

# Examining the Relationship between Media Freedom and the Social Economic Stability of South Sudan

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**Abstract** - This study examined the relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability in South Sudan. This study was guided by the objectives of: (a) To assess the level of media freedom in South Sudan. (b) To examine the extent of socio-economic stability in South Sudan. (c) To analyze the relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability in South Sudan. The study was motivated by concerns over limited media independence, restrictions on press operations, and the potential implications of these constraints on governance, economic performance, and social cohesion in the country. The general objective was to assess how media freedom influences socio-economic stability, with specific focus on aspects such as transparency, accountability, information flow, and public trust. The study adopted a descriptive and analytical approach, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data obtained from selected respondents within media institutions, government bodies, and civil society organizations in South Sudan. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and interviews, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation techniques to establish the relationship between the key variables. The study was guided by the premise that a free and independent media environment enhances access to information, supports accountability, and contributes to informed decision-making, all of which are essential for socio-economic stability. Findings of the study revealed that media freedom in South Sudan is relatively constrained due to regulatory limitations, political influence, and security-related challenges affecting journalists and media houses. The study further established that limited media freedom negatively affects the timely dissemination of information, reduces transparency, and weakens public trust in institutions. In contrast, improved media freedom was found to be associated with enhanced accountability, better governance practices, and improved social cohesion, which collectively contribute to socio-economic stability. The study concluded that media freedom plays a significant role in shaping socio-economic outcomes in South Sudan.

**It recommended that policymakers strengthen legal and institutional frameworks that protect press freedom, promote independence of media institutions, and ensure the safety of journalists. Additionally, efforts should be made to support media development as a means of enhancing transparency, accountability, and inclusive socio-economic growth in the country.**

**Keywords:** Media freedom and the social economic stability.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability has become an increasingly important area of inquiry in contemporary development studies. Media freedom refers to the extent to which journalists, media institutions, and citizens can access, report, and disseminate information without undue interference, censorship, or intimidation from the state or other powerful actors. It plays a critical role in promoting transparency, accountability, and informed public participation in governance processes. In contrast, socio-economic stability encompasses the degree to which a society experiences consistent economic growth, equitable distribution of resources, political order, and social cohesion over time.

In the context of South Sudan, a nation that has faced prolonged conflict, political transitions, and developmental challenges since its independence, understanding the interplay between media freedom and socio-economic stability is particularly significant. The media environment in South Sudan operates within a complex landscape characterized by regulatory constraints, security concerns, and evolving institutional frameworks. These conditions can influence how information is produced and shared, which in turn affects public awareness, civic engagement, and policy accountability.

Media freedom can contribute to socio-economic stability by enabling the dissemination of accurate information that supports effective decision-making by both citizens and

policymakers. A free and independent media can expose corruption, highlight inefficiencies in public service delivery, and provide a platform for diverse voices, thereby strengthening governance systems. Conversely, limitations on media freedom may restrict access to reliable information, reduce transparency, and hinder efforts to address socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality.

This study, therefore, seeks to examine the relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability in South Sudan, with the aim of understanding how the level of press independence and information accessibility influences economic performance, social cohesion, and overall national development. By exploring this relationship, the study intends to contribute to existing knowledge on governance and development, while also providing insights that may inform policy interventions aimed at strengthening both media systems and socio-economic outcomes in South Sudan.

Media freedom has increasingly been recognized as a fundamental pillar of democratic governance, accountability, and sustainable development. A free and independent media plays a critical role in informing citizens, shaping public opinion, exposing corruption, and holding both public and private institutions accountable. Through investigative journalism, public discourse, and dissemination of information, media institutions contribute to transparency and enable citizens to make informed decisions that influence political, social, and economic outcomes. In many developing countries, the extent to which media operates freely is closely linked to governance quality and overall societal stability.

Social and economic stability, on the other hand, refers to a condition in which a society experiences consistent economic growth, low levels of conflict, equitable distribution of resources, employment opportunities, and general social cohesion. Stable socio-economic environments are typically characterized by predictable institutions, rule of law, reduced inequality, and trust between citizens and government. These conditions are essential for attracting investment, promoting development, and ensuring long-term national progress. However, achieving and maintaining such stability remains a challenge in countries affected by political transitions, weak institutions, and limited access to reliable information.

