

**Research Article**

## **Uganda Press Coverage of Presidential Campaigns Violence: A Case of Daily Monitor and Red Pepper**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines how Ugandan media, particularly *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper*, reported on the violence surrounding the 2020 presidential election campaign, specifically focusing on the period in November 2020. It investigates the role of the press in shaping narratives about political violence and examines how media outlets framed these events through the lenses of gatekeeping and framing theories. The paper focuses on November 2020 a period (month) which left lives of more than 54 people lost and scores nursing bullet wounds from security agencies. The paper applied a mixed methods approach whereby data was collected using content analysis and in-depth interviews. The paper has discovered that security narratives that *The Press* glorifies violence is unfound. The paper lists gaps the press needs to address in order to give a satisfying coverage of election violence especially in dictatorial regimes like that of Museveni.

**Keywords:** Violence, Democracy, Campaigns, Nomination, Elections, Press Coverage.

### **Introduction**

The media industry in Uganda might be seen as fast growing but the journalists face an array of danger if they critically report against the president, his inner circles and security echelons thus gagging the media freedom (Cohen and McIntyre, 2020). Despite credit of the blossoming media in Uganda being attributed to Museveni's regime that has been in power since 1986, journalists mostly those working in the press have experienced state persecution just like the regimes of 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. The Museveni media liberation which started in 1990s has led to the growth of both print and broadcast media (Cohen and McIntyre, 2020). The country currently boasts of both English publications with a national appeal as well local language newspapers and tabloids with a significant number of copy circulation (Isoba, 1980; Chibita, 2009; Cohen and McIntyre, 2020). The two most prominent English newspapers include *New Vision* and *Daily Monitor* with a daily circulation of about 30,000 and 26,000 respectively (Goretti, 2007; Cohen and McIntyre 2020). The *New Vision* and *Daily Monitor* are followed by *The Observer* and *Red Pepper* as other English publications while *Bukedde* a local language publication (Luganda) out competes the leading English newspapers in daily circulation (Goretti, 2007; Cohen and McIntyre, 2020). The 1990 media liberalization, the BBC (2019) observes that has enabled 87 percent of the Ugandan adult population have access to press and broadcast channels like radio, newspapers or TV stations.

Nevertheless, state interference has remained a key hindrance to Uganda's press full operation which makes the country's media run on unpredictable circumstances (Cohen and McIntyre, 2020). The state exerts supremacy on the media even for slightest headlines or perception that what has been published or broadcast is against the president or his inner circles (Cohen and McIntyre, 2020).

Other than the physical assaults and attacks unleashed by the state through security agencies, Lugalambi and Tabaire (2010), Freedom House (2017), Cohen and McIntyre (2020) note that Ugandan media operates under extralegal mechanisms that limit its freedom. Ugandan journalists and media houses are operating under threats of closure by UCC which is the regulatory body, in addition to attacks by government officials and security personnel as often observed by media and human rights bodies (CPI, 2020; HRNJ, 2020). For instance, before the November 2020 presidential campaign violence, the preceding years show ministers and security chiefs consistently accusing the press of promoting terrorism, hatred, and inciting violence.

Minister Frank Tumwebaze, who was in charge of information and national guidance, in 2018 accused journalists of being partisan actors and lacking professionalism (CPJ, 2020).

As the momentum for the 2021 presidential elections was booming, UCC ordered the suspension of 39 journalists for their roles in reporting the arrest of opposition leader, Robert Ssentamu Kyagulanyi alias Bobi Wine (Steffen, 2019). Kyagulanyi had then gained popularity and had hinted at challenging Museveni's grip on power in the 2021 elections. The campaign period leading to the 2021 general elections was marred by widespread violence where journalists and political candidates were arrested and beaten. HRW (2021), notes that, journalists are occasionally reprimanded on instructions of UCC and other government officials accusing them of being partisan and inciting violence.

Cohen and McIntyre (2020), observe that, when journalists are subjected to arrests and intimidations, they resort to self-censorship which hampers the democratic and economic development of the society. CPJ (2020), indicates that the president has often used insulting language when referring to some media outlets. For instance, during a press conference in Soroti, eastern Uganda, on December 9, 2015, in the lead up to the 2016 presidential elections, President Museveni described *The Daily Monitor* and its sister television station, NTV as a bad media group. In cases where journalists have applied their journalistic skills to access information that government agencies perceived as not meant for the public, the reporters and editors have been summoned by the Media Crimes Department which is under the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID). For instance, Wesaka (2021), writes that, criminal summons were issued to *Daily Monitor* editors and journalists for a story about the November 2020 presidential campaign violence which was termed as false. Surprisingly, Wesaka indicates that, the story was first aired by BBC before *Daily Monitor* published it with a few additions but that did not spare the newspaper staff.

