

When the Voice of the Voiceless Fails to Become a Voice: Who Becomes Accountable and to Whom? - A Case Study of Uganda

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined the accountability dynamics of the media in Uganda, exploring the paradox of a press widely celebrated as the 'voice of the voiceless' yet frequently failing to represent marginalized populations effectively. Using a cross-sectional mixed-methods design, data were collected from 600 purposively and randomly sampled respondents across four regions of Uganda — Central (Kampala), Northern, Eastern, and Western — supplemented by key informant interviews with journalists, civil society actors, regulatory officers, and community representatives. The study employed univariate descriptive analysis to profile respondents and assess patterns of media access and trust; bivariate chi-square analysis to examine associations between demographic variables and perceptions of media accountability; and multilevel logistic regression modelling to identify predictors of perceived accountability while controlling for district-level clustering. Findings revealed stark regional and educational disparities in perceptions of media accountability, with respondents in Northern Uganda and those with no formal education being the least likely to regard the media as accountable. The multilevel model demonstrated a significant intraclass correlation (ICC = 0.116), confirming that district-level contextual factors — including government interference and infrastructural access — significantly shaped individual perceptions. Social media access emerged as the strongest predictor of perceived accountability (OR = 3.24, $p < 0.001$), underscoring the growing role of digital platforms in bridging accountability gaps. Formal mechanisms such as the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) were found to be severely underutilised and associated with low satisfaction, while community radio call-ins remained the most accessed accountability channel. The study concluded that structural, regulatory, and infrastructural deficits perpetuate the accountability gap in Uganda's media landscape, and recommended regulatory reform, media literacy investment, and decentralisation of community media financing as priority interventions.*

Keywords: Media accountability, Uganda, multilevel modelling, voice of the voiceless, press freedom, marginalization, Uganda Communications Commission

INTRODUCTION

The concept of the media as the 'voice of the voiceless' has long occupied a central position in democratic theory and normative press philosophy, particularly in developing democracies across sub-Saharan Africa, where institutional mechanisms for citizen participation remain fragile and unevenly distributed. Uganda, with its relatively vibrant but politically constrained media environment — characterised by over 300 licensed radio stations, numerous television broadcasters, and a growing digital press — presents a compelling paradox: a media landscape that is numerically expansive yet substantively constrained in its capacity to represent and amplify the concerns of society's most vulnerable groups (Cheung, 2019; Sikdar, 2020). Despite constitutional guarantees of press freedom under Article 29 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution, the Ugandan media operates under significant state regulatory pressure, commercial imperatives, and self-censorship norms that frequently prioritise elite narratives over grassroots voices. The 2021 and 2023 press freedom indices consistently ranked Uganda among the lowest performers in East Africa, with journalists reporting harassment, arbitrary detention, and politically motivated broadcast suspensions (Knight, 2026; Majaro-Majesty et al., 2023). Against this backdrop, the question of accountability — to whom the media is answerable and who bears responsibility when the media fails its democratic mandate — becomes critically urgent. This study was motivated by the growing empirical and normative gap between the aspirational role assigned to the media in Uganda's development discourse and the lived reality of communities that remain systematically unheard (Callahan & Obenchain, 2012; Ju & Kim, 2023). By interrogating the structures, mechanisms, and perceptions of media accountability through a multi-regional, multi-method lens, this research sought to contribute both theoretical refinement and actionable policy insight to an underexplored dimension of Ugandan media governance (Eliasoph et al., 1996; Mihailidis, 2022).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Uganda's media history is embedded in a broader postcolonial trajectory in which the press transitioned from a colonial instrument of information control to an ostensibly liberalised fourth estate following the National Resistance Movement government's partial media liberalisation policies of the late 1980s and 1990s (Mwesige, 2004). The commercialisation of media that ensued produced a proliferation of outlets, particularly FM radio stations that became the dominant information source for rural and semi-urban populations, many of whom relied on radio as their primary — and often sole — medium of public information (Wamara, 2022; Wilson, 2017; Wong et al., 2022). However, this expansion occurred alongside structural contradictions: the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), established under the Uganda Communications Act of 1997 and reformed in 2013, served a dual role as both a communications regulator and an instrument of state media control, routinely issuing directives that curtailed live broadcast of opposition political events and suspended critical programmes (Nassanga & Maractho, 2017). The political economy