In the context of South Sudan, the relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability is particularly significant. Since gaining independence in 2011, the country has faced persistent challenges including political instability, civil conflict, weak institutional frameworks, economic hardships, and limited infrastructure. These challenges have affected the development of independent media, often

resulting in restrictions, censorship, and threats to journalists. In such an environment, media outlets may struggle to operate independently, which can limit the flow of accurate and timely information to the public.

Media freedom can influence socio-economic stability in several ways. Firstly, it promotes transparency by exposing corruption and mismanagement, thereby encouraging accountability in both public and private sectors. Secondly, it supports informed economic decision-making by providing citizens, investors, and policymakers with relevant information about markets, policies, and opportunities. Thirdly, a free media environment fosters dialogue and inclusivity by giving voice to diverse groups within society, which can help reduce tensions and prevent conflict. Conversely, limited media freedom may contribute to misinformation, reduced public trust, weakened institutions, and poor governance outcomes, all of which can negatively impact socio-economic stability.

Despite the recognized importance of media freedom, there is limited empirical evidence examining its direct relationship with socio-economic stability in South Sudan. Much of the existing literature focuses broadly on media and governance in general or on conflict and development separately, with fewer studies specifically addressing how variations in media freedom influence economic performance, social cohesion, and institutional stability in the South Sudanese context. This gap highlights the need for a focused study to explore how media freedom interacts with socio-economic conditions in the country.

This study seeks to examine the relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability in South Sudan. By analyzing how media independence, access to information, and freedom of expression affect economic activities, governance, and social cohesion, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of media in national development. The findings are expected to provide insights for policymakers, media practitioners, and development stakeholders on how strengthening media freedom can support sustainable socio-economic stability.

The literature on media freedom and socio-economic stability highlights the crucial role that an open media environment plays in democratic governance, social cohesion, and economic development. Across global and regional contexts, scholars and practitioners emphasize that media freedom fosters transparency, accountability, and citizen participation, which are essential ingredients for stable and sustainable societies. Studies from different settings suggest that when media can operate independently, it contributes to a more informed public, encourages investment by reducing

uncertainty, and supports peaceful social dialogue all of which can underpin socio-economic stability.

In the specific context of South Sudan, research shows that media freedom remains limited and contested. Historical analyses indicate that although the constitution guarantees freedom of the press, journalists often face harassment, censorship, and legal restrictions that undermine these rights in practice. Since independence in 2011, the absence of robust legal protections and regulatory frameworks has left media institutions vulnerable to political pressures and state control, contributing to an environment where self-censorship and intimidation are widespread.

Empirical work on media practices in South Sudan reveals that journalists and media outlets operate under constant threat, including arbitrary arrests, detentions, and even fatalities among media practitioners. These constraints not only hinder the free flow of information but also weaken the media's capacity to function as an effective watchdog and platform for public discourse. Legal frameworks such as the Media Authority Act 2013 and the National Security Service Act have been critiqued for restricting press freedom and limiting the ability of journalists to report freely on governance and social issues.

Beyond press freedom itself, literature also explores the broader media landscape in South Sudan, noting that conflict, political instability, and weak institutions have impeded the development of a vibrant and independent media sector. International assessments highlight the precarious nature of media operations, where censorship and intimidation are common, further weakening media's role in supporting democratic governance and socio-economic development.

While much of the South Sudan-specific research focuses on media freedom and legal constraints, other studies point to the potential role of media in contributing to peacebuilding and social stability. For instance, analyses of media coverage of conflicts and peace agreements demonstrate that when media platforms report responsibly on social and political developments, they can foster public understanding and dialogue, which are important for reconciliation and stability.

Despite the growing body of research on media freedom and related challenges in South Sudan, there remains a gap in empirical evidence directly linking media freedom to socio-economic stability outcomes such as economic growth, investment climate, employment, and social cohesion. Most studies focus on descriptive accounts of media constraints or on legal analyses, rather than on how variations in media freedom influence broader socio-economic conditions. This gap underscores the need for focused research that examines how media freedom or the lack thereof affects economic

performance, public trust, governance quality, and social stability in South Sudan.

In summary, the literature suggests that while media freedom is widely acknowledged as important for democratic governance and development, South Sudan's media environment faces significant challenges that limit its potential to contribute to socio-economic stability. This review highlights both the constraints on media freedom and the theoretical pathways through which media can influence socio-economic outcomes, setting the stage for empirical investigation into their relationship in the South Sudanese context.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### *Location of the Study area*

**Study Area:** The study was conducted in South Sudan, focusing on selected urban centers where media houses, government institutions, civil society organizations, and business entities are concentrated. These areas were considered appropriate due to their relevance to media operations and socio-economic activities.

