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## EXPLORING THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE: AN INTERPRETIVIST PERSPECTIVE

**Maxhobadile Ndamase**

Walter Sisulu University

218134789@wsu.ac.za

&

**Yusuf Lukman**

Walter Sisulu University

ylukman@wsu.ac.za

### ABSTRACT

The system of governance in South Africa is a concerning issue characterized by poor accountability, lack of transparency, and lack of public participation. After observations, it is crucial in this fourth industrial revolution to assess the role of mass media in promoting good governance, which leads to proper accountability, public participation, and transparency. The main aim of this study is to explore the importance of mass media in promoting good governance. The focus of the study was on eight (8) wards in King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality. The existing literature related to this topic was reviewed by the researchers on mass media and good governance, with the foundation of Media Ecology Theory (MET) introduced by Marshall McLuhan. Briefly mass media plays a role of exposing government failure, promote accountability, provide proper communication and government success, while providing people with information about maladministration, corruption, and public scandals. A cluster sampling method was used to select the respondents which made total of sixty (60) respondents. The population is made up of adults and children from community and municipality. The study adopted mixed method approach to gather data and analyze data. Quantitative (questionnaires) were conducted to fifty (50) community members and qualitative (in-depth interviews) with ten (10) municipal officials. RStudio software was used for quantitative data presented in graphs and for qualitative data word cloud was utilized. The finding revealed that majority of the participants agreed that mass media promotes good governance, and a few disagree. The study recommends that Mass media should provide conducive space for masses to enable participate in governance issues. Media publication at grassroot level should also focus on fighting corruption, lack of good governance, and improve consultation of public in formulation policy the study.

**Keywords:** Mass media, good governance, Media Ecology Theory (MET), Accountability, Public participation.

### INTRODUCTION

Most local government is faced by issues related to good governance and the role of government on this regard cannot be overemphasized, especially in developing states. Citizens expect government to protect their human rights, to ensure democracy, and serve their needs (Cheema & Gordarn, 2016). Masses also demand their government to meet their expectations, needs and demands through accountability, transparency, involving masses on matters of

government, responsiveness, and respect rule of law. As a result, most of the mentioned elements are not met by government for instance, be accountability, taking the interest of the majority into consideration, and transparency (Bouckear & Thomas, 2020). Public trust is essential in government especially under democratic system, most of the time public trust is perceived as an integral part of good governance and democratic system (Vigoda, Moore & Said, 2015).

Therefore, meeting citizen's needs, demands and expectations, improvement in citizen trust and promotion of good governance is crucial at all spheres of government. With this new mass media transformation can be wisely used as a tool to make public officials, accountable, responsiveness and transparent (Williams & Rose, 2019). Mass media can function as the instruments to ensure good governance from both sides citizens and governing bodies and ensure, monitoring and evaluation by ensuring basic principles of good governance such as public participation and accountability (Punch & Piere, 2020). This paper sought to identify role of mass media in promoting good governance, also identify the problem in good governance. It looks at mass media as educational instruments in issues of good governance, effect of mass media in sharing the information and effect of mass media in good governance to explore how media can be used to promote good governance.

## **Background**

Tangri and Roniger (2015) state that on conference of Commission on Global Governance, the countries that are ensuring respect for human right, promotion of transparency, respect rule of law and better public administration capacity is meeting international standard for good governance. Developing states are experiencing challenges to enjoy good governance, control of corruption, effective accountability, and access to information (Goarge, 2016). Good governance as the exercise of political, economic, and administrative power to manage country's affairs in a proper manner through meeting interests of population at large (Nations, 2016). Institute of governance, describe good governance as all norms, processes, and set of values use to resolve its conflict and manage development (Governance, 2019).

The continent of Africa has major and critical challenges which is governance, most of African people have no access to good governance or experience it for many years under colonialization even now they are denied (Jonathan, 2016). The content is no longer under colonialization but still the continent is under a curse when refers to good governance, irresponsible, lack of good governance, and government failure. It is not a new thing that good governance ensures affairs of the rules of continent, capital development and human capital (Mark & Heper, 2018). Africa is still behind in quality good governance as a result there are low human capital and capital development, corruption, electoral violence, and state capture institution (Welles & Werner, 2017).

