didn't have enough different political perspectives. One-sided conversations are so widespread that they make political shows less respectable and make consumers less sure that what they see on TV is fair.

The results show even more that people choose experts who have academic credentials, professional experience, and a track record of being fair. Bruchmann et al. (2023) assert that political discourse is more credible when newsrooms prioritize competency and subject-matter expertise over political allegiance. The respondents' emphasis on expertise-based selection highlights a growing demand for analytical rigor and factual interpretation in political programming, reflecting global trends that show a declining tolerance for partisan commentary lacking substantial foundation (Suh et al., 2025).

The research demonstrates that inadequate diversity in guest selection diminishes the perceived legitimacy and democratic importance of political broadcasts in Nakuru County especially. Seventy-two percent of those who answered said that bias was mostly caused by not having different points of view. People believe that political imbalance is produced by both who owns the media and who gets to speak in televised discussions. This outcome corresponds with Entman's (2010) framing theory, which asserts that political messages are significantly shaped by the chosen interpreters tasked with their delivery. As a result, media companies use guest selection to figure out which stories to promote and which ones to hide.

These findings align closely with Agenda-Setting Theory, which posits that the media do not dictate thoughts but rather influence the subjects of contemplation. By having the same political pundits on their shows over and over again, broadcasters effectively guide viewers toward specific ways of thinking about political events while downplaying opposing points of view. Garajamirli (2025) contend that expert panels influence problem salience and narrative trajectory by contextualizing political information in accordance with ideological or institutional goals. This study supports the claim that biased guest selection hampers political discourse and restricts pluralism in the broadcast media of Nakuru County.

The Political Economy of Media is another useful technique to make sense of the results. Kartinawati et al. (2020) assert that the choice of guests is often swayed by broader organizational goals, including ownership connections and commercial necessities. The association between ownership structures and recurrent panellists revealed in this study suggests that guest selection may be influenced by structural relationships rather than exclusively by journalistic merit. This corroborates global research indicating that editorial decisions are shaped by power dynamics that dictate who is included, who is excluded, and the selection of political content (Salamon, 2024).

The results suggest that picking guests and experts for panels is a big way that political bias is made and kept in broadcast shows. The statistical results and the literature both show how important it is to have a variety of

trustworthy and professionally qualified specialists in political broadcasting to make it fairer, encourage balanced discussion, and win back the audience's trust.

## V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

The study indicates that picking the correct guests and experts for Nakuru County's television programs has a major effect on political bias. The findings indicated that the selection of individuals for political talk programs significantly influenced the framing of conversations and the ideological direction of televised debates. When shows repeatedly using the same commentators, especially those with known political views, the conversations tend to be slanted in a predictable way. This overreliance on politically connected panellists creates entrenched narratives that undermine the objectivity and variety expected in political programming on television.

The study also discovered that the best way to identify if an audience feels something is biased is if there aren't any competing views. When multiple points of view aren't included, political issues are only shown in a narrow fashion, which makes public conversation less fair. The results, on the other hand, demonstrated that choosing panellists based on their professional qualifications, subject-matter experience, and proven impartiality made political programs more believable. This method not only makes the analysis better, but it also makes the viewer more inclined to believe that the broadcast is fair and honest. The research shows that guest selection methods need to be open and fair to cut down on political prejudice. Making ensuring that people from different political and professional backgrounds are equally represented can make neutrality much stronger, support democratic values, and improve political communication on TV and radio.

### 5.2 Recommendations

The results of this study point to a number of ways to make it easier to choose guests and expert panellists for political broadcast shows in Nakuru County that are fair, open, and trustworthy. First, media businesses should make a list of clear standards for how to pick visitors, such as political analysts, experts, and pundits, and then implement those rules. These standards should put professional qualifications, analytical experience, and proven political neutrality at the top of the list of things to look for in a panel member. Setting these kinds of standards would cut down on random or interest-based choices and make sure that the panel is made up of people who the audience thinks are fair, as evidenced by the study's low fairness score.