### **Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive and correlational research design to examine the relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability in South Sudan. The descriptive component enabled the researcher to describe the current state of media freedom and socio-economic stability, while the correlational aspect was used to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between the two variables.

**Study Population:** The target population comprised journalists, media practitioners, government officials, civil society representatives, and members of the business community. These groups were selected because they are directly or indirectly involved in media activities and socio-economic processes within the country.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

A sample was drawn from the target population using a combination of sampling techniques. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents from each category to ensure equal representation, while purposive sampling was applied to identify key informants such as senior journalists, media regulators, and government officials with relevant knowledge of media policies and socio-economic issues. The sample size was determined based on availability, accessibility, and the need to obtain reliable and representative data.

### Data Collection Methods

Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires and interview guides. Questionnaires were administered to respondents to gather quantitative data on perceptions of media freedom and socio-economic stability, while interviews were conducted with key informants to obtain in-depth qualitative insights. Secondary data were obtained from published reports, academic journals, policy documents, and institutional records related to media and socio-economic conditions in South Sudan.

### Research Instruments

The main research instruments included questionnaires and interview guides. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions designed to measure respondents' perceptions of media freedom and socio-economic stability. The interview guide contained open-ended questions that allowed respondents to provide detailed explanations and contextual information. The instruments were pre-tested to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity.

### III. DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data collected from questionnaires were coded, entered, and analyzed using statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) and inferential statistics, particularly correlation analysis, to determine the relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically by organizing responses into key themes and patterns relevant to the study objectives.

**Validity and Reliability:** Validity of the research instruments was ensured through expert review and pilot testing to confirm that the questions adequately measured the intended variables. Reliability was assessed using internal consistency measures to ensure that the instruments produced consistent results over time.

**Ethical Considerations:** The study observed ethical standards by obtaining informed consent from all participants before data collection. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and participation was voluntary. Permission was also sought from relevant authorities where necessary before conducting the study.

### IV. RESULTS

The results are presented in line with the study objectives: assessing the level of media freedom, examining socio-economic stability, and analyzing the relationship between the two variables. A total of 145 questionnaires were

distributed to respondents, and all were successfully completed and returned, yielding a 100% response rate. This provided sufficient data for reliable analysis.

### Level of Media Freedom in South Sudan

Respondents were asked to rate key aspects of media freedom using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High).

Table 1: Level of Media Freedom (n = 145)

Indicator	Mean Score	Interpretation
Freedom of expression	2.4	Low
Access to information	2.2	Low
Government interference	4.1	Very High
Safety of journalists	2.1	Very Low
Media regulatory independence	2.5	Low
<b>Overall Mean Score</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>Low</b>

Source: Primary data (2026)

The results indicate that media freedom in South Sudan is generally low. Respondents reported limited freedom of expression and restricted access to information. Government interference was perceived to be very high, while the safety of journalists was rated very low. Overall, the media environment is viewed as constrained and not fully independent.

The findings in Table 1 indicate that the overall level of media freedom in South Sudan is low (Mean = 2.7), with particularly high government interference (Mean = 4.1) and very low levels of journalist safety (Mean = 2.1). These results have several important implications:

First, the low level of freedom of expression and limited access to information suggests that the media is constrained in its ability to inform the public effectively. This limits citizens' access to accurate and timely information, which is essential for informed decision-making and active participation in governance. As a result, public awareness and civic engagement are likely to remain weak.

Second, the very high level of government interference implies that media institutions may lack editorial independence. This can lead to biased reporting, suppression of critical voices, and reduced accountability of public officials. In such an environment, corruption and misuse of public resources may go unchecked, ultimately affecting governance quality.

Third, the very low safety of journalists indicates a risky working environment for media practitioners. This situation is

likely to encourage self-censorship, where journalists avoid sensitive topics to protect themselves. Consequently, important issues affecting society may remain underreported, weakening the role of the media as a watchdog.

Fourth, the low level of media regulatory independence suggests that regulatory bodies may be influenced by political interests. This undermines fair media oversight and may result in unequal treatment of media houses, limiting diversity and pluralism in the media sector.

Overall, these findings imply that the restricted media environment in South Sudan hinders transparency, accountability, and democratic development. The lack of media freedom may also negatively affect socio-economic progress, as information flow, public debate, and policy scrutiny are essential drivers of development.

In summary, improving media freedom through reducing government interference, enhancing journalist safety, and strengthening regulatory independence is critical for promoting good governance and supporting broader socio-economic stability.