### **The Press and Poll Violence Under Museveni**

The paper uses the past and present scenarios of media roles in democratic and violence scenarios to explain how such factors influence framing campaign violence. First, Ismail and Deane (2008), reason that you cannot discuss democracy without understanding the media's vital role in shaping it. For democracy to thrive, actors need to promote coherent support for public interest media platforms (Ismail and Deane, 2008). So, if the media has been operating in gaged scenarios, it also impacts how they shape the existing poll violence in reflection of their past experiences. In this context, the *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper* have been seized by security forces, often shut, journalists summoned, arrested and charged. When discussing any given society, Ismail and Deane (2008) write that, you need to first assess the dominant language used in press content. Ismail and Deane's arguments are contained in their research about Kenya's post-2007 electoral violence. The duo observed that the media mostly local language radios, were blamed for fueling hatred and violence following the controversial presidential elections. The duo notes that people discuss important news and political issues after exposure to press content. The duo's arguments mean that the way people interact and make sense of political information available is through the media. Thus, once people identify with a political group, they seek out politically similar others to make sense of messages made available to them through the media.

Lugalambi and Tabaire (2010) note that the press' critical journalism in Uganda traces way back in 1920 with first establishment of African newspaper, *Sekanyolya* which was critical of both the kingdom and the British rulers. The 1949 riots were blamed on the newspapers and this resulted into enactment of the Press Censorship and Publications Act which limited the circulation of several newspapers and their subsequent banning (Lugalambi and Tabaire, 2010). Perhaps, all regimes in Uganda since independence have drawn from the experiences of colonial rulers to gag the media. Even in the Museveni's regime which has been in power since 1986, the media has been gaged on accusations of maligning the country's security, telling lies or promoting violence as seen in the opening section of this paper.

The Uganda Constitution in article 29 provides for freedom of expression and media. However, FHRI and ACME (2016), argue that Ugandan media is still very far from enjoying the constitution guarantees. FHRI and ACME observations were reechoed by Ssenoga (2018), Walulya and Nassanga (2020), that journalists in Uganda work under a harsh environment. This is because the journalists operate in an atmosphere full of kidnap, repression, harassment, intimidation, imprisonment, and sometimes death.

The unfriendly environment in which the media operates, restrains the citizens from questioning the head of state, cabinet officials as well as government policies which are crucial in democracy flourishing (Walulya and Nassanga, 2020). Despite the fact that journalists in Uganda, like elsewhere in the world play a very

crucial part to inform and mobilize voters as well as being a link between political contestants and voters, journalists in every election cycle operate under safety and security risks as they become a target by security agencies (Walulya and Nassanga, 2020). Ssenoga (2018), argues that, the environment in which the Ugandan media operates has created a sense of self-censorship. This means, that journalists, editors, and other media practitioners, think twice before they let anything be published or broadcast on their media platforms (Ssenoga, 2018). Ssenoga (2018), Walulya and Nassanga (2020), note that when insecurity and targeting of journalists become the order of the day, editors fear assigning reporters to execute assignments whose consequences may turn out to be negative. The impact of this decision by editors not to assign reporters to risky environments, makes the media houses miss out on using observatory skills to tell first-hand stories (Ssenoga, 2018; Walulya and Nassanga, 2020). This, results into dependency on one-sided accounts of security and government officials. Sekeba (2016), argues that, the government gags the media with the aim of avoiding being criticized. Thus, regimes hide under the excuse of preserving national security to unleash brutality to journalists. This kind of environment leaves the journalists in a dilemma of whether to be loyal to their profession, nationalism/regime demands, at the expense of exposing the unscrupulous conduct of power-wielding individuals.

The media roles in elections are to provide information that enables the electorate to make informed choices, provide a platform for debate by providing space for opinions amongst the supporters and candidates vying for various elective posts (ACME, 2021). Thus, the press is the watchdog for free and fair electoral processes during campaigns, polling and post-election period. Other than being a watchdog, media is crucial in sensitizing or educating the public and acting as a voice for the voters. The press involvement in any electoral process, they further noted that, makes the public gain more information about the candidates' positions at a lesser costly medium. This is because the press is able to reach thousands of masses with a single publication or broadcast.

