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Ace Up One's Sleeve: A Systematic Communicative Review of Journalistic Media Dominance in Shaping the Contemporary Political Landscape

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the role of journalistic media in shaping the contemporary political landscape, focusing on its ability to manipulate and direct public opinion and policy. Considering the media's dominance in agenda setting, this study highlights the urgency of understanding its broad influence on democracy and public policy. Journalistic media, which has transformed from a passive information provider to an active opinion shaper, plays a crucial role in this fast-paced and widespread information era. Therefore, a deep understanding of how media shapes political narratives is essential to maintaining the integrity of the democratic process. The methodology used in this research is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), which involves the collection and analysis of data from previously published sources to build a comprehensive understanding of the media's role in politics. This approach allows for the identification of trends, challenges, and the broader impact of media on politics. Additionally, this study employs theoretical analysis by combining Media Dependency Theory and Agenda Setting Theory to examine how public dependence on media and media's power in setting the agenda influence political dynamics. The results of the study indicate that media often leverages its strategic position to direct public opinion, which can significantly impact election outcomes and public policy. The high public dependence on media for information makes the media a powerful tool in shaping the political agenda, often benefiting media owners or specific interest groups. Based on the findings and discussion, this article recommends the need for stricter media oversight and increased media literacy among the public to reduce bias and ensure that the media plays its role as an effective watchdog rather than a biased opinion shaper. These recommendations aim to support policies that promote transparency and integrity in journalism, ensuring that the media can continue to be a pillar of healthy democracy without compromising objectivity or accountability.

Keywords SLR, Dominance, Journalistic Media, Contemporary Politics

INTRODUCTION

The current era of disruption plays a significant role in the social realm, particularly in the context of shaping the political landscape. A study published in Nature in 2012 found that messages in Facebook feeds could directly increase voter participation by about 60,000 and indirectly through social contagion by 280,000 (Bond et al., 2012). This finding highlights the crucial role of social networks and interpersonal relationships in political mobilization. Meanwhile, a report from the Oxford Internet Institute in 2020 revealed the manipulation of social media by political actors, including disinformation campaigns run by governments and political parties, showing the complexity of using digital media in politics, which often threatens the integrity of democratic processes (Oxford Internet Institute, 2021).

In the current era, shifts in communication paradigms have redefined the role of journalistic media in society (Kim et al., 2023). Media, which was initially a passive information channel, has now transformed into an active agent that shapes and influences public opinion. This change has been accelerated by the digital revolution, which enables

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the instant and widespread dissemination of information, giving the media the ability to reach a broader and more segmented audience than ever before. This phenomenon sharpens the importance of understanding how narratives are formed and presented in the context of modern journalism.

With the expansion of information technology, journalistic media not only plays a role as a news provider but also as a political agenda setter (Duffy et al., 2020). The power to set the public agenda, which was once dispersed among various institutions, is now increasingly concentrated in the hands of major media. This raises questions about the extent to which media can influence political and social decisions without compromising ethical and objective journalism principles.

The media's ability to influence public understanding and political outcomes necessitates a closer look at how this power is used and the impact it has. For example, in some cases, the media has been used to propagate specific agendas, often neglecting facts or prioritizing sensationalism over substance. This tendency undermines public trust in the media and threatens the integrity of the democratic process (Purnomo & Hartanto, 2023).

Given that media often functions as the gatekeeper of information, the credibility and reliability of news sources become highly important (Hecht et al., 2017). Without transparency from the media, the public may not be able to make well-informed decisions or recognize the biases that may influence reporting. This highlights the importance of indepth studies on ethical principles in journalism and how these principles are upheld or violated in current practice.

In this study, a systematic analysis of journalistic media and its role in political agenda setting will provide important insights into the internal and external mechanisms that influence media operations (Suleiman M. Yar'Adua et al., 2023). By identifying and understanding these variables, research can reveal the extent to which media plays a strategic role in shaping political and social contexts.

This study also aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the media in fulfilling its watchdog function, a role that is crucial in maintaining checks and balances in government. Assessing how the media uncovers the truth and puts pressure on powerful figures and institutions offers insights into how effectively the media fulfills its democratic mission (Yuri Alfrin Aladdin & Alfathan, 2022).