of Ugandan media further complicated accountability, as the majority of media houses depended on government advertising revenues, creating incentive structures that discouraged critical investigative journalism directed at public officials. Meanwhile, communities in Northern and Eastern Uganda — still recovering from decades of conflict, displacement, and chronic underdevelopment — had disproportionately lower media access and limited capacity to utilise available accountability mechanisms, reinforcing cycles of informational exclusion (Cooke-Jackson, 2018; Deepa et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2025). Civil society organisations and international development partners had, over the preceding two decades, invested in community radio and participatory journalism initiatives aimed at strengthening the media's accountability function, yet evaluations of these programmes revealed mixed outcomes, with sustainability and reach remaining perennial challenges (Kim et al., 2021; Lee, 2025; Mukokoma & van Dijk, 2011). This study was therefore positioned at the intersection of media governance, democratic accountability, and social equity, drawing on cross-regional evidence to assess whether and how Ugandan communities perceived the media to be accountable, what structural factors mediated this perception, and what remedial frameworks could realistically be implemented within Uganda's regulatory and socio-economic context (Godfrey et al., 2023; Hoge et al., 2022; Muhammed & Henry, 2024; Sarah & Joshua, 2024).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite occupying a constitutionally and normatively affirmed role as an instrument of democratic accountability and public representation, Uganda's media has demonstrably and repeatedly failed to function as an effective voice for marginalised communities, particularly in rural, conflict-affected, and low-income areas (Joan & Christopher, 2025; Keneth et al., n.d.; Rebecca & Vincent, 2024). The failure manifests across multiple dimensions: editorial gatekeeping that prioritises urban, elite, and commercially viable stories; regulatory capture by state actors who instrumentalise the UCC and other oversight bodies to suppress critical voices; and the absence of functional, accessible, and trusted accountability mechanisms through which ordinary citizens can hold media practitioners responsible for inaccuracies, omissions, and biases (Bhebhe et al., 2016; Bizuneh et al., 2025; Kjeld et al., 2023). The resultant accountability gap produces a situation in which neither the media nor the state nor civil society bears clear, enforceable responsibility for the systematic silencing of the voiceless — a structural vacuum that undermines the normative foundations of Uganda's democratic media system (Julius & Isaac Kazaara, 2025; Mohammed & Suzan, 2024; Nelson & Christopher, 2022; Robinah & Jacob, 2023). Existing literature, while rich in descriptive accounts of press freedom violations and structural constraints, has not adequately interrogated the statistical correlates of perceived media accountability at the individual and community levels, nor has it modelled how district-level contextual factors — including government interference, infrastructure, and community media access — shape these perceptions across Uganda's diverse regional contexts. This study addressed that empirical and analytical gap.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Main Objective

To assess the extent to which the Ugandan media fulfils its accountability mandate to marginalised and voiceless communities, and to identify the individual, structural, and contextual factors that mediate perceptions of media accountability across Uganda.

Specific Objectives

1. To describe the socio-demographic characteristics and patterns of media access among respondents across four regions of Uganda.
2. To examine the association between demographic and contextual factors and perceptions of media accountability among Ugandan communities.
3. To determine the individual and district-level predictors of perceived media accountability while accounting for clustering effects across Ugandan districts.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4. What are the socio-demographic characteristics and media access patterns of respondents across the four regions of Uganda?
5. Is there a statistically significant association between demographic and contextual variables and perceptions of media accountability among Ugandan communities?
6. What individual-level and district-level factors significantly predict perceived media accountability after controlling for community-level clustering effects in Uganda?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional mixed-methods research design to systematically investigate perceptions of media accountability across Uganda's four administrative regions — Central (Kampala), Northern, Eastern, and Western. A total of 600 respondents were selected through a combination of purposive and stratified random sampling: purposive sampling was used to ensure representation of communities with varying levels of media access and historical exposure to conflict, while stratified random sampling ensured proportional regional representation. Primary data were collected through structured interviewer-administered questionnaires and supplemented by 24 key informant interviews conducted with journalists (n=8), UCC regulatory officers (n=4),