Today's Nations are experiencing remarkable problems in promoting good governance, which results to poor democracy, lack of transparency, poor accountability, and lack of press freedom. Good governance is crucial for long term sustainable development for the nation. The mass media is essential information source, which play important role in shaping healthy democracy and promote good governance (Anne & Lund, 2016).

There is a dilemma in conceptualizing the term good governance by government officials, scholars and international development organization are faced by challenge of defining it and they are analyzing governance on their own interests. For instance, Fakuma and Sunny (2016) see governance as an ability of the government to make law and enforce it whether government is democratic or authoritarian. From point of view Norris (2016) state good governance as merge with rule of law and democracy, which is important for sustainable development, economic growth, and eradication of poverty.

## **Problem Statement**

Local government has-to govern in a proper manner to encourage accountability, transparency, and respect in rule of law and encourage public participation. Freedom of information needs to be provided to the public for proper formulation of public polices, evaluation, monitoring of local government performance and for the public to make informed decisions (Okan & Santos, 2021 ).

However, local government faces difficulties in finding a platform to promote good governance and this results to poor public participation, lack of transparency and accountability. There is no place to share municipal information especially to the people who are in rural areas. There is poor public participation in affairs of local government, there is no monitoring and evaluation on the performance of local government as decisions are taken without the involvement of the masses. This study seeks to establish mass media as a promoter of good governance.

It is essential to note that policies have been considered to promote good governance, but good governance is still a concerning challenge, this is then a pre-proposal that there is a need for a promoter of good governance. Studies have been carried out in South Africa based on promotion of good governance in different provinces, but their findings cannot be applied to all provinces and districts. There is limited literature on mass media as promoter of good governance, now this study aims to close or address a gap in the literature by proposing mass media as a promoter of good governance.

## **Objectives**

- To determine the role of mass media as an educational instrument on issues of good governance.
- To assess the effects of mass media in sharing the information.
- To determine the effect of mass media in good governance.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Mass media as educational instruments in issues of good governance**

There is an affirmation that media plays an essential role in educating civil society and organization about lack of transparency, good governance, and accountability in government (Salaiman & Conny, 2015). The media increases public debate on government affairs such as formulation and implementation (execution) of government policies, including greater challenges in transparency in the revenue of the public as it continues to expose lack of good governance (Mlambo, et al., 2019). Studies argued that media cannot be denied on its role in

time of crisis. People rely on media to know the challenges of governance, as it educates the public on issues of financial misconduct in government departments (Nnamdi, 2019).

Maswanganyi (2016) express that media is a watch dog player in making the public to be aware about the ongoing challenges of the various public institutions, as media promotes the different pillars of good governance for instance public accountability by public officials, in the process of decision making, transparency, democratic elements, participation, and provide access to information about governance pillars issues. It explains challenges faced by top managers and tell citizens what to do as the response to the challenge (Ballander & Landqvist, 2020). Feltein and Dani (2018) state that in the process of democratic state, media can be seen as integral part, as it promotes freedom of expression, educating public, organisation and freedom of conscience which can be facilitated through communication. The importance of this is to educate and empower individuals, which is an essential element of governance and democracy (Nwogo & Jaky, 2015).

It works as educational tool to enlighten public about responsibility of government towards them, masses can be able to accept and reject programme of government through mass media (Sulatro, 2018). It is found that mass media is an educator and informer Experts get a chance to share their knowledge on issues of governance and propose remedies (Rescue, 2019). The modern media enables to educate the public on promotion of accountability and effectiveness of the country to uplift (benefit) the society in terms of social needs (Liu & Yougy, 2017). Access to information is a start for growth of democracy in many ways, such as media makes the citizens of the country to inform them to make informed decisions about governance issues, more than opting for ignorance. Ama and Tack (2017) outline that mass media it promotes principles of good governance for instance accountability, farness, access to information, transparency, and public participation with its issues. Media is the linkage between community and officials of government organisation, it provides common room for expert and nonexpert. Public get space to express their opinion on government issues from grass root level to provincial and national level (Bankler & Faris, 2018).