Moreover, this study seeks to explore the impact of journalistic media on political polarization. With the increasing prevalence of filter bubbles and echo chambers exacerbated by social media and news algorithms, it is important to understand how traditional and digital media influence each other and contribute to a more fragmented political discourse (Schmidt, 2023).

Therefore, there is a real urgency to conduct this research, considering the widespread impact of journalistic media on contemporary democracy. Through this systematic approach, the research aims to provide recommendations that can help formulate policies promoting transparency and integrity in journalism, as well as offering strategies to reduce bias and increase objectivity in reporting.

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Finally, this research is not only relevant in the academic context but also crucial for media practitioners, policymakers, and the general public. The results of this study are expected to raise awareness about the critical role played by the media in modern society and strengthen the foundation for more responsible and democratic journalism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research delves into the profound influence of journalistic media in shaping the contemporary political landscape, focusing on its ability to function as an "Ace Up One's Sleeve," or a hidden advantage strategically leveraged. The phrase metaphorically denotes the existence of a secret strategy or resource that the media can use to significantly influence political outcomes. Through systematic analysis, this study aims to understand how news narratives and framing by the media not only reflect but also shape political priorities and public opinion, making journalistic media a key player in influencing power dynamics in the political arena.

This study also seeks to investigate how media dominance in agenda-setting can affect public policy and perception of critical issues. By utilizing communication theories such as Media Dependency Theory and Agenda Setting Theory, this study delves into the mechanisms behind media influence and how journalistic media leverages its capacity to influence, shape, or even manipulate the contemporary political landscape. This includes assessing how the media chooses to highlight certain issues, sideline others, and the impact of these editorial decisions on the public and political decisions. In this research, the authors refer to several previous studies relevant to this study, namely:

Chiumbu and Munoriyarwa (2023) in their research titled "Exploring data journalism practices in Africa: data politics, media ecosystems and newsroom infrastructures" use a qualitative approach to analyze data journalism practices in Africa. They examine how data politics, media ecosystems, and newsroom infrastructures influence news production. The findings show that infrastructure constraints and limited resources often hinder effective data journalism. Compared to "Ace Up One's Sleeve," this research provides a specific context for the technical challenges in journalism, complementing the understanding of how infrastructural factors can affect journalistic media dominance in a political context.

Dessie, Ali, and Moges (2023) examine perceptions of the professional role of Ethiopian journalists during the political transition post-EPRDF in their study in Cogent Arts and Humanities. Surveys and in-depth interviews were used to collect data. The results show that journalists often see themselves as ethno-political advocates, reflecting a shift in the journalistic role from news deliverer to political actor. This research, when compared to "Ace Up One's Sleeve," emphasizes how role perception can influence news content and public opinion formation, providing a different perspective on media influence in politics.

Koivunen and Vuorelma (2022) explore the concept of trust and authority in mediamediated politics in their study published in the European Journal of Communication. Through discursive analysis, they discuss how media influences perceptions of trust and political authority among the public. The findings show that media plays a significant role in shaping trust in political institutions. This research provides useful insights for "Ace Up

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One's Sleeve" by showing how media can set the agenda through its influence on authority and trust, which is a crucial part of media dominance in politics.

Musa and Antwi-Boateng (2023) investigate investigative journalism in Nigeria in the context of promotional politics in their research published in Cogent Social Sciences. Using case studies and content analysis, they found that promotional politics often shapes the narrative and coverage of investigative journalism. The results show that investigative journalists play an important role in uncovering the truth but are often hampered by political and economic pressures. This study adds another perspective to "Ace Up One's Sleeve" by highlighting how external pressures influence media independence and its ability to influence the political landscape.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research approach using a library research method to investigate how journalistic media influences the formation of political agendas (Togia & Malliari, 2017; Weyant, 2022). This approach was chosen for its ability to gather and analyze data from various published sources, providing deep insights into media practices within the context of contemporary politics. The approach allows researchers to access a wide and diverse range of data, enriching the analysis with multidisciplinary perspectives.