civil society representatives (n=6), and community opinion leaders (n=6). Fieldwork was conducted over a period of eight weeks using trained research assistants who administered informed consent procedures in accordance with Makerere University's Research Ethics Committee guidelines (Approval No. MUREC-2025-0147). The questionnaire captured socio-demographic information, media access patterns, perceptions of media accountability, utilisation of accountability mechanisms, and satisfaction with available redress channels. Quantitative data were entered into SPSS version 28 and analysed using three sequential statistical approaches. First, univariate analysis was performed to generate frequency distributions, percentages, and measures of central tendency and dispersion for all key variables, providing a descriptive profile of the study population and their media engagement patterns. Second, bivariate analysis was conducted using Pearson's chi-square test of independence to examine associations between categorical explanatory variables — including sex, age group, education level, region, and media access type — and the binary outcome variable of perceived media accountability (accountable vs. not accountable), with statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$ and Cramér's V computed to assess effect size. Third, multilevel logistic regression modelling (two-level: individuals nested within districts) was performed using MLwiN software to determine individual-level and district-level predictors of perceived media accountability while accounting for the non-independence of observations arising from within-district clustering; the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was calculated from the null model to quantify the proportion of variance attributable to district-level factors, and sequential model building — from null to fully adjusted — was used to assess the contribution of each covariate block. Odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals were reported for all multilevel model parameters, and model fit was assessed using deviance statistics and the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023). Qualitative data from key informant interviews were transcribed verbatim, translated where necessary, and subjected to thematic analysis using NVivo 14, with themes deductively grounded in the accountability framework and inductively refined from emergent patterns in the data. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings was performed at the interpretation stage to produce a coherent, evidence-based account of media accountability dynamics in Uganda.

RESULTS

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (Univariate Analysis)

Table 1 presents the univariate distribution of socio-demographic characteristics and media access patterns among the 600 study respondents.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Media Access of Respondents (N=600)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	312	52.0
	Female	288	48.0
Age Group	18–25 years	138	23.0
	26–35 years	192	32.0
	36–45 years	156	26.0
	46+ years	114	19.0
Education Level	No formal education	84	14.0
	Primary	126	21.0
	Secondary	198	33.0
	Tertiary/University	192	32.0
Region	Central (Kampala)	180	30.0
	Northern	126	21.0
	Eastern	150	25.0
	Western	144	24.0
Media Access	Radio	414	69.0
	Television	270	45.0
	Online/Social Media	204	34.0
	Print (Newspaper)	102	17.0

The univariate analysis revealed that the study sample was nearly evenly distributed by sex, with males constituting 52.0% (n=312) of respondents and females accounting for 48.0% (n=288). The modal age group was 26–35 years, comprising 32.0% of respondents, suggesting a predominantly youthful sample consistent with Uganda's demographic profile, where the median age is approximately 17 years and a substantial proportion of the adult population falls within the younger working-age cohort. Educational attainment was notably diverse: 33.0% of respondents had attained secondary education, 32.0% tertiary or university-level education, 21.0% primary education, and 14.0% reported no formal education. This distribution reflected the sampling strategy, which deliberately over-sampled urban respondents in Kampala — where educational attainment tends to be higher — to ensure adequate variation in the outcome variable. Regional representation was proportionally weighted, with the Central region (Kampala) contributing the

largest share at 30.0%, followed by Eastern (25.0%), Western (24.0%), and Northern (21.0%) regions, the latter reflecting its lower population density and relative geographic inaccessibility in the post-conflict recovery period.

Regarding media access, radio emerged as the dominant medium, accessed by 69.0% of respondents, a finding consistent with Uganda's established pattern of radio penetration, particularly in peri-urban and rural settings where electricity access and smartphone affordability remain significant barriers. Television access was reported by 45.0% of respondents, predominantly concentrated in urban and peri-urban zones, while online and social media usage stood at 34.0%, reflecting the expanding but still unequal digital footprint driven by the growth of mobile internet. Print media — including newspapers and magazines — was accessed by only 17.0% of respondents, underlining its continued decline as a primary news source among the general population, compounded by low newspaper circulation outside major urban centres and prohibitive cover prices relative to household incomes in rural Uganda. These descriptive distributions provided the essential baseline for subsequent bivariate and multilevel analyses and highlighted the structural inequalities in media access that were expected to mediate perceptions of accountability across the sample.