### **Mass media effect in information sharing**

Mass media are considered as a fast key factor in sharing the information to the public, as media is still valued and reliable source in sharing the information to the masses, also continue to inform the citizen on current affairs. Most people believe on accuracy of something after it has been shared by the media mostly newspapers and television (Napoli & James, 2020). The print media is seen as the most crucial to deliver the accurate information to the masses. The sharing of information by media frames better understanding of individual and society about public institutions procedures and policies. The access to information shapes the actions of the population and influence them to keep eye in government (Semour, et al., 2015).

Media gather information to scrutinize good and wrong in public institutions also share the information with the public (Souing, 2018). Asea (2018), express that civil society can be able to monitor services provision, ensure accountability, control, bribery and improve awareness for social-economic and political actors, as it plays a crucial role in controlling the corruption since they access the information. The release of the information also checks the elected representatives (ward councils) in local governance to ensure that they uphold oath of offices

as they were elected, to ensure that all the wishes and grievances of the electorates are carried out (Weible, 2020).

Community chooses the government they prefer through accessing the information from media. Public Organisation get room to defend their department during the times of allegations (Wingart, 2019). Government gets a chance to confirm false information and state what is true. Media shares the role of government to the masses and role of masses to government. As media publish information that put pressure on government institutions to act responsible (Wormer, 2020). Anacees and Berger (2015) conclude that mass media facilitate good governance and government programmes through providing information. Mass media is the defender of public interest since it investigates policies, abuse of power and hidden news about government through sharing the information (Manafe, 2019).

Mass media provides information and reasons about policy amendment also open platform for public debate on changes (Iyanga & Holzeir, 2018). It helps to recognise public opinion in the activities of governance, as government can navigate the opinion and feelings of the public and good governance can be strengthen when masses have access to information (Simon, 2018).

### **Effect of mass media in good governance**

Mass media plays a crucial role to the civil society in enabling them to understand and influence public policies to enhance good governance (Botsman, 2017). Furthermore, it stabilises the democracy and improve good governance by allowing public debates also access to information Radhika (2015) added that media expose abuse of power and make state capture to call culprit to account for their action. For instance, Republic of South African president Cyril Ramaphosa has appeared in news24 article, which was releasing how president was funded on CR17 campaign (Coronel & Asola, 2019).

Therefore Ngwogo (2015) indicates mass media as an informer and educator by providing necessary information to the public to make good decisions and correct all errors of emissions in public sector. It results to public organisation to receive complains from the public through media and try to respond. Media is a platform to predict the incoming events, for instance service delivery protests since community state they complain on media specifical social media (Dahgrenn, 2018). The interaction of non-expert and expert in public debate led to new perspective and encourage democracy which is the foundation of good governance (Davis & Lohm, 2018).

Public authority get room to provide strategies to tackle the community issues on media. Activities of government that will take place are being gazetted in media to meet most masses. Government approves policies that have both non-expert and expert opinion (Hegen, et al., 2020). Media work as a central force in governance, as it is deployed to improve governance through information sharing to encourage accountability, transparency, and public participation (Van & Yingy, 2020). Policy makers navigate the cultures of masses through media to be considered in policy formulation and implementation process (Floyd & Fukuda, 2016).

Experts uses mass media to share their knowledge on government issues which make these platforms to enhance governance through involvement of masses (Carli, 2017). Public officials

are visible to the public through utilizing mass media p (Simon & Connie, 2018). Mass media is used to express community opinions and government programmes, give stakeholders voices in policy making processes (Martin & McNair, 2015). Opposition parties get room to expose dirty work of current government and give public chance to choose best political party to govern with preferred ideology (Nusa & Nipa, 2019). It continues to expose public servants' moral, legal responsibility, and duties to be performed with ethics. There is no information that is hidden by government to the masses which are good or bad with the present of mass media (Martin, et al., 2016).