The data sources for this research include both primary and secondary data (Creswell, 2020). Primary data was obtained through official documents, recordings of journalistic activities, and recent publications from relevant media organizations. Meanwhile, secondary data involved the review of scientific literature such as academic journals, books, articles, and previous research reports related to media and politics. Data collection was conducted through in-depth library research, examining and evaluating existing sources to build a strong foundation for the research.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model, which facilitates qualitative analysis through three streams of activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (B. Miles et al., 2014). Data reduction involves filtering, focusing, and simplifying extensive field notes. Data display organizes the filtered information into an interpretable form, while conclusion drawing allows the researcher to determine the meaning and connect the research findings with theory and previous studies.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed triangulation techniques, which involve using multiple theories, sources, methods, or researchers to cross-check the obtained results (Flick, 2020). Triangulation helps validate the accuracy of the data and strengthens the reliability of the research findings by cross-referencing information from different sources, reducing bias, and increasing confidence in the data and analysis presented. Through this approach, this study aims to generate credible and comprehensive insights into the influence of journalistic media in contemporary politics.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Dominance of Journalistic Media in The Contemporary Era

The dominance of journalistic media in the contemporary era reflects a significant shift in how information is disseminated and interpreted within society (Tariq et al., 2022). Amidst the advancement of digital technology and media consolidation, the power of journalism has evolved not only as a provider of information but as a primary shaper of public opinion and political agendas. This era is marked by the increasingly complex role of media in influencing social and political dynamics, where controlling narratives and shaping perceptions have become crucial. This subsection will explore various aspects of this dominance, from media ownership concentration, the influence of digitalization, to practices of sensationalism and polarization, while assessing their impact on public policy and life. The forms of media dominance identified in the contemporary era are as follows:

Table 1. Dominance of Journalistic Media in the Contemporary Era

No	Dominance Thomas	Description
	Theme	Media has the ability to shape dominant narratives in society,
1	Narrative Control	often influencing political agendas and public opinion through
		the selection of topics and presentation.
2	Ownership Concentration	Media ownership concentrated in the hands of a few large corporations or individuals can influence the independence of journalism and allow owners' interests to affect political agendas.
3	Information Digitalization	The transition to digital platforms increases the speed and reach of news distribution, but also leads to issues like fake news, filter bubbles, and echo chambers, all of which impact democratic processes.
4	Agenda Setting	Media often determines the topics that become public concerns, which directly influences political priorities and directs public discourse. This impacts government policies and actions.
5	Sensationalism and Polarization	Sensationalism in reporting can attract attention but often sacrifices depth of analysis, resulting in polarized opinions and strengthening ideological divisions within society.
6	Media and Politics Interaction	Media and politics often engage in a reciprocal relationship where media plays a role in exposing political scandals or supporting certain political careers, while politicians use media to reinforce their image and messages.

The concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few large corporations or individuals strengthens the potential influence of this power. When media is owned by a few entities, the independence of journalism is threatened as it may be tailored to serve the political or business agendas of the owners. This centralized ownership can lead to the homogenization of news presented to the public, where the diversity of perspectives and plurality of voices become limited (Sehl & Eder, 2023).

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The development of information digitalization has transformed how news is distributed and consumed (Schniederjans et al., 2020). Digital platforms accelerate the spread of information but also present new challenges such as the spread of fake news, the formation of filter bubbles, and echo chambers. These phenomena weaken the foundation of democracy by confining individuals to information that reinforces their own views, reducing exposure to different perspectives.

The power of the media in agenda setting is significant. Media often determines what issues gain public attention and how those issues are discussed. This process not only directs public discourse but also directly influences political priorities and government policies. Media-controlled agendas can reflect specific interests and manipulate the political process to benefit certain groups or ideologies (Hamid & Ismail, 2020).

Sensationalism in reporting is another aspect of media dominance that often sacrifices in-depth analysis in favor of attracting attention (Dempster et al., 2022). This approach often results in polarized public opinion and strengthens ideological divisions within society. Sensational news tends to ignore important nuances of complex issues, ultimately affecting the public's ability to make well-informed decisions.

The interaction between media and politics is often symbiotic. Media plays a crucial role in uncovering political scandals and can support or undermine certain political careers. Conversely, politicians use media to reinforce their image and deliver their messages. This relationship demonstrates how media and politics mutually influence each other, where the power and influence of one party can be highly dependent on the other (William & Nur Endah Retno Wuryandari, 2020).

These phenomena collectively show how journalistic media not only plays a role in shaping our understanding of the world but also in directing and sometimes manipulating contemporary political dynamics. Therefore, understanding media dominance in these various aspects is essential to critically examine and gain a deeper understanding of how this power operates within modern society and politics. Further research on the influence of media in contemporary democratic societies and how to restore or maintain ethics and objectivity in journalism is crucial for maintaining the health of public dialogue and the integrity of the democratic process.