The *Daily Monitor* (2003) and the *East African* (2003), observed that Uganda registers violence every election cycle whereby paramilitary groups such as Kalangala Action Plan (KAP) affiliated to the ruling party the National Resistance Movement (NRM) unleash violence on opposition candidates and their supporters. The Uganda Radio Network (2016), reported that ahead of the 2016 general elections, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) unveiled a rival paramilitary group named Power 10 while one of the party's members who was also Kawempe South constituency candidate, Mubarak Munyagwa introduced Red Top Brigade. URN noted that Power 10 and Red Top Brigade were created purposely to respond to KAP's violence. The situation was not different in the 2021 presidential and parliamentary elections. A fortnight before the 2021 presidential election, NRM unveiled a taekwondo group claiming it was going to safeguard its election results across the country (NV, 2021). In response, FDC's Lubaga South MP candidate Habibu Buwembo and Kampala Woman MP Candidate, Stella Nyanzi, also re-launched the 2016 Power 10 group to counter NRM's taekwondo and karate group but also to protect their votes (URN, 2016). But all these paramilitary groups and their horrendous activities in every election cycle wouldn't have been known if it was not the media's inquisitiveness. This brings us to Binenwa's (2020), description of the media as organized mediums or channels used to disseminate news or information to people as an intangible service to society. Binenwa emphasized that media is the main way large numbers of people receive information and entertainment.

In conclusion, the press is crucial in democratic dispensation, vital in violent times, and becomes a voice for the victims. However, the press can also be a source of violence through unprofessional reporting but this depends on which side the agitators of violence have pushed the pressmen and women. Similarly, the press can sometimes be a conduit for peaceful resolution of conflicts that lead to violence. When violence becomes the order of the day, the systems and institutions like police that are mandated to investigate violence becomes non-functional and so is the press. The press faces similar consequences like citizens and other institutions during violence.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper uses Framing and Gatekeeping theories because of their relevance on how the media sieves collected information to fit the targeted audience and how the news events are framed or presented to the consumers.

### **Framing Theory**

The framing theory was used to analyze how the press framed the November 2020 presidential campaign violence. The focus was on instruments such as hate speech, inflammatory rhetoric, story numbers, story

sizes, sources quoted, adherence to journalism principles like fairness and balanced reporting. Framing, as per Entman's (1993), observation means using particular features of a matter to advance it. This involves defining it, causing interpretation, moral assessment and steering argument that result in recommendation or disapproval of the subject (Entman, 1993). Thus, framing focuses on the message that has been presented in a manner that gives it credence compared to others. To frame a subject or an event, means choosing some aspects of it that are assumed to be more important and making them more salient (Entman, 2010). This, Entman notes is mostly done in text communication where a particular problem is described and defined for the target audience to make recommendation.

The most beneficiaries of framing events, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), explained are aspirants for political offices who often frame issues from a moral perspective (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). The duo argued that the moral foundation theory shows that human behavior is complex. Semetko and Valkenburg explained that people support political candidates for various moral perceptions and their argument for seconding a candidate rhyme with their moral ground. Thus, the researcher examined how the press presented actors in the November 2020 presidential campaign violence. These actors included but not limited to; the politicians, security, voters, election organizers and civil society.

McQuail (2010), reasoned that the frame-building process takes place in a continuous interface between media practitioners, news sources, and social movements. McQuail's observation is that the products of news framing are mostly exhibited in texts, audio, or visuals. This implies that the interaction between media frames and individuals' prior knowledge and predispositions may affect learning, interpretation, and evaluation of issues (McQuail, 2010). Borah (2011), argued that for any communication to be successful, there must be a shared framework for creating meaning from relayed, published, or broadcast information. This is consistent with Doles' (2009), arguments highlighted in the literature section that when a story is framed, it is upon the readers or viewers to understand what is being reported and it is also upon them to decide how to act or respond to the information they have consumed. Borah (2011), observed that human beings cannot leave without making frames because it is part and parcel of their daily life. This observation means that each person brings their own frames to communication.

Orgeret and Tayeebwa (2016), observed that the 2016 concept regarding agenda building that factors such as audience are vital in pushing the media's agenda. This means the media frames cannot independently develop and push frames without the audience's involvement (Orgeret and Tayeebwa, 2016). Therefore, the audience can perceive meaning from the media content based on their knowledge of the subject. This enables them to form their own frames because of other salient sources of information like readers' opinions or peers but solemnly being changed by mere media frames. Orgeret and Tayeebwa arguments is consistent with Ismail and Deane (2008), discussion that conflict can be boiling for years and only waits for a spark that could be a mere tribal statement carried by the media or trivialization of issues in a hot contest. Ismail and Deane based their arguments on the role the media played in Kenya's 2007 election violence. The author also assessed the 2007 Kenyan presidential poll that turned violent after Mwai Kibaki was declared winner.