Association Between Demographic Factors and Perceived Media Accountability (Bivariate Analysis)

Table 2 presents the results of Pearson's chi-square tests examining the association between key demographic and contextual variables and respondents' binary perception of media accountability.

Table 2: Bivariate Association Between Demographic Variables and Perceived Media Accountability

Variable	Media Accountable (%)	Media Not Accountable (%)	Chi-Square (χ^2)	p-value
Region				
Central (Kampala)	48.3	51.7	.	.
Northern	21.4	78.6	.	.
Eastern	30.7	69.3	.	.
Western	33.3	66.7	41.28	<0.001
Education Level				
No formal education	14.3	85.7	.	.
Primary	22.2	77.8	.	.
Secondary	35.4	64.6	.	.
Tertiary/University	54.2	45.8	62.47	<0.001
Media Access Type				
Radio only	19.6	80.4	—	—
TV and Radio	38.1	61.9	—	—
Online/Social Media	56.4	43.6	57.83	<0.001

The bivariate analysis demonstrated statistically significant associations between perceived media accountability and three key variables: region ($\chi^2 = 41.28$, $p < 0.001$), education level ($\chi^2 = 62.47$, $p < 0.001$), and type of media access ($\chi^2 = 57.83$, $p < 0.001$). Among regional categories, respondents in the Central region (Kampala) recorded the highest proportion perceiving the media as accountable at 48.3%, compared to only 21.4% in the Northern region, 30.7% in the Eastern region, and 33.3% in the Western region. This pronounced regional gradient — with the Northern region exhibiting the lowest accountability perception — was substantively meaningful: Northern Uganda's history of armed conflict under the Lord's Resistance Army, the resultant disruption of media infrastructure, and the persistent state of relative underdevelopment in the post-conflict period collectively contributed to diminished trust in both media institutions and public regulatory bodies. The chi-square statistic for regional association was among the largest observed in the bivariate stage, indicating a strong and significant departure from independence between region and accountability perception.

The association between education level and perceived media accountability was similarly strong and followed a clear positive gradient: only 14.3% of respondents with no formal education regarded the media as accountable, rising progressively through primary (22.2%) and secondary (35.4%) to tertiary/university level (54.2%). This dose-response pattern is consistent with theories of media literacy that posit education as a key enabler of critical media consumption — individuals with higher educational attainment were better positioned to interrogate media content, identify structural biases, and distinguish between performative accountability and genuine representational mandates. The association between media access type and accountability perception was equally instructive: respondents accessing online and social media reported the highest proportion of perceived accountability at 56.4%, significantly higher than those relying on radio only (19.6%), a difference that underscores the disruptive democratising potential of digital media platforms in contexts where traditional broadcast media remains susceptible to regulatory interference and elite capture. These bivariate findings collectively pointed towards a structural pattern in which informational disadvantage — mediated by geography, education, and media access — systematically reproduced perceptions of media unaccountability, setting the stage for multilevel modelling to disentangle individual from contextual drivers.

Multilevel Logistic Regression: Predictors of Perceived Media Accountability

Table 3 presents the results of the two-level multilevel logistic regression model estimating the odds of perceiving the media as accountable, with individuals nested within districts.

Table 3: Multilevel Logistic Regression — Predictors of Perceived Media Accountability (N=600, 45 Districts)

Predictor Variable	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)	p-value
Fixed Effects				
Age (per year)	0.97	0.94	1.00	0.042
Sex (Female vs Male)	1.12	0.84	1.49	0.439
Education: Secondary (ref: None)	2.18	1.31	3.63	0.003
Education: Tertiary (ref: None)	4.67	2.74	7.96	<0.001
Region: Northern (ref: Central)	0.31	0.19	0.50	<0.001
Region: Eastern (ref: Central)	0.48	0.30	0.76	0.002
Region: Western (ref: Central)	0.54	0.34	0.86	0.010
Media Access: Online (ref: Radio)	3.24	2.11	4.97	<0.001
Media Access: TV (ref: Radio)	1.87	1.29	2.72	0.001
Gov't Interference Index (0–10)	0.78	0.71	0.86	<0.001
Random Effects				
District-level variance (σ^2)	0.43	.	.	<0.001
Intraclass Correlation (ICC)	0.116	.	.	.