The Role of Contemporary Media in Shaping the Political Landscape

In a dynamic global context, contemporary media plays a crucial role in shaping the political landscape, serving as a catalyst for change and a monitor of power (Wilson et al., 2020). Media not only channels information but also influences how that information is interpreted and responded to by the public. With its ability to mediate between the government and the public, provide a platform for public debate, and act as a watchdog over policies, the media determines the direction of political dialogue and democracy. This subsection will explore various dimensions of the media's role in contemporary politics, revealing how media educates, activates, and influences public opinion and policy while assessing its consequences for the integrity of the democratic process. The roles of media in shaping the political landscape are as follows:

Media Role **Description** No Media functions as a bridge between the government and the Information public, conveying policies and political changes to the public, 1 Mediator while gathering and presenting public responses policymakers. Media provides a platform for various political and social **Public** Debate 2 actors to discuss and debate important issues, facilitating Platform dialogue among diverse groups. Media has an educational role by providing information about important political processes and issues, helping the public to 3 Political Educator make informed decisions during elections or referenda. Too1 Media is used by various entities to rally support for or oppose for Mobilization policies, often through campaigns designed to influence public 4 and Activism opinion or spur collective action.

Table 2. The Role of Contemporary Media in Shaping the Political Landscape

In the context of contemporary democracy, the media holds an integral role not only as a provider of information but also as an important mediator between the government and the public (Ali et al., 2023). Media acts as a communication bridge, conveying policies and political changes from the government to the public, while simultaneously gathering and presenting public responses to policymakers. In this role, the media facilitates the two-way flow of information that is essential for a responsive and inclusive decision-making process. This openness helps in building trust between the government and citizens, as well as enabling the public to engage more actively in the political process.

Additionally, the media also provides a vital platform for various political and social actors to discuss and debate important issues. By offering space for dialogue among diverse groups, the media plays a crucial role in democratizing public debate. Through open discussion and constructive dialogue, the media helps to strengthen the foundations of democracy by ensuring that diverse perspectives and voices can be heard. This platform is not only important for shaping opinions but also essential in creating consensus or shared understanding of the issues affecting society (Jin et al., 2023).

The media also plays the role of political educator. Through news coverage and analysis of political processes and issues, the media educates the public about how the political system works and the issues at stake. This role is especially crucial during elections or referenda, where a good understanding of the issues can influence voters' decisions. The media ensures that citizens have access to the information needed to make informed decisions, which is a key pillar of democratic participation (Thorbjørnsrud & Figenschou, 2022).

In the realm of activism, the media is used as a tool for mobilization by various entities, from civil society groups to political parties. Media enables campaigns designed to influence public opinion or to encourage collective action. Whether through traditional news coverage or digital campaigns, the media plays a key role in rallying support for or against particular

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policies. The power of the media in organizing and directing public action not only enhances its capacity as a political tool but also as an instrument for social change (Ghosh, 2023).

Another critical role of the media is as a government watchdog. Through investigative journalism, the media plays an important role in exposing cases of corruption, abuse of power, and injustice (Choi & Yang, 2021). This task not only supports transparency but also accountability in governance. Investigations conducted by journalists often bring important issues into the public sphere, forcing institutions to act and rectify. This capability makes the media an important guardian in holding the government accountable for its actions.

Through these various roles, the media not only reflects social and political realities but also shapes them. The power of the media in the context of contemporary politics cannot be ignored, as it has significant influence in directing the course of democracy and the quality of public life. Therefore, the importance of maintaining the integrity and independence of the media cannot be overstated, given its profound influence on shaping the modern political landscape.

Systematic Literature Review: Communication, Media, and Contemporary Politics

In an era characterized by rapid technological and informational developments, research on the interaction between communication, media, and contemporary politics is becoming increasingly relevant. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) in this context aims to compile, analyze, and interpret various studies that have been conducted regarding the influence of media in the political arena. This review is crucial considering that media not only serves as a provider of information but also as a shaper of public opinion, which has a significant impact on political policies and social life. Through this SLR, we can understand how narratives are formed, maintained, or changed in this ever-evolving and dynamic society.