### **Gatekeeping Theory**

Gatekeeping is a practice through which information is sieved to the public by the media practitioners like reporters and editors (Shabir *et al.*, 2015). Shabir *et al.*, (2015), observed that gatekeeping occurs at all stages of the media structure starting from the reporter to the editor. Numerous studies have been done to advance the concept of gatekeeping in different academic fields including the media. In general, gatekeeping refers to the process of filtering and creating a myriad of bits of information into the restricted number of messages that reach people every day (Brown, 2018). Shabir *et al.*, (2015), observed that all media houses have a very large number of stories brought to their attention daily by foot soldiers (reporters) as well as their correspondents and wire services which they cannot put to use thus requiring them to make a decision on what to use and what to abandon or put in shelves.

Shabir *et al.*, (2015) further notes that it starts with a reporter who decides on what storyline or angle to pursue or cover and after making the decision, the information is brought to the editor's desk. This means that there are always differing interests when packaging news. The media through gatekeeping, decides the salient issues to emphasize when publishing or broadcasting events. For instance, Barzilai-Nahon (2009), argued that media practitioners like editors and reporters decide what kind of information to prioritize and neglect. The arguments mean gatekeepers shape news into a completed product for the audience. This involves sieving news, settling or choosing what words are fit for the target audience. The news handlers select stories, they deem fit for their frames in regard to the target audience (Barzilai-Nahon, 2009).

Shabir *et al.*, (2015), and Losorsa (2002) note that the editors select, sieve, and frame issues to the public basing on the impact, controversial topics are given priority, and all other issues that are deemed to be popular are prioritize. This means elements for news such as prominence, impact, geographical proximity, and duration are highly considered when choosing which news to publish or broadcast (Lasorsa, 2002). This shows that in order to understand the impact of media frames, on receivers of information, one needs to first grasp how information is chosen and packaged by reporters and editors. This is why the researcher analyzed the choice of words and sources that were used by the selected dailies when reporting the election violence in 2020.

### **Research Methodology**

This paper employed sequential mixed research design that incorporates qualitative and quantitative techniques. Mertens (2005), discussed that sequential mixed research approach provides a basis for collecting another type of data. With sequential mixed research design, the researcher first collected and analyzed press frames of the November 2020 presidential campaign violence which was a basis for choosing the interview respondents. After collecting and analyzing press frames, the respondents who were identified to link their opinions to the findings. This is because sequential mixed research method involves sequentially or concurrently linking strands (Mertens, 2005). Mertens further notes that sequential mixed research approach is a means of pursuing divergence across qualitative and quantitative procedures within social science inquiry but in a chronological manner.

This researcher interviewed two reporters and one editor from each of the selected newspapers that included *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper*, thus making a total of six (06) respondents. The six respondents were sequentially and purposively selected basing on the findings derived from analyzing press frames in the two dailies. Reporters who were selected as respondents from each of the two dailies had more than 10 stories about presidential campaign violence for the period that was under review. Out of the six respondents, only one was a female. As earlier explained that the respondents were sequentially and purposively selected in regard to the content analysis findings. There were high chances that all respondents could have been males or females. However, the researcher found only one female respondent who had over 10 stories about the November 2020 presidential campaign violence. The only female respondent had 18 stories and she noted that she was attached to FDC presidential candidate Patrick Oboi Amuriat who was the second most attacked contestant through the period under review according to content analysis findings. The purposively selected reporters and editors explained what informed their style of reporting of the November 2020 presidential campaign violence. As Lincoln (2000), noted that purposive sampling focuses on people who are specialized or experienced in a given subject, the researcher selected the reporters because their bylines frequently appeared during the analysis of the presidential campaign violence stories.

The researcher applied the purposive sampling technique and used a sample of six (06) respondents including two reporters from *Daily Monitor* and two others from *Red Pepper* as well as an editor from of the cited publications. The editors were selected to respond to the press frames such hate speech, inflammatory language, one sided reporting, gender imbalance and conventional news dominance in the reviewed period. Also, content analysis was employed to collect data. This was important because it is orderly and aids assessing or studying data in printed or electronic form in order to gain meaning and understanding which increases an individual's observatory knowledge (Bowen, 2009). The reason why the researcher put much focus on content analysis for this study, was to spot consistency, divergence and possibly new themes regarding how the press reported the November 2020 presidential campaign violence. The assessment of the stories looked at the headline, reporter's name, story sourcing in terms of quoted sources borrowing from Adichie's (2018) arguments about the danger of a single story. A single-story source does not give context or a true picture of the whole story and it is one sided (Adichie, 2018).