The null multilevel model confirmed significant district-level variation in perceived media accountability, with a random effect variance of $\sigma^2 = 0.43$ and an intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) of 0.116, indicating that approximately 11.6% of the total variance in perceived accountability was attributable to unobserved district-level factors — a proportion sufficiently large to justify the multilevel modelling approach and to invalidate single-level regression as an appropriate analytic strategy. In the fully adjusted model, several individual-level predictors emerged as statistically significant. Education level was among the most robust fixed-effect predictors: respondents with secondary education had 2.18 times the odds of perceiving the media as accountable compared to those with no formal education (OR = 2.18, 95% CI: 1.31–3.63, $p = 0.003$), while those with tertiary or university-level education had 4.67 times the odds (OR = 4.67, 95% CI: 2.74–7.96, $p < 0.001$), confirming the strong gradient observed in the bivariate stage and reinforcing the centrality of educational attainment as a mediator of media accountability perception. Age exerted a modest but statistically significant negative effect (OR = 0.97 per year, $p = 0.042$), suggesting that older respondents were slightly less likely to perceive the media as accountable, possibly reflecting accumulated disillusionment with media performance over time or generational differences in expectations of the press.

Regional effects remained substantial after controlling for individual-level covariates, with respondents in the Northern (OR = 0.31, $p < 0.001$), Eastern (OR = 0.48, $p = 0.002$), and Western (OR = 0.54, $p = 0.010$) regions all being significantly less likely than Central region respondents to perceive the media as accountable — findings that underscore the persistent role of geographic and structural disadvantage in shaping media accountability perceptions independent of individual socio-demographic characteristics. The government interference index — a composite measure of perceived regulatory overreach and political pressure on media outlets — was a significant negative predictor (OR = 0.78 per unit, 95% CI: 0.71–0.86, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that as perceived state interference increased, the probability of perceiving the media as accountable decreased sharply. This finding provided empirical confirmation of qualitative accounts from key informants who repeatedly cited UCC directives, targeted broadcast suspensions, and informal government pressure on editors as primary mechanisms through which the media's accountability capacity was systematically eroded. Online/social media access retained its status as the strongest positive predictor even in the fully adjusted multilevel model (OR = 3.24, 95% CI: 2.11–4.97, $p < 0.001$), while television access also conferred a significant advantage over radio-only access (OR = 1.87, $p = 0.001$). Collectively, these multilevel findings highlighted that perceived media accountability in Uganda was a product of intersecting individual endowments, access inequalities, and district-level governance contexts — a multi-determined outcome that single-level analyses would have inadequately captured.

Accountability Mechanisms: Utilization, Satisfaction, and Odds of Voicing Grievance

Table 4 presents the frequency of use of available media accountability mechanisms, satisfaction rates among those who used each mechanism, and the adjusted odds of using each mechanism to voice a grievance about media content or conduct.

Table 4: Utilization and Effectiveness of Media Accountability Mechanisms Among Respondents

Accountability Mechanism	Reported Use (%)	Satisfaction Rate (%)	Odds of Voicing Grievance (OR)	p-value
Media regulatory body (UCC)	18.7	22.4	0.44	<0.001

Direct media complaint	31.2	28.6	0.81	0.210
Social media advocacy	42.3	54.7	2.37	<0.001
Civil society organisations	14.6	31.2	0.63	0.018
Parliamentary petition	6.8	18.3	0.29	<0.001
Community radio call-ins	54.8	49.1	1.74	<0.001
None / No mechanism used	28.4	.	.	.

The analysis of accountability mechanism utilisation revealed a striking paradox at the heart of Uganda's media governance architecture: the formal regulatory mechanism — the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) — was the least trusted and most underutilised channel, accessed by only 18.7% of respondents and generating a satisfaction rate of a mere 22.4% among those who engaged with it. This finding was statistically supported by an odds ratio of 0.44 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that respondents who had interacted with the UCC were less than half as likely as the reference group to report having successfully voiced a grievance. Key informant interviews corroborated this quantitative signal, with civil society representatives and journalists consistently describing the UCC as a government-aligned body more invested in disciplining dissent than in protecting citizen rights or enforcing media ethical standards. Similarly, parliamentary petitioning — the most formal constitutional mechanism for citizen redress — was accessed by only 6.8% of respondents, with a low satisfaction rate of 18.3% and an odds ratio of 0.29 ($p < 0.001$), reflecting both the structural inaccessibility of parliamentary processes to ordinary citizens and widespread cynicism about the political will to act on media accountability concerns through legislative channels. Civil society organisations, which had been widely positioned by development partners as accountability intermediaries, were used by 14.6% of respondents, with a satisfaction rate of 31.2% and an OR of 0.63 ($p = 0.018$), indicating that while marginally more effective than state mechanisms, they too fell short of meeting community accountability expectations.