Even though As Batchry (2017) state that mass media destroy the image of municipality to the public if municipality have made mistake since media publish such as exaggerate the news. As The public trust is decreased by media when negative information has been published and public starts to undermine public institutions.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study used Media Ecology Theory (MET) Marshall McLuhan 1964. The aim of MET was to understand the social influence of communication and technology. Parker (2016) indicate media ecology theory as an indication of how media shape good governance in terms of culture. MET it include the influence of media and communication in values emotions, thoughts, and influences of human view, also theory like deeper into communication studies.

Marshal McLuhan (1964) in his theory accept radio stations, televisions, and internet (digital platform) to have influence in society and institutions. This theory emphasis the connection between society and that have different culture and technology. Marshall 1964, outlines that the new media have modernised the society to be more relevant in communication technology such as YouTube, Blogs, Twitter and News24.

Media technology effect are emphasised as an essential concept in MET, as it supported by three important elements: experiences are being organised as perceptions are fixed by media, world have become one unit due to media and media is involvement in every action and act of society and institutions. This indicates that the presence of media cannot be ignored since decision making process or governance is influenced through media. Media have brought world into a small village; everyone is into social unit in terms of economic and political system (John & Kings, 2016). Proper information is received as a result because of media. Mark (2018) outline that when media trends change the society adapts, also change to follow the new trend set by the media.

There are rules of media which are obsolescence, reversal, retrieval, and enhancement which are set by MET as they indicate effect of communication and technology in the new technology transformation. Society cannot run away from the impact of technology, and it leaves a mark in actions of modern community.

The Theory of Media Ecology suited this research well, because of mass media transformation to well based news from printed media (newspaper) or platform of technology have improved access to information, democracy and good governance including public participation. Government and citizens can access and share current news everywhere and participate freely

using media. This theory contributed to the aim of this study, which made the researchers to rely greatly on MET.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Waulters and Kruger (2017) Point out that to improve social science with education mixed method has key elements. For this justification mixed method approach was utilised instead of one approach. The mixed method approach was employed, which is qualitative and quantitative research method, Fataki and Flick (2017) state that mixed method is another procedure can be utilised to gather data in one study with the purpose of understanding research problem in different point of view. Gohman (2014) add that utilising mixed approach, one method can be developed and informed by the data gathered from other method. It improves the correspondence of the results from virous method (Gwija, 2019).

The study utilised mixed method with the belief that it is the best approach to the study because, data gathered from sample using various methods encourage representative of the study population. Philosophical orientation of the researcher needed both approaches (quantitative and qualitative method). Furthermore, Brink and Clark (2019) state that other similar study with this one has used one approach, which make the research to be unique.

Data collection method utilised in this study is questionnaire and interviews. All ethical concerns were considered during the data collection, study was explained to participants, how data will be used, participation was voluntary, confidentiality, anonymous and, they also have a right to withdraw from participating or to skip the question if they wish.

### Sample and Procedures

The type of Sampling that the researchers adopted is Cluster Sampling which is a subset of sampling in probability. Probability sample is when the unit of analysis have same chance of being selected (Masland & Sousa, 2015). According to Sen &Trakman (2018, p. 22) cluster random sampling has two phase process which is to divide the whole population in groups or clusters through regions, villages, schools, wards, and geographic population etc. Meaning that as there are thirty-seven (37) wards as determined by the Demarcation Board and established in terms of Municipal Demarcation 1998 (Act no 27 of 1998), in total the sample size will be drawn from ten (10) wards taking five (5) people per ward which make fifty (50) people in general community members and ten (10) municipal officials including four (4) ward councillors which make total of sixty (60) people.