Other variables the researcher prioritized during content analysis was gender, choice of words for purposes of identifying whether such articles promoted hatred and inflammatory speech. A case in point was the *Red Pepper* edition of November 26 under the main story titled: '*We Will Kill All of You*' but lacked text on the cover to explain who was promising to kill who. Since the researcher applied a sequential mixed methods approach, content analysis became crucial because of its applicability in the deductive and inductive way (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). With that in mind, the researcher settled for November 2020 articles on presidential campaign violence. In conclusion, the researcher developed a coding frame that looked at the person who the story focused on, and adherence to principles of journalism like the right to reply to a person mentioned in the unfavorable context. As already explained in sampling size section, the researcher chose the respondents basing on the findings of content analysis.

### Data Analysis

Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007), argue that data inquiry means procedures of scrubbing, altering, and sculpting content with the intent of finding vital information to enhance a study or enable the making of decisions. Data analysis helps to extract helpful information from records and taking decisions based on the findings made from existing data (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). The coding dimensions were used to analyze *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper* stories about the November 2020 presidential campaign violence. The story focus was also an important variable for data analysis where the researcher provided all the names of the 11 presidential candidates and the first contestant to be quoted was considered to be the focus of the story. One this variable, if a story had quoted two or more presidential candidates, the researcher considered the first one to be the focus of the story even when their views were similar or different on the subject. Since the study was about violence during presidential campaigns, the researcher deemed it important to have a variable assessing the newspapers stories whether they were promoting hate speech or inflammatory language. If the statement was in form of inflammatory language or promoting hatred, the researcher would select *yes* and if it was not, a *no* was the alternative.

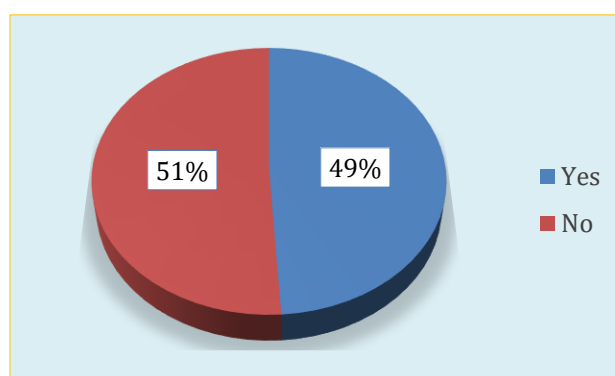
### Key Findings

The researcher using the content analysis tool and instruments on the coding sheet, reviewed 237 articles published about November 2020 presidential campaign violence. The researcher realized that most of the November 2020 presidential campaign violence stories focused on Robert Kyagulanyi, the National Unity Platform (NUP) candidate at 47.7 percent, followed by Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) candidate, Patrick Amuriat at 13.9 percent. In nutshell, Kyagulanyi had 113 stories focusing on him, 38 stories focused on other actors like police, electoral commission, army, or the clergy, while 33 articles focused on Amuriat. Tumukunde came in the fourth position as a person who was focused on in the stories about presidential campaign violence with 19 articles.

The interviewees noted that it was not deliberate to prioritize Kyagulanyi but every edition's stories had a particular candidate who would dominate the day depending on the magnitude of violence that had been unleashed on him or her by security forces.

*"We had very many stories of violence because of what was happening at the time. Besides a number of candidates were also blocked. Police blocked them and, in some instances, they attempted to fight back. Those in power especially the police and army attempted to use the SOPs to do whatever they wanted. Basically, the reason why we decided to focus on violence [is that] we were responding to what was happening in the field. We were responding to what the police were doing to the candidates."* (Interviewee 01).

The researcher defined the right to reply as seeking a response from the person mentioned in the unfavorable context. If a candidate, for instance from NUP accused one of NRM, the right to reply for this particular study meant seeking a response from the NRM person but not having many sources from one political party. During content analysis, the researcher noticed that almost one in every two stories on November 2020 presidential campaign violence did not offer a right of reply to those accused. See Figure 1 below on right to reply.