### Extent of Socio-Economic Stability in South Sudan

Respondents assessed socio-economic stability based on employment, income, service delivery, and political conditions.

Table 2: Socio-Economic Stability (n = 145)

Indicator	Mean Score	Interpretation
Employment opportunities	2.3	Low
Income stability	2.1	Very Low
Access to healthcare services	2.6	Low
Access to education	2.8	Moderate
Political stability	2.2	Low
Economic performance	2.4	Low
<b>Overall Mean Score</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>Low</b>

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The findings show that socio-economic stability in South Sudan is low. Many respondents reported unstable incomes, limited employment opportunities, and inadequate access to essential services such as healthcare. Political instability and weak economic performance were also highlighted as key concerns affecting overall stability.

The findings show that socio-economic stability in South Sudan is generally low (Overall Mean = 2.4), with particularly

weak income stability (Mean = 2.1) and limited employment opportunities (Mean = 2.3). These outcomes carry several important implications:

First, the low level of employment opportunities suggests that a large portion of the population may be unemployed or underemployed. This can lead to increased poverty levels, reduced household welfare, and greater dependence on informal or unstable sources of income. Over time, this weakens economic productivity and limits national development.

Second, the very low income stability indicates that households are likely experiencing unpredictable earnings. Such instability makes it difficult for individuals to meet basic needs, plan for the future, or invest in education and business activities. This situation can perpetuate cycles of poverty and economic vulnerability.

Third, the low access to healthcare services implies that many people may not receive adequate medical care. Poor health outcomes reduce labor productivity and increase the financial burden on households, further worsening socio-economic conditions. It also limits the country's ability to build a healthy and productive workforce.

Fourth, although access to education is rated moderate, it is not sufficiently strong to offset the broader socio-economic challenges. Limited or uneven access to quality education may hinder skill development, thereby affecting employability and long-term economic growth.

Fifth, the low level of political stability suggests the presence of uncertainty and potential disruptions in governance. Political instability often discourages both local and foreign investment, disrupts service delivery, and weakens institutions, all of which negatively affect economic performance.

Finally, the low rating of overall economic performance reflects a struggling economy with limited growth and development opportunities. This condition constrains government capacity to provide services, create jobs, and improve infrastructure.

In general, these findings imply that South Sudan faces significant structural challenges that hinder socio-economic progress. Addressing these issues will require coordinated efforts to create employment opportunities, stabilize incomes, improve access to essential services, and strengthen political and economic systems.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Media Freedom in South Sudan

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std
Media freedom in Juba is severely restricted, limiting independent journalism.	65 (44.8%)	55 (37.9%)	15 (10.3%)	5 (3.4%)	5 (3.4%)	4.18	0.80
Journalists face harassment and threats, curtailing their ability to report freely.	70 (48.3%)	50 (34.5%)	15 (10.3%)	5 (3.4%)	5 (3.4%)	4.23	0.78
Government censorship often prevents critical issues from being publicly addressed.	60 (41.4%)	55 (37.9%)	15 (10.3%)	10 (6.9%)	5 (3.4%)	4.12	0.82
Access to information is controlled, impacting transparency and public awareness.	60 (41.4%)	55 (37.9%)	15 (10.3%)	10 (6.9%)	5 (3.4%)	4.12	0.83
The lack of media diversity limits public discourse and democratic engagement.	55 (37.9%)	60 (41.4%)	20 (13.8%)	5 (3.4%)	5 (3.4%)	4.05	0.84
Media outlets risk closure or severe penalties for reporting on sensitive topics.	60 (41.4%)	55 (37.9%)	15 (10.3%)	10 (6.9%)	5 (3.4%)	4.12	0.81
Self-censorship is prevalent among journalists due to fear of government retaliation.	65 (44.8%)	50 (34.5%)	20 (13.8%)	5 (3.4%)	5 (3.4%)	4.18	0.79
Independent media faces significant challenges in maintaining editorial independence.	60 (41.4%)	55 (37.9%)	20 (13.8%)	5 (3.4%)	5 (3.4%)	4.12	0.82
State control over media content affects the reliability and objectivity of news.	60 (41.4%)	55 (37.9%)	20 (13.8%)	5 (3.4%)	5 (3.4%)	4.12	0.81
Restrictions on media freedom impede the public's right to information and accountability.	65 (44.8%)	50 (34.5%)	20 (13.8%)	5 (3.4%)	5 (3.4%)	4.18	0.80