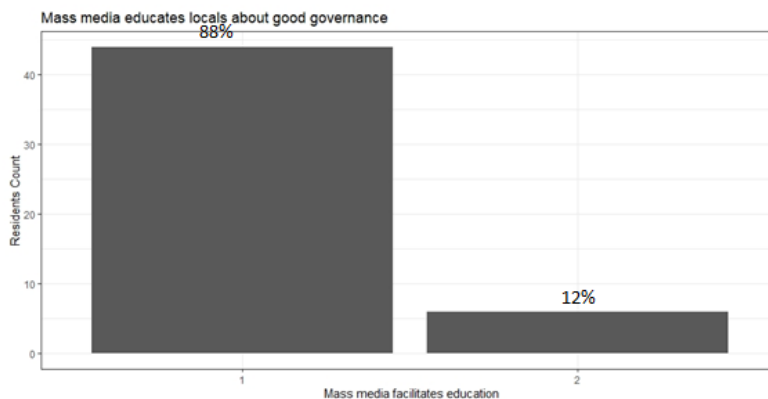
The researchers adopted the cluster sampling since the population is too large for using or applying random sampling, cluster is applied because sample frame is not accessible for instance details or names and the map or geographical area were used for relevant of the area. The researchers taken this number of respondents due to the limited time, limited resources, and finances to collect data.

Researchers used emails and manually to send questionnaire to the targeted population. As Manag (2017) state that personal method is when the questionnaire given to participant to complete it on their own time. The researchers were available when challenges were experienced by the respondents. This procedure was used as it is not expensive and is simple,

it also permits honest responses and anonymity (Collis & Kielly, 2014). The researchers used launch time to conduct the interviews with ten (10) respondents who were municipal officials. Questionnaires was issued to seventy (70) participants fifty (50) returned or responded to the questionnaire.

Computer software was used to capture and code questionnaire, interview; the data was analysed using qualitative and quantitative data programme, which is R-studio for quantitative (questionnaire), word cloud for qualitative (interviews) researchers have looked in other software in qualitative for analysing such as WiMAX NVivo, Atlas and R-studio. It was adopted since it fit well in this study and researchers can use the programme. The quantitative data was rated in terms of “yes and no”.

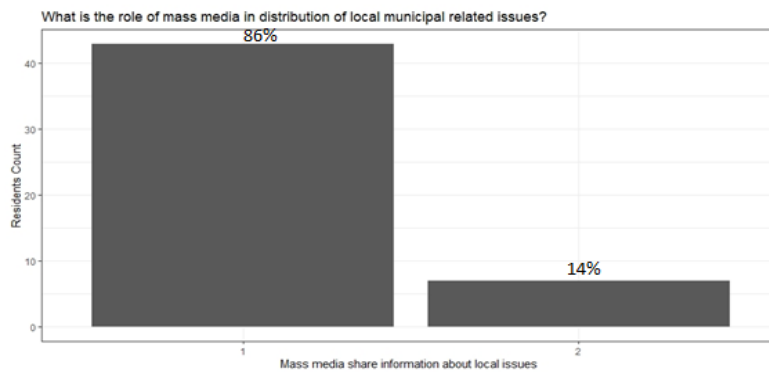
## Findings



**Figure 1: Shows the residents of KSDLM who believes mass media educate people about good governance**

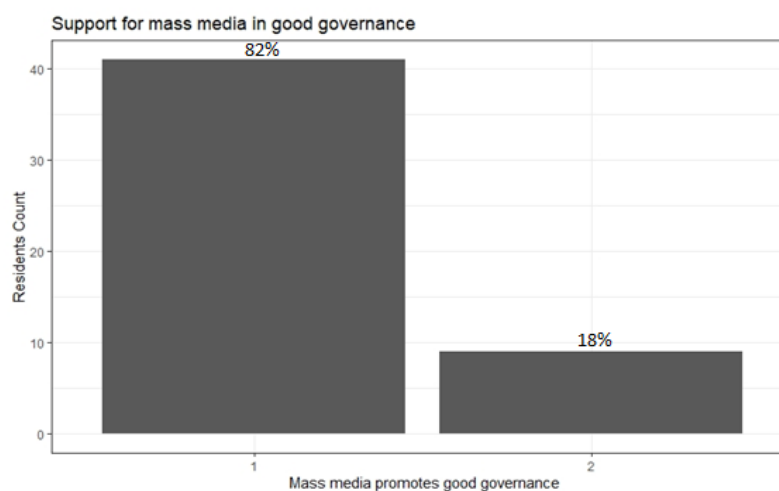
When respondents were asked whether mass media is an educational instrument in issues of good governances, from fifty (50) respondents. 44 Responses, which is 88 % of residents believe that mass media facilitate education pertaining good governance of local communities while a small proportion six (6) respondents that make (12 %) disagree that mass media play a role in educating people local issues of governance The majority of KSDLM indicate that mass media is an educational instrument in good governance.