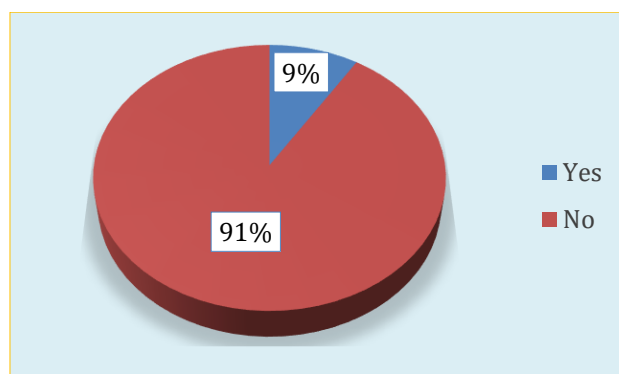
**Figure 1.** The overall percentages of right to reply the two newspapers accorded to people mentioned in unfavorable context.

It was *Daily Monitor* with 53.4 percent that slightly gave more right of reply to those accused compared to *Red Pepper* which gave only 46.6 percent of the accused people to reply.

Interviewee 02 who is an editor at *Red Pepper* argued that it is not an issue of running a story without seeking views of the accused person provided it was good to the audience. Interviewee 02 noted that the stories that were perceived as one-sided or propaganda were factual and they could run the same story as many times as possible.

*"We are a newspaper that at the end of the day we want to make sales. If there is a good story about NUP or NRM, I don't mind running it. I am speaking as an editor, I don't have a problem running it for even a year. For them it is propaganda but there are those who want to read it. We want to maximize profits and keep the paper running and informing the public."* (Interviewee 02).

The researcher found out that 9 percent of the 237 stories about the November 2020 presidential campaign violence contained hate speech and inflammatory language. Some of the stories that this researcher deemed promoting hatred or inflammatory language had headlines like 'We Will Kill All of You', or 'Ankole Rejects Kyagulanyi'. Although majority of the stories did not carry hate speech and inflammatory language, *Red Pepper* had more stories with contents of hatred and inflammatory in nature. See Figure 2 on hate and inflammatory speech.

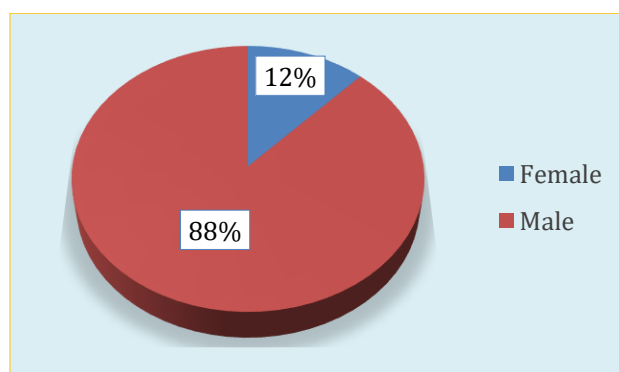


**Figure 2.** The overall percentages of hate speech and inflammatory language the examined Ugandan press had in their stories regarding the 2021 presidential campaign violence.

In response to this finding, Interviewee 02 argued that all the headlines of the stories published during the November 2020 presidential campaign violence reflected what was happening on the ground, what candidates were saying or enduring in their quest for power. Interviewee 02 insisted that all stories conformed to the paper's house style and editorial policy which glorifies stories of 'Scandal, Sex, and Shock.'

*"We were not propagating violence but it was based on our setting. We have triple SSS (scandal, shock and sex) as part of our editorial policy. The stories should fall under scandal, shock, and sex. It must have an element of scandal either political scandal, sex, you know how we do it and the story must be shocking. Someone should look at it and feels shocked that things were happening. It is one way of condemning it."* (Interviewee 02).

After analyzing the 237 stories in *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper* about the November 2020 presidential campaign violence, the researcher noticed that only one in every 10 sources was female. See Figure 3 below on gender disparities.



**Figure 3.** Gender disparities in press stories.



Interviewee 01 noted that when they realized gender gaps, they introduced vox pops where it was a must to have a man and a woman.

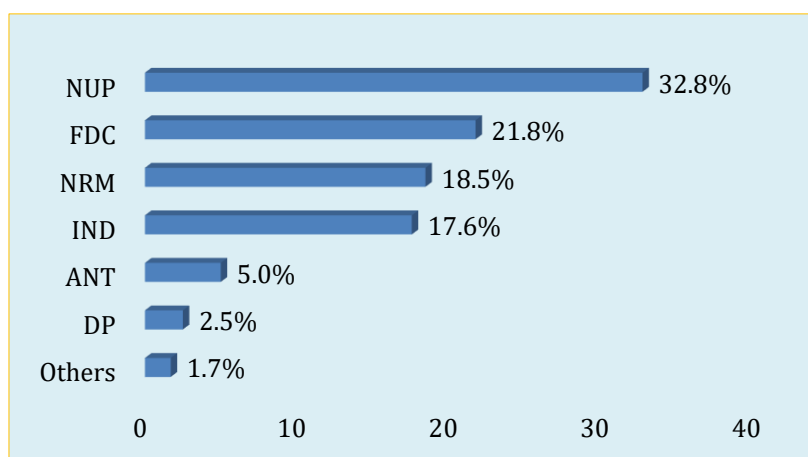
*"The gap was from the field. As a newspaper, we decided to introduce vox pops. We would get people at the rallies to give feedback on what candidates had said. We rejected very many stories without vox pops. It was more of a policy. A man and a woman could tell us their demands, what problems they were facing and how they wanted the candidates to solve them."* (Interviewee 01).