This systematic review also seeks to identify and evaluate emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities from the complex interaction between media and politics. By examining various sources and research methodologies, this SLR paves the way for a deeper understanding of the communication strategies used by political actors and media, as well as the public's response to these initiatives. By integrating findings from various disciplines and perspectives, this review aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, media practitioners, and the general public in facing the ever-changing global dynamics.

At this level, the author collected 1,000 previous studies using the Publish or Perish application with the keywords "contemporary journalistic media and politics." Once the data was collected, the author conducted network analysis and density analysis using the VosViewer application. The results are as follows:

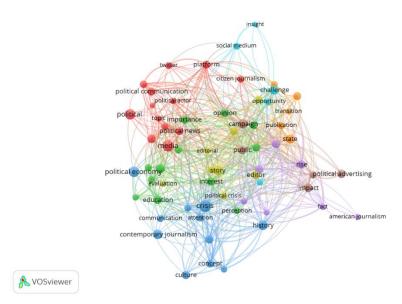


Figure 1. Density Analysis of Contemporary Journalism in the Political Landscape

The network visualization displayed using VOSviewer reflects the complex relationships between key concepts in the study of political communication and media. Large nodes such as "political communication," "media," and "public opinion" stand out, indicating that these are central areas in the related literature. The interconnection between "media" and "political news" with "public" and "opinion" emphasizes the role of media in shaping public opinion and political dialogue. The lines connecting "crisis," "perception," and "impact" indicate intensive research on how crises are perceived and their impact on public opinion and policy.

In the context of the study titled "Ace Up One's Sleeve: A Systematic Communicative Review of the Dominance of Journalistic Media in Shaping the Contemporary Political Landscape," this research focuses more on media dominance in contemporary politics and how it influences power structures and agenda-setting in politics. While the network analysis represented by this visualization offers a broader and multidisciplinary view, involving the dynamic interactions between various factors such as education, crisis, and the role of technology like "social medium" and "Twitter."

The novelty derived from this VOSviewer visualization lies in its ability to visually and quantitatively demonstrate how frequently and how strongly relationships between concepts occur in the existing literature. Compared to this study, this visualization provides a more expansive perspective on the various dialogues occurring within media studies, while the research is more specific in analyzing the influence of journalism in a political setting. When integrated, these two approaches can provide a deeper and more holistic understanding of the role of media in contemporary society and politics.

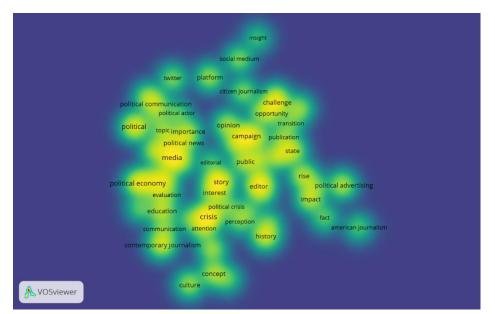


Figure 2. Density Analysis

The density visualization generated by VOSviewer in this image depicts the main focus in the literature related to political communication and media. Areas with higher light intensity indicate the most discussed topics in the related studies. Terms like "political communication," "media," and "public opinion" stand out with high density, indicating that the interaction between media and the public and its impact on political communication is a highly active area of research. The density around the terms "social media" and "Twitter" indicates significant growth in studies exploring the influence of digital platforms in modern political dynamics.

In contrast, this study more specifically examines how journalistic media, as a traditional institution, still plays a role in shaping political opinion and agenda-setting in the contemporary era. While the density visualization provides a broad overview of dominant topics in the literature in general, the research focuses on specific aspects of journalistic media and its implications in contemporary politics, offering a deeper and more focused perspective on one aspect of the broader media.

The novelty obtained from this density analysis lies in its ability to identify and visually display trends and patterns in the extensive literature, providing a useful general view for recognizing potential areas for further research. This differs from the "Ace Up One's Sleeve" study, which leans more towards an in-depth investigation of how certain principles of journalistic media are maintained or altered in the context of modern politics. By integrating these two approaches, researchers can develop a more comprehensive understanding of how various forms of media—both traditional and digital—affect and are shaped by the contemporary political landscape.

In the context of the dominance of journalistic media over contemporary politics, Media Dependency Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how individuals and society rely on the media as the primary source of political information (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976). In situations where alternative information is limited or less

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accessible, journalistic media plays a critical role in shaping public perceptions and political decisions. This dependency not only enhances the influence of the media but also increases the potential for manipulation of public opinion, especially during periods of social or political tension.