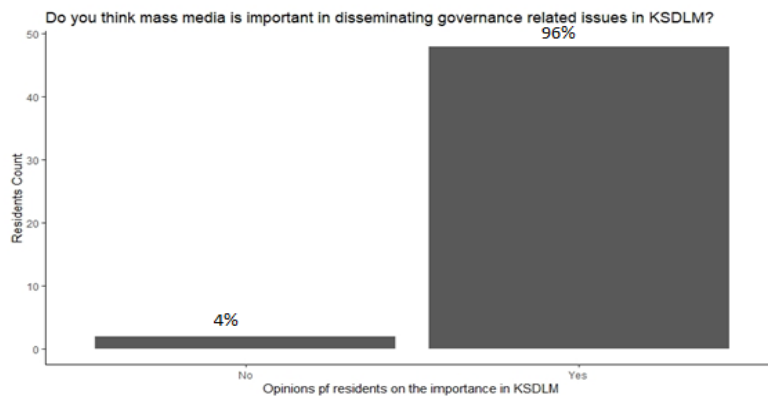
**Figure 2: Shows the role of mass media sharing information about good governance**

When respondents were asked whether mass media play role in sharing the information about good governance. Response about 86 % of the KSDLM believe that mass media plays a role in sharing the information in municipal related issues on the other hand only 14 % disagrees with role of mass media in sharing information on municipal related issues. The majority of KSDLM residents notice the role of mass media in sharing the information on governance.



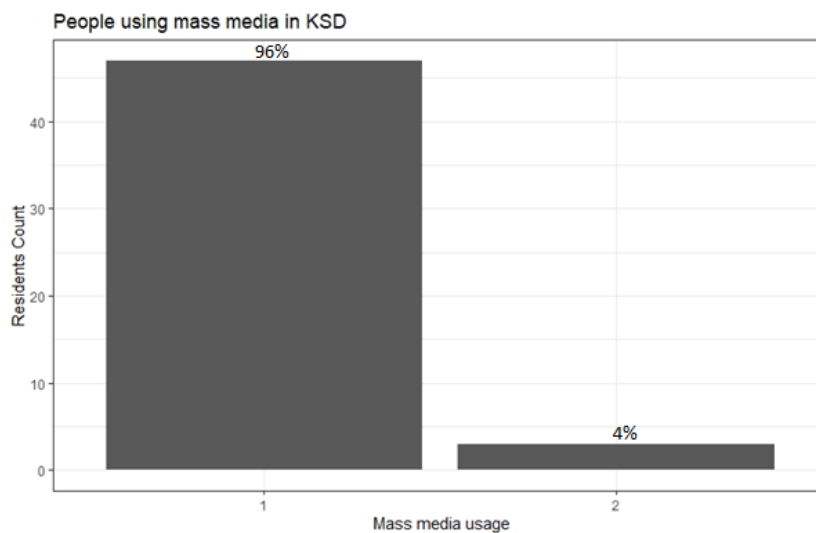
**Figure 3: Shows the proportion of KSDLM residents who believe that mass media promote or support good governance**

To a question whether mass media promote or support good governance. responses about 82 % individuals within KSDLM view mass media as supporting tool for good governance of the local municipality. On the hand 18 % of the residents disagree that mass media support good local governance.



**Figure 4: Shows residents of KSDLM who believes that mass media is importance to good governance**

To a question whether mass media is important to good governance. Response, the 96% of KSDLM residents who recognised the importance of mass mendia in promoting good governance, while 4% individuals disagree. The majority of KSDLM residents, notice the importance of mass media in good governance.



**Figure 5: Shows the KSDLM residents who use mass media**

To a question whether people of KSD utilise mass media. Response, the majority of KSDLM residents using mass media is 96 %, while 4 % of the individuals residing at KSDLM are not using mass media. The graph demonstrates that most people who reside in KSDLM use mass media.