Second, broadcast stations should develop and preserve a roster of independent specialists from other domains, like law, media studies, governance, political science, and public policy. The registry should feature information about the person's life, their areas of competence, and confirmation that they are not biased. This would give broadcasters more qualified specialists to pick from and make them less reliant on a small group of commentators who know them or agree with their politics. Media companies might manage their own independent registration, or they could work with bodies like the Media Council of Kenya to do so.

Third, media corporations should make sure that the people on the panel vary often so that people don't become locked in their own thoughts and hear a wider range of opinions. No one pundit can control political discourse because specialists switch between programs and broadcast cycles. Rotation also helps bring in diverse points of view and answers the common complaint that the same ideologically aligned speakers are heard too often, which leads to bias in broadcasting.

Fourth, it is crucial to teach producers, editors, and talk show hosts new talents and help them improve the ones they already have. Journalists should know how to undertake ethical journalism, check facts, determine neutrality, and deal with different points of view on panels. They would gain better at locating competent, trustworthy specialists and be less likely to be misled by political actors if they kept learning and growing in their jobs. Lastly, media stations should regularly evaluate their political panels for impartiality and diversity. These audits should look at things like how many males and women there are, how many people have different political views, how much professional experience they have, how often people show up, and what political party they belong to. The results should assist make adjustments to the editorial process that make it more open and friendly.

### Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

### Funding Declaration

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

## REFERENCES

- Agarwal, L. (2022). Media ownership and its influence on political reporting. *Journal of Nonlinear Analysis and Optimization*, 13(1), 34–38. <https://doi.org/10.36893/JNAO.2022.V13I02.078-086>
- Bennett, W. L., Livingston, S. G., Bennett, L., & Carroll, L. (2018). The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions. *European Journal of Communication*, 33, 122–139. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323118760317>
- Bruchmann, K., Vincent, S., & Folks, A. (2023). Political bias indicators and perceptions of news. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, Article 1078966. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1078966>
- Cagé, J., Hengel, M., Hervé, N., & Urvoy, C. (2025). Political bias in the media—evidence from the universe of French broadcasts, 2002–2020 (No. 11741). *CESifo Working Paper*. <https://hdl.handle.net/10419/316855>
- Entman, R. M. (2010). Media framing biases and political power: Explaining slant in news of Campaign 2008. *Journalism*, 11(4), 389–408.
- Garajamirli, N. (2025). Algorithmic gatekeeping and democratic communication: Who decides what the public sees? *European Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 4(3), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejmedia.2025.4.3.54>
- Henshaw, E. E. (2024). Reporting on political corruption in Nigeria: Sources, ownership affiliations, and other determinants of news frames (Doctoral dissertation, City, University of London). <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/33180/>
- Kartinawati, E., Pawito, P., Wardo, W., Wijaya, M., & Purwasito, A. (2020). Political preference of media owner, power abuse, and bias (Case on private televisions in Indonesia). *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 17(7), 6907–6917. <http://repository.usahidsolo.ac.id/id/eprint/1000>
- Kiflu, G. K., Ali, A. C., & Nigussie, H. (2023). The challenges of hosting televised deliberations in Ethiopian media. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 28(1), 184–200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612211020267>
- Miller, S. (2019). The South African publishing gate: Information keepers and seekers. *Mousaion: South African Journal of Information Studies*, 37(4), [17 pages]. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-1e3ec4644c>
- Ndonye, M. M. (2019). Emergence of ethnopolitical journalism in Kenya: Lessons from the 2017 televised political analyses shows. *Editon Consortium Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 1(1), 36–51. <https://doi.org/10.51317/ecjmcs.v1i1.52>
- Salamon, E. (2024). The political economy of news media and journalism. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.1531>
- Suh, Y. J., Shah, D. V., & Wagner, M. W. (2025). How partisan media influences aversion to political compromise. *Media and Communication*, 13(8), 47. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.10009>
- Susánszky, P., Kopper, Á., & Zsigó, F. T. (2022). Media framing of political protests—reporting bias and the discrediting of political activism. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 38(4), 312–328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2022.2061817>
- Torotwa, E. K. (2023). An assessment of newspaper coverage of the 2022 presidential election (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).