The findings showed that 103 stories out of the 237 that were reviewed quoted the candidates as the main sources translating into 43.5 percent. These were followed by 42 stories quoting police or army thus accounting for 17.72 percent. The stories quoting candidates' representatives were 27 making 11.4 percent, while stories quoting ordinary persons as main sources were 25 forming 10.5 percent.

**Table 1.** How the examined 'Ugandan press presented people, organisations and institutions as sources of news in their reporting of 2021 presidential campaign violence.

Sources	Frequency	Percent
Candidate	103	43.5
Police/army	42	17.72
Candidate's/party representative	27	11.4
Ordinary person	25	10.5
Religious leader or an NGO representative	10	4.2
Government official	9	3.8
Electoral commission official	5	2.1
Political commentator/expert opinion	4	1.7
Other	12	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The researcher discovered that most of the main sources in the stories about November 2020 presidential campaign violence were affiliated with NUP (32.8percent) followed by FDC (21.8percent) and NRM (18.5percent). See Figure 4 below on political affiliations.



**Figure 4.** Political affiliations.

## General Discussion

The researcher noticed that the number of stories about presidential campaign violence in both *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper* was largely determined by the severity of violence registered the previous day. On days where there was minimal violence against presidential candidates, the newspapers published one or two stories about the same. Contrary to security and government officials' allegations as highlighted by CPJ (2020) that the press promotes violence, the findings showed that the press' reporting on violence is largely determined by the severity of violence. The more the violence, the more stories about it. This means that the press reporting is also triggered by violence. The findings are consistent with CPJ (2020), observation that the media plays a key role in making the public know what is happening during violent or conflict times.

Although the dailies continuously indicated that security officials unleashed violence on candidates, their supporters and campaign agents in the guise of preventing the spread of Covid-19, most of the stories in the



main pages of the two newspapers were about how security had arrested candidates, teargassed crowds or blocked rallies. The press neglected stories explaining the impact or what was at the stake if crowds were allowed to gather amidst Covid-19 which was ravaging the world. The paper argues that such stories of global health concern needed to feature in the important pages of every edition. This means the editors became dictators as described by Shabir *et al.*, (2015) and Brown (2018) because they usurp themselves powers to think what is right or not for the audience.

The findings show that both *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper* neglected the actual victims of presidential campaign violence by focusing on official news sources that included candidates, their agents, politicians, government, and security officials. The content analyzed about how the press reported the November 2020 presidential campaign violence indicated that there was too much focus on National Unity Platform (NUP) candidate Robert Ssentamu Kyagulanyi, and Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) candidate Patrick Amuriat. Much as the dailies' reporting is in tandem with election violence reports by HRW 2021, and ACME 2021, that NUP and FDC presidential candidates were most targeted and victimized by security officials throughout the campaign process, they were not the extreme recipients of the violent acts. The UHRC (2020) and UPF (2020) reports rarely mention any politician who was injured or killed during the November 2020 presidential campaign violence. Reports that were studied as part of literature showed that the people who were killed or injured during the November 2020 presidential violence were mechanics, food vendors, shop attendants, civilians walking on streets and some were at their homes.

The findings showed the press was to a certain extent unfair and unbalanced in its reporting of November 2020 presidential campaign violence. During content analysis, a number of stories were found to be one-sided and thus fit to be called propaganda. This coincided with Ekyooto (2019), argument that some newspapers such as *Red Pepper* were suspected to have been hired to publish all sorts of propaganda against Kyagulanyi and other opposition politicians. This is consistent with Koven (2004), observation that that press propaganda can lead to violence especially when the choice of words irks or catches the attention of groups that feel victimized. During data collection, the researcher noticed that *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper* scored highly in terms of minimizing stories that contain hate speech and inflammatory language. However, this came at a cost of self-censorship. The interviewees claimed that they were often warned by state officials against reporting stories that promote hatred and violence. This is identical to observations of Walulya and Nassanga (2020) that the media's efforts to fulfill the democratic obligations are faced with threats, intimidations and sometimes deaths.