In sharp contrast, community radio call-ins emerged as the most widely used accountability mechanism, accessed by 54.8% of respondents — more than twice the utilisation rate of any formal mechanism — with a satisfaction rate of 49.1% and an odds ratio of 1.74 ($p < 0.001$), confirming a significant positive association between community radio engagement and successful grievance expression. This finding was substantively important: community radio call-ins, despite being informal and non-binding, provided an accessible, low-barrier, linguistically appropriate platform for ordinary citizens to contest media narratives, raise community concerns, and hold radio presenters directly accountable in real time — a form of horizontal accountability that formal regulatory mechanisms consistently failed to provide. Social media advocacy similarly showed a positive and significant association (OR = 2.37, $p < 0.001$), reflecting the platform's capacity to amplify citizen voices beyond local audiences and to generate reputational pressure on media organisations. However, it was significant that 28.4% of respondents reported using no accountability mechanism whatsoever, a proportion that likely underestimated the true scale of accountability disengagement given potential social desirability bias in self-reported civic participation. Taken together, these findings illuminated a fundamental misalignment between the formal accountability architecture established under Ugandan media law and the informal, community-embedded mechanisms through which citizens actually exercised whatever limited accountability power they possessed — a misalignment with profound implications for the design of media accountability reform in Uganda.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated, through rigorous multi-level empirical analysis, that the Ugandan media's celebrated identity as the 'voice of the voiceless' remains aspirational rather than operational for a substantial proportion of the country's population, particularly those residing in post-conflict northern regions, those with limited formal education, and those dependent on radio as their sole media channel. The accountability deficit was shown to be structurally determined — shaped by educational inequalities, geographic disparities in media infrastructure, state regulatory overreach, and the systematic underperformance of formal complaint and redress mechanisms — rather than being an incidental or correctable product of individual media practitioner choices. The intraclass correlation of 11.6% confirmed that district-level contextual factors, including government interference and infrastructural access, exerted independent and significant influence on accountability perceptions beyond what individual-level characteristics could explain, underscoring that media accountability in Uganda is a systemic challenge requiring systemic intervention. The convergent finding that informal mechanisms — particularly community radio call-ins and social media advocacy — outperformed all formal regulatory channels in both utilisation and satisfaction offered a pragmatic entry point for reform: rather than investing exclusively in strengthening top-down regulatory bodies that communities fundamentally distrust, policy and development interventions should strategically build upon the existing social infrastructure of community-embedded media engagement while simultaneously addressing the structural conditions — state capture, commercial dependency, infrastructural inequality — that continue to prevent Uganda's media from becoming a genuine, effective, and accountable voice for all its citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ugandan government and media regulatory stakeholders should urgently reform the Uganda Communications Commission to establish structural independence from political interference, including the appointment of commissioners through a transparent parliamentary process, the introduction of citizen complaint panels with binding adjudicatory authority, and the publication of annual accountability performance reports — measures that could directly address the low trust and high dissatisfaction rates documented in this study.

The Ministry of Education and Sports, in partnership with civil society organisations and media houses, should integrate media literacy into the national curriculum at both primary and secondary levels, equipping young Ugandans with the critical consumption skills necessary to interrogate media content, utilise accountability mechanisms, and demand representational justice particularly given the study's finding that education was the strongest individual-level predictor of perceived accountability.

Development partners, the government of Uganda, and community media organisations should co-invest in a sustainable, decentralised community radio financing model that reduces stations' dependency on government advertising revenue, thereby strengthening editorial independence and enabling community radio — already the most utilised and trusted accountability mechanism — to function as a robust, insulated platform for grassroots voice and media accountability across Uganda's diverse regional contexts.

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