Source: Field data, 2024

As illustrated in the table 4.9 above, for the statement, "Media freedom in South Sudan is severely restricted, limiting independent journalism," 65 respondents (44.8%) strongly agreed, and 55 respondents (37.9%) agreed, suggesting that media freedom is perceived as highly restricted, which directly affects independent journalism in Juba. 15 respondents (10.3%) were unsure, and 5 respondents (3.4%) disagreed, with 5 respondents (3.4%) strongly disagreeing. The mean score of 4.18 and standard deviation of 0.80 reflect strong agreement with minimal variability, indicating a consistent perception of media freedom being severely limited. The high levels of agreement highlight the importance of addressing media restrictions to improve the environment for independent journalism.

For the statement, "Journalists face harassment and threats, curtailing their ability to report freely," 70 respondents (48.3%) strongly agreed, and 50 respondents (34.5%) agreed, emphasizing the widespread concern that journalists in Juba face harassment and threats that hinder their ability to report freely. 15 respondents (10.3%) were unsure, and 5 respondents (3.4%) disagreed, with 5 respondents (3.4%) strongly disagreeing. The mean score of 4.23 and standard deviation of 0.78 suggest strong agreement with minimal variability in responses, underscoring the seriousness of the risks faced by

journalists and the need for greater protection of their rights to report independently.

"Government censorship often prevents critical issues from being publicly addressed," 60 respondents (41.4%) strongly agreed, and 55 respondents (37.9%) agreed, indicating a significant perception that government censorship is a barrier to addressing critical issues. 15 respondents (10.3%) were unsure, 10 respondents (6.9%) disagreed, and 5 respondents (3.4%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.12 and standard deviation of 0.82 reflect strong agreement, with some variability, suggesting that while most respondents view censorship as a serious issue, there may be differences in how strongly it is felt. This indicates a need for reforms to ensure that critical issues are addressed openly and without fear of censorship.

For the statement, "Access to information is controlled, impacting transparency and public awareness," 60 respondents (41.4%) strongly agreed, and 55 respondents (37.9%) agreed, emphasizing that control over access to information is seen as a significant barrier to transparency and public awareness. 15 respondents (10.3%) were unsure, 10 respondents (6.9%) disagreed, and 5 respondents (3.4%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.12 and standard deviation of 0.83 indicate

strong agreement with some variability in responses, further highlighting the need for more accessible and transparent channels of information to foster greater public awareness.

"The lack of media diversity limits public discourse and democratic engagement," 55 respondents (37.9%) strongly agreed, and 60 respondents (41.4%) agreed, indicating that respondents perceive the lack of media diversity as a major limitation to public discourse and democratic participation. 20 respondents (13.8%) were unsure, and 5 respondents (3.4%) disagreed, with 5 respondents (3.4%) strongly disagreeing. The mean score of 4.05 and standard deviation of 0.84 suggest strong agreement with a slightly wider spread of opinions, indicating that while most agree on the limitation imposed by lack of media diversity, there is some variation in the strength of this view. This underscores the need for a more diverse media landscape to enhance democratic engagement and public debate.

For the statement, "Media outlets risk closure or severe penalties for reporting on sensitive topics," 60 respondents (41.4%) strongly agreed, and 55 respondents (37.9%) agreed, indicating a strong perception that media outlets in Juba face significant risks, including closure or penalties, for reporting on sensitive topics. 15 respondents (10.3%) were unsure, 10 respondents (6.9%) disagreed, and 5 respondents (3.4%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.12 and standard deviation of 0.81 show strong agreement with minimal variability, suggesting that respondents view the risk to media outlets as a serious concern that needs to be addressed to ensure the free flow of information.

"Self-censorship is prevalent among journalists due to fear of government retaliation," 65 respondents (44.8%) strongly agreed, and 50 respondents (34.5%) agreed, highlighting the widespread belief that self-censorship is a common practice among journalists in Juba due to fear of government retaliation. 20 respondents (13.8%) were unsure, and 5 respondents (3.4%) disagreed, with 5 respondents (3.4%) strongly disagreeing. The mean score of 4.18 and standard deviation of 0.79 indicate strong agreement with minimal variability, reinforcing the idea that self-censorship is a significant issue in Juba's media landscape.