## What do you understand about mass media ?

The majority of municipal officials understand mass media as the communication platform between community and municipality, social media is the most used form of communication. Community get news about relevance of municipality from mass media. Napoli and James (2020) opined that Mass media are considered as a fast key factor in sharing the information to the public, as media is still valued and reliable source in sharing the information to the masses, also continue to inform the citizen on current affairs.



## What is the importance of mass media in good governance?

Municipality workers review mass media as the important tool to government to reach its people. The community utilise mass media to express their needs to municipality as government utilised to inform public. Municipal manager believes that “*Mass media create formal relationship between community and municipality also clear the misunderstanding between municipality and community at large*”. Even the community of KSDLM at large recognise the importance of mass media in good governance, Figure 4: indicate that 96% of the KSDLM notice the importance of mass media in good governance and only 4% disagree with that. This means that mass media is an important tool to promote good governance.

A word cloud diagram with the following words and their approximate positions and colors: 'government' (top, grey), 'municipality' (top-right, green), 'mass' (left, grey), 'people' (center, vertical, brown), 'public' (right, green), and 'media' (bottom, grey).

## **Do you believe that mass media is an educational instruments in issues of good governanace ?**

Majority of the municipality believe that mass media educate both municipality and people on issues of good governance. Municipality get chance to know the issues faced by people regarding issues of good governance, also express their opinions on issues that evolve the municipality. The head of communication department stated that *“Every information we provide to the people are educational, about our by-laws and about service delivery process in suitable and understandable language”*.

A word cloud diagram with the following words and their approximate positions and colors: 'media' (left, vertical, grey), 'people' (top-right, brown), 'municipality' (center, brown), and 'issues' (bottom, pink).

## **What is being used by King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality?**

The municipal officials have mentioned the most popular used platform used by King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality to promote good governance, local radio station (Unitra Community Radio and Ingwane) is the most utilised mechanism to inform public on affairs of municipality. Facebook is the second utilised platform to distribute information together with

local newspapers (Mthatha express and Isolezwe) of municipality to the people. The municipal manager mentioned that “*Facebook and local newspaper are more relevant since the can keep the information for long time*” can get it anytime.



## **In your own opinion what is the effect of mass media in good governance?**

Majority of municipal officials have indicated that mass media is mostly bad to good governance since most of media workers/ journalists always look for negative news that affect municipality. Human resource management manager indicated that “*Media parishioners do not like to come when municipality is doing well or come when they are invited to publish good news about municipality, they interest is on scandals of municipality*”. As Batchry (2017) state that mass media destroy the image of municipality to the public if municipality have made mistake since media publish such as exaggerate the news. As The public trust is decreased by media when negative information has been published and public starts to undermine public institutions. This indicate even though mass media have good effect on the other hand have negative effect.



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMANDATIONS

At this juncture, this study ascertained that local governments find difficulties to find platform to promote good governance, which have negative impact such as poor accountability, lack public participation and poor service delivery. In keeping with the objectives of the study the findings revealed that mass media can be used to promote good governance based on usage, knowledge, importance, and support of mass media by community and municipal officials. Furthermore, accountability can be ensured through exposing abuse of power via mass media. The information that is being published must contained governance education, transparency all the time with the purpose of educating the public. The must be basic information that assists masses to make informed or proper decisions. As recommendation, Mass media should provide conducive space for masses to enable to participate, in governance issues. Media publication should focus fighting corruption, lack of governance, and improve consultation of public in formulation policy. This will hold public officials accountable for their action and strengthen good governance, education to the public through public engagements. Protection of human rights must be maintained by mass media when information is published with respect of human privacy, dignity, and equality. Moreover, mass media needs to provide room for feedback to the public on their submission or demands. This means it must focus on improving community development, national, provincial, and local security including democratic peace. The media employer needs to train employees to publish information or stories with constitution standard. Finally, media needs to eliminate misleading information to ensure that the report do not leave any doubt in mind of the masses when story in being published. It must protect the freedom of press and freedom of expression when information is gathered.

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