An analysis of 237 articles published by *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper* about the November 2020 presidential campaign violence point to the fact that the press lacked in-depth reporting. Most of the stories were conventional news stories. Despite the fact that violence dominated the period under review, pressmen and women bothered less to serve their audiences with analytical news pieces or feature stories that attached faces to violence victims and perpetrators. Hence, the general reporting lacked stories what Schedler (2022) recommended to be helpful in identifying and attaching responsibility to agitators or organizers of violence. Because there were no much efforts to investigate and identify who did what during the presidential campaign violence, the readers were majorly served with numbers of injured and killed people as well as security, government and politician lamentations.

Six of every 10 stories both in *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper* were accompanied by a related picture according to the analysis of the November 2020 presidential campaign violence. The outcomes marches the Entman (1993) argument that the media uses particular features to frame and advance a topic, an issue or subject. Thus, *Red Pepper* and *Daily Monitor* used pictures to show the violence that was happening during the presidential campaign violence. Entman further notes that framing a subject or an event, means choosing some aspects of it that are assumed to be more important and making them more salient. This also shows the media believes in Ballenger (2014) and others observation that photos are and will always be a powerful tool in communication in the press because they create an everlasting impression resulting from their spontaneous capture of the audiences' attention and feelings.

The findings about the gender of news sources during the November 2020 presidential campaign violence reporting conform to arguments of Semujju (2014), and UWMA (2022) that the press in Uganda is still far from realizing the need of gender balancing in its reporting. The analysis showed that only one out of every 10 stories quoted a female as a main news source. This implies male dominance in press reporting still continues and it also points to the fact that journalists have not embraced the importance of gender balancing in their sourcing of news. Male dominance also confirms Akinbobola (2020) argument that media

houses often tend to assign softer beats like health or education to female journalists and leave those they perceive to be hard to males. Nassanga (1997) has a different opinion that women issues regardless of the scenario like violence or conflict, they are never prioritized by Ugandan press.

The findings of the study show *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper* prioritized the most victimized politicians and political parties in their reporting of November 2020 presidential campaign violence. This implies that a group that is at the receiving end during political violence is likely to receive much media attention than others. The press prioritization of politicians as main news sources is consistent with reports of HRW (2021), ACME (2020), UHRC (2020) and Freedom House (2021) that National Unity Platform-NUP and Forum for Democratic Change-FDC were mostly victimized by security officials during the presidential campaign period. An observation that emerged from analyzing *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper* stories is that violence stories overwhelm the gatekeepers and as a result they tend to squeeze the pages in order to accommodate as many stories as possible. The press opted for quantity at the expense of quality. The compressed stories lacked some details because of limited space. This was mostly noticed in *Red Pepper's* articles because it had very few pages. This perhaps agrees with Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), explanation that politicians often frame issues from a moral perspective (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). Perhaps politicians acted in ways that forced the press to prioritize each of their actions.

### **Recommendations**

The paper recommends that the press should attach equal importance to violence and other stories from the fields like health, education and business. All the newspapers' most important pages from one to 10 were largely covered with stories of violence, campaign schedules or candidates' promises. This restricts readers to violence and politics at the expense of other vital news occurrences.

The media should adhere to journalism principles of fairness and balanced reporting. The fact that *Daily Monitor's* 46.6% stories and *Red Pepper's* 53.4% stories did not give a right to reply is alarming and needs to be urgently addressed.

The papers recommend that newspaper should attach importance to gender balancing in their reporting as a matter of policy. The fact that only one story out of every 10 had a woman as a main news source is quite frightening and against global goals of equality and gender balance in every aspect. If possible, the two dailies should train their reporters on gender balancing when reporting news.

Newsroom managers should train their reporters on how to report violence so that they stop running away from politicians who face violence during political campaigns. Running away from politicians facing violence leaves them at the mercy of tormentors yet voices for their plight are crucial in such times.

Although the number of stories containing hate speech were generally few, the paper emphasizes that the press should at all costs avoid use of inflammatory language. This is because sparking violence does not sometimes require very many stories. Every story must pass the test of lack of hate speech and inflammatory language.

### **Conclusion**

The paper concludes that the factors that shaped how the press reported the November 2020 presidential campaign violence were both internal and external. By being internal, the researcher means in-house factors like assigning journalists to cover presidential candidates, editorial policies and ownership contributed to the way the media reported the way it. For external factor such violence that shaped the entire campaign process, attacks on journalists, and bureaucracies on accessing information all influenced how the press reported the November 2020 presidential campaign violence.

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