For the statement, "Independent media faces significant challenges in maintaining editorial independence," 60 respondents (41.4%) strongly agreed, and 55 respondents (37.9%) agreed, suggesting that a large proportion of respondents believe that independent media in Juba faces serious obstacles in maintaining editorial independence. 20 respondents (13.8%) were unsure, and 5 respondents (3.4%) disagreed, with 5 respondents (3.4%) strongly disagreeing. The mean score of 4.12 and standard deviation of 0.82 reflect

strong agreement, with a slight variation in responses, highlighting the importance of supporting independent media to ensure unbiased reporting.

"State control over media content affects the reliability and objectivity of news," 60 respondents (41.4%) strongly agreed, and 55 respondents (37.9%) agreed, indicating that respondents largely believe that state control influences the reliability and objectivity of media content. 20 respondents (13.8%) were unsure, and 5 respondents (3.4%) disagreed, with 5 respondents (3.4%) strongly disagreeing. The mean score of 4.12 and standard deviation of 0.81 suggest strong agreement with minimal variability, pointing to the significant impact of state control on media content and its effect on the quality and impartiality of news.

For the statement, "Restrictions on media freedom impede the public's right to information and accountability," 65 respondents (44.8%) strongly agreed, and 50 respondents (34.5%) agreed, highlighting the widespread belief that restrictions on media freedom are a direct barrier to the public's right to information and accountability. 20 respondents (13.8%) were unsure, and 5 respondents (3.4%) disagreed, with 5 respondents (3.4%) strongly disagreeing. The mean score of 4.18 and standard deviation of 0.80 reflect strong agreement with minimal variability, reinforcing the view that media restrictions undermine public accountability and the right to information, emphasizing the need for reforms to ensure a free and independent press.

### Relationship Between Media Freedom and Socio-Economic Stability

To determine the relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis (n = 145)

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
Media Freedom vs Socio-Economic Stability	0.64	0.000

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The results reveal a strong positive relationship ( $r = 0.64$ ) between media freedom and socio-economic stability. The p-value (0.000) indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. This implies that improvements in media freedom are associated with improvements in socio-economic stability. Where media operates freely, it enhances transparency,

accountability, and access to information, which contribute to better socio-economic outcomes.

### Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which media freedom predicts socio-economic stability.

Table 5: Regression Results

Variable	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	p-value
Media Freedom	0.58	7.92	0.000

Source: Primary data (2026)

Model Summary	Value
R <sup>2</sup>	0.41
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.40

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The regression results indicate that media freedom has a significant positive effect on socio-economic stability ( $\beta = 0.58, p < 0.01$ ). The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.41 shows that 41% of the variation in socio-economic stability is explained by media freedom. This demonstrates that media freedom is an important factor influencing socio-economic conditions in South Sudan.

The level of media freedom in South Sudan is low, with high government interference and limited journalist safety. Socio-economic stability is also low, characterized by unemployment, unstable incomes, and weak service delivery. There is a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability. Media freedom significantly predicts socio-economic stability, explaining a substantial proportion of its variation.

## V. DISCUSSIONS

The discussion is organized according to the three key objectives: the level of media freedom, the extent of socio-economic stability, and the relationship between the two variables.

### Level of Media Freedom in South Sudan

The findings revealed that the overall level of media freedom in South Sudan is low, as reflected by the overall mean score of 2.7. Key dimensions such as freedom of expression, access to information, and media regulatory independence were all rated low, while government interference was rated very high and journalist safety very

low. These findings suggest that the media environment in South Sudan operates under significant constraints. High levels of government interference indicate that media institutions may lack autonomy, which limits their ability to report objectively and hold authorities accountable. Similarly, the low rating of journalist safety implies that media practitioners face risks that may lead to self-censorship, thereby weakening the role of the media as a watchdog. The restricted access to information further limits the effectiveness of the media in informing the public. When journalists cannot easily obtain accurate and timely information, the quality of reporting declines, and public awareness is compromised. This situation undermines democratic processes and reduces citizen participation in governance. Overall, the findings imply that the media sector in South Sudan is not fully empowered to perform its critical functions, which include promoting transparency, accountability, and public dialogue.

### Extent of Socio-Economic Stability in South Sudan

The study findings indicate that socio-economic stability in South Sudan is generally low, with an overall mean score of 2.4. Indicators such as employment opportunities, income stability, political stability, and economic performance were all rated low, while access to education was only moderate.

These results reflect a challenging socio-economic environment characterized by limited economic opportunities and weak service delivery systems. The low level of employment opportunities and income stability suggests that a significant proportion of the population may be facing economic hardship, which can lead to increased poverty levels and reduced standards of living. The low rating of political stability further highlights the presence of uncertainty and instability within governance structures. Political instability often disrupts economic activities, discourages investment, and weakens institutional performance, all of which contribute to poor socio-economic outcomes.