According to Agenda Setting Theory, the media has the ability to influence the public agenda by selecting specific issues to highlight, effectively determining the topics discussed in public discourse (Mccombs & Shaw, 1972). In practice, journalistic media often prioritizes news and information that supports particular agendas or interests while neglecting other aspects that may be equally important. This can limit the spectrum of information available to the public, thus influencing the direction of societal discussions and opinions as a whole.

The increasing dependency on journalistic media amplifies the effects of agendasetting in shaping public opinion (Wang et al., 2022). For instance, in a political context, the media can emphasize the importance of certain issues such as economic policy or national security, which can direct public focus and political discourse toward these issues while ignoring other matters like climate change or social inequality. This creates a situation where less reported issues are perceived as less important by the public.

The interaction between media dependency and agenda-setting is particularly significant during election periods. Political candidates and parties often use the media to disseminate their messages and policies. The media, acting as gatekeepers, selects messages that best align with their own narratives or agendas. The public's dependency on the media for election information makes the effects of agenda-setting more pronounced, where candidates receiving more media coverage are perceived as more important or more worthy of being elected.

The influence of journalistic media in shaping the political landscape is also reflected in how issues are presented to the public (Wlezien & Soroka, 2023). The media tends to frame issues in ways that evoke emotions or generate concern, a technique known in framing theory, which directly relates to agenda-setting. This framing can steer public opinion not only about what to think but also how to feel about certain issues.

Furthermore, the dependency on journalistic media increases in societies experiencing crises or conflicts. In such situations, the media often becomes the primary source for individuals to receive updates and guidance. This places the media in a highly influential position, allowing them to shape the crisis narrative in ways that support particular political agendas or ideologies, thereby reinforcing the impact of agenda-setting in highly sensitive contexts.

However, reliance on the media also opens up the potential for misinformation and bias. In some cases, the media may intentionally or unintentionally spread false or misleading information, which can have long-term impacts on public perception and trust in democratic institutions. This is where the importance of media literacy and critical thinking about information sources becomes key (Apriya et al., 2023).

Awareness of the mechanisms of media dependency and agenda-setting becomes crucial in today's digital age. With the increasing number of information sources and access

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to social media, individuals have more opportunities to verify facts and gain diverse perspectives. Ideally, this should reduce reliance on a single source and promote more inclusive and diverse discussions.

Therefore, understanding the dynamics between media dependency and agenda-setting provides important insights into how journalistic media can influence the contemporary political landscape. This research helps uncover how media dominance, in the context of dependency and agenda-setting, plays a critical role in shaping politics and public opinion, influencing how policies are formed and implemented in society.

The novelty of this study lies in the combined application of Media Dependency Theory and Agenda Setting Theory to investigate how journalistic media influences the contemporary political landscape. Focusing on the interaction between society's dependence on journalistic media and the media's ability to set the public agenda allows for a deeper analysis of how the media affects not only public perception but also political and social priorities broadly. This approach distinguishes this research from previous works that tend to explore the two theories separately or in narrower contexts, thus contributing significantly to our understanding of power dynamics in journalistic media and its direct influence on contemporary social and political structures.

CONCLUSION

This study has deeply explored how journalistic media uses its power to influence and shape the contemporary political landscape by utilizing Media Dependency Theory and Agenda Setting Theory. The findings show that the media functions not only as a channel of information but also as an active agent in the formation of public opinion and the setting of the political agenda. The high public dependency on the media as the main source of information, especially in times of crisis or when other alternative information is less accessible, strengthens the role of the media in shaping political and social narratives. This places journalistic media in a very influential position, enabling them to use their power not only to reflect but also to manipulate political reality in line with specific interests.

Thus, this research emphasizes the importance of ensuring integrity and transparency in journalistic practices to maintain public trust and support a healthy democratic process. Furthermore, these findings highlight the need for greater media literacy among the public so they can be critical of the information they receive and understand how the media can influence their political perceptions and decisions. By expanding this understanding, society can more effectively identify bias and manipulation, thereby promoting more inclusive and diverse political discussions. This research contributes to the academic literature by providing new insights into the mechanisms behind media power and its implications for democracy and fair and transparent political governance.

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