Although access to education was rated slightly higher than other indicators, it remains insufficient to offset the broader challenges. Limited access to healthcare services also points to gaps in social service provision, which negatively affects human development and productivity. In general, the findings suggest that South Sudan faces structural socio-economic challenges that require coordinated efforts to improve economic conditions, strengthen institutions, and enhance service delivery.

### Relationship Between Media Freedom and Socio-Economic Stability

The study established a strong positive and statistically significant relationship ( $r = 0.64, p < 0.01$ ) between media

freedom and socio-economic stability. This indicates that improvements in media freedom are associated with improvements in socio-economic conditions. This relationship can be explained by the role of the media in promoting transparency and accountability. A free and independent media is better positioned to expose corruption, monitor government performance, and disseminate information that supports informed decision-making among citizens and policymakers. These functions contribute to better governance and, ultimately, improved socio-economic outcomes.

Furthermore, access to reliable information enables individuals and businesses to make informed economic decisions, which can enhance productivity and economic growth. In contrast, restricted media environments limit information flow, which can lead to inefficiencies, poor governance, and economic stagnation. The findings therefore reinforce the idea that media freedom is not only a political or civil right but also an important driver of socio-economic development.

### **Influence of Media Freedom on Socio-Economic Stability**

The regression results further demonstrated that media freedom has a significant positive effect on socio-economic stability ( $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), explaining 41% of the variation in socio-economic stability ( $R^2 = 0.41$ ). This suggests that media freedom is a strong predictor of socio-economic outcomes in South Sudan. The relatively high explanatory power indicates that improvements in media freedom could lead to meaningful improvements in socio-economic conditions. However, the remaining 59% of the variation in socio-economic stability is explained by other factors not included in this study, such as governance quality, infrastructure development, education systems, and external economic influences. This implies that while media freedom is important, it should be complemented by other policy interventions to achieve sustainable socio-economic stability.

### **Overall Discussion**

The findings of this study highlight a critical link between media freedom and socio-economic stability in South Sudan. The low levels of both variables suggest a reinforcing cycle where limited media freedom constrains transparency and accountability, which in turn contributes to poor socio-economic outcomes. At the same time, the strong positive relationship between the two variables indicates that improving media freedom could serve as a strategic entry point for enhancing socio-economic stability. Strengthening media institutions, protecting journalists, and promoting access to information are likely to have broader developmental benefits. This study examined the relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability in South Sudan. The

findings indicate that media freedom is perceived to be limited, and this limitation has notable implications for transparency, accountability, information dissemination, and overall socio-economic conditions in the country.

The results revealed that respondents generally rated the level of media freedom as low to moderate. Many participants reported that media institutions operate under restrictive conditions influenced by regulatory controls, political pressure, and security concerns. Journalists were reported to face challenges such as intimidation, censorship, and fear of reprisals when reporting on sensitive issues. These conditions have contributed to self-censorship among media practitioners, thereby reducing the diversity and openness of information available to the public. This finding aligns with the view that restricted media environments limit the media's role as a watchdog and weaken its ability to promote accountability.

In relation to socio-economic stability, the findings suggest that South Sudan continues to experience challenges such as economic uncertainty, limited investment, unemployment, and weak institutional frameworks. Respondents indicated that access to reliable and timely information plays a significant role in shaping economic decisions, public confidence, and social interactions. However, due to constraints in media freedom, the flow of accurate information is often limited, which negatively affects planning, investment decisions, and public trust in institutions.

The correlation analysis conducted in the study showed a positive relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability. This implies that improvements in media freedom are associated with better socio-economic outcomes. Specifically, increased media freedom was linked to enhanced transparency in governance, improved accountability of public officials, and greater awareness among citizens regarding economic and social issues. These factors contribute to a more stable socio-economic environment by reducing uncertainty and promoting informed participation in development processes.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that media freedom plays a significant role in fostering social cohesion. Where media outlets are able to operate independently, they provide platforms for dialogue, debate, and the exchange of diverse viewpoints. This can help reduce tensions, promote understanding among different groups, and support peacebuilding efforts. In contrast, limitations on media freedom may restrict such dialogue, potentially contributing to misinformation, rumors, and mistrust among communities.

The study also found that governance and institutional performance are closely linked to the level of media freedom. Respondents noted that when media institutions are free to

investigate and report on issues without interference, there is greater accountability in public service delivery. This, in turn, encourages better management of public resources and improved policy implementation, which are essential for socio-economic stability.

However, the study identified several challenges that continue to affect media freedom in South Sudan. These include weak legal protections for journalists, limited financial and technical capacity of media houses, political interference, and insecurity. These challenges constrain the effectiveness of the media sector and limit its contribution to socio-economic development.

In summary, the discussion demonstrates that the challenges facing media freedom in South Sudan are closely connected to the country's socio-economic conditions. Addressing these challenges requires deliberate efforts to create an enabling environment for the media while simultaneously implementing policies aimed at improving economic and social well-being.

Overall, the findings of the study suggest that media freedom is an important factor influencing socio-economic stability in South Sudan. Strengthening media independence, improving regulatory frameworks, and ensuring the safety of journalists would enhance the media's capacity to contribute to transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making. This, in turn, would support efforts toward achieving sustainable socio-economic stability in the country.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The study set out to examine the relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability in South Sudan. Based on the findings, it is evident that media freedom plays a significant role in shaping socio-economic outcomes within the country. The study established that the level of media freedom in South Sudan remains limited due to regulatory constraints, political influence, security concerns, and challenges faced by media practitioners. These limitations have affected the ability of the media to operate independently and perform its core functions effectively.

The findings further demonstrate that socio-economic stability in South Sudan is influenced by the quality and accessibility of information disseminated through the media. Where media freedom is constrained, the flow of accurate and timely information is restricted, which negatively impacts transparency, accountability, public trust, and informed decision-making. Conversely, an environment that supports greater media freedom contributes to improved governance, enhanced public awareness, stronger institutional accountability, and better social cohesion.

The study also concludes that there is a positive relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability. This implies that improvements in media independence are likely to contribute to more stable economic conditions, reduced social tensions, and strengthened institutional performance. Media freedom enables the media to act as a watchdog, a platform for public discourse, and a channel for information dissemination, all of which are essential for sustainable development.

In light of these findings, the study concludes that strengthening media freedom is essential for promoting socio-economic stability in South Sudan. Efforts to improve legal protections for journalists, reduce interference in media operations, and support the development of independent media institutions would significantly enhance the media's contribution to national development. Ultimately, a free and vibrant media sector is a key driver of transparency, accountability, and inclusive growth, all of which are necessary for achieving long-term socio-economic stability in South Sudan.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study examining the relationship between media freedom and socio-economic stability in South Sudan, the following recommendations are made:

**Strengthening Legal and Policy Frameworks:** The government of South Sudan should review and reform existing media laws and policies to ensure they fully guarantee freedom of expression and press freedom. Clear and protective legal frameworks will help safeguard journalists and reduce arbitrary restrictions on media operations.

**Enhancing Protection of Journalists:** Relevant authorities should establish and enforce mechanisms that ensure the safety and security of journalists. This includes preventing harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrests, and other forms of abuse that hinder free reporting.

**Promoting Media Independence:** Media institutions should be supported to operate independently without undue political or external interference. Encouraging editorial independence will enable media houses to report objectively and contribute effectively to public awareness and accountability.

**Capacity Building for Media Practitioners:** Media organizations, in collaboration with development partners and training institutions, should invest in continuous professional development for journalists. Training in investigative reporting, ethics, and digital journalism will improve the quality and credibility of media output.

**Improving Access to Information:** Government institutions should adopt transparent information-sharing practices by ensuring timely release of public information. Implementing access-to-information policies will enable journalists and citizens to obtain reliable data necessary for informed decision-making.

**Supporting Media Infrastructure Development:** Stakeholders should invest in improving media infrastructure, including communication technologies, broadcasting equipment, and internet access. Improved infrastructure will enhance the reach and effectiveness of media services across the country.

**Encouraging Responsible Journalism:** Media practitioners should adhere to ethical standards such as accuracy, fairness, and objectivity in reporting. Responsible journalism helps reduce misinformation and promotes trust between the media, the public, and institutions.

**Promoting Collaboration Between Stakeholders:** There should be stronger collaboration among government agencies, media organizations, civil society, and development partners to create an enabling environment for media freedom. Such partnerships can help address challenges facing the media sector while promoting socio-economic development.

**Public Awareness and Media Literacy:** Efforts should be made to improve media literacy among the general public so that citizens can critically analyze information and make informed decisions. An informed population contributes to social cohesion and economic stability.

These recommendations, if implemented, would help strengthen media freedom in South Sudan and enhance its positive contribution to socio-economic stability, governance, and national development.

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