

Watchdog of Natural Resources Transparency? Evaluating Print Media Oversight of Tanzania's Extractive Industry

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Abstract

This study examines the role of newspapers as watchdogs in overseeing Tanzania's extractive industry, a sector vital to the country's economy yet fraught with governance and transparency challenges, through vital information dissemination intervention. The study utilises an exploratory mixed-methods approach. Its quantitative content analysis covers information carried in five leading national newspapers—*Mwananchi*, *The Citizen*, *Nipashe*, *The Guardian*, and *Daily News*—published in 2009, 2014, and 2019. This analysis evaluates the coverage of extractive industry transparency in accordance with the 2023 Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) standards. Subsequently, the research engages key respondents to gain deeper insights into the quantitative findings. The findings reveal that of 720 newspaper editions, only 52 media units were relevant, as they provided information on extractive industry transparency. In total, only 52 media articles contained the required information over more than 1,000 days. The newspapers' coverage of the extractive industry contracts, Production Sharing Agreements (PSAs) and Mineral Development Agreements (MDAs) is almost non-existent, with only one article covering the leaked Statoil addendum. Beneficial ownership, a critical aspect in revenue transparency, received zero coverage, indicating a lack of interest in the topic. Information on the extractive industry revenue has been more prominently covered than other aspects of the EI transparency. The coverage focuses primarily on the amount of revenue the government loses. The media highlights the need for the government to increase revenue from extractive industries by providing salient information on the causes of revenue losses, including smuggling, tax evasion through over-invoicing, and unfavourable contract terms. The article recommends establishing a firm editorial policy that prioritises coverage of the extractive industry. Journalists need specialised training to navigate the complexities of the extractive sector and attendant issues of disseminating such information. News media should also actively collaborate with CSOs and other stakeholders who advocate for transparency and accountability in the extractive industry.

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Introduction

Tanzania has extensive extractive mineral reserves and has entered the ranks of prominent players in the global oil and gas sector. In this competitive environment, it faces numerous challenges, including developing local capacities, negotiating favourable contracts with multinational firms, creating beneficial policies and fiscal frameworks, including ensuring the resources benefit the current generation and posterity, devising practical strategies to add value and avoid the “resource curse”, a concept coined by Auty (1993). While these efforts are within the domain of government, relevant ministries and institutions, media and journalists—the Fourth Estate—have a critical responsibility to oversee and promote the Extractive Industry (EI) transparency, by investigating the industry and its players, providing vital and valuable information to the public, fostering public debate, and overseeing the industry’s governance. While this is important, a comprehensive understanding of how extractive industry transparency is covered in the media is limited. Most insights derive from broader contexts rather than focused media (Smulovitz & Peruzzotti, 2000). Unlike previous studies, such as Schriffrin (2009), Behrman et al. (2012), and MCK (2015), on the interplay between media and the extractive industry that have examined journalistic quality indicators in EI reporting, this article advances by assessing newspapers’ coverage of EI using the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) standards as a guiding framework. The standards cover the legal and institutional framework, including contract and license allocation, revenue collection and allocation, and social and economic spending. It uses the five national newspapers, namely *Mwananchi*, *The Citizen*, *Nipashe*, *The Guardian*, and *Daily News*, published in 2009, 2014 and 2019, in its assessment. This paper addresses explicitly two important questions: how do print media cover issues related to EI transparency, and what factors explain their coverage?

Watchdog journalism

Watchdog journalism plays a critical role in the extractive industries, including mining, oil, and natural gas. By promoting transparency, accountability, and responsible governance, this type of journalism offers essential oversight. Watchdog journalism scrutinises the actions of government officials and corporations in the extractive sectors. This includes investigating the legality of contracts and ensuring compliance with regulations. According to Weaver and Wilhoit (1986), such journalism serves as a “check on power,” ensuring those in authority are held accountable for their actions and decisions, especially in sectors with substantial societal impacts. Journalists in this field analyse the economic repercussions of extractive activities on local and national scales. They report on the distribution of revenues and the economic benefits or detriments posed to local communities. The National Resources Governance Institute (2018) emphasises that transparent reporting on these financial aspects is essential for equitable resource management. Watchdog journalists investigate and expose corruption, fraud, and malpractice in extractive industries. Collier (2007) highlights the role of journalism in uncovering the “resource curse,” in which countries rich in natural resources experience

lower economic growth and worse development outcomes. By exposing corrupt practices, journalists can trigger public engagement and policy reform.

Extractive activities often significantly impact local communities through displacement or environmental degradation. Journalists advocate for these communities' rights by bringing their concerns to the public domain. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (2016), effective reporting can lead to more significant accountability and increased protection for affected populations. Watchdog journalism plays a pivotal role in highlighting the environmental consequences of extraction processes. As the World Bank (2017) noted, robust media oversight can lead to greater corporate accountability for ecological practices, ultimately driving sustainable operations and compliance with environmental laws. By providing detailed analysis and data, watchdog journalism fosters informed public discourse about EI. This is critical to empowering citizens to engage effectively with policymakers. As noted by the Open Government Partnership (2020), industry transparency helps citizens hold authorities accountable and demand better governance.

Journalists often support initiatives like the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which aims to enhance transparency in resource-rich countries. Reporting on compliance with EITI standards is crucial for promoting responsible resource management (EITI, 2023). The role of media in advocating for transparency is recognised as fundamental for effective governance in the resource sector. Watchdog journalism educates various stakeholders about the complexities of extractive industries, helping them understand the socio-economic and environmental challenges they pose. According to Roberts (2018), informed citizenry can lead to more robust advocacy for policies that ensure better outcomes in the management of natural resources. Watchdog journalism is indispensable in fostering accountability and transparency in the extractive industries. It not only holds powers accountable but also empowers communities, educates the public, and promotes sustainable practices.

Extractive Industries in Tanzania

Tanzania possesses significant reserves of minerals and natural gas, featuring a diverse array of valuable resources such as diamonds, nickel, phosphate, copper, Tanzanite, iron ore, soda ash, limestone, gypsum, uranium, graphite, gold, rare earth elements, and coal (Geological Survey of Tanzania, 2007; Tanzania Mining Industry Investor Guide, 2015). Additionally, the country has emerged as a notable player in the oil and gas sector, with a remarkable natural gas reserve of 57.54 Trillion Cubic Feet (TCF), including 10.406 TCF onshore and 47.13 TCF offshore (PURA, 2020).

Despite possessing significant resources, there are ongoing concerns among scholars, civil society organisations (CSOs), and politicians about the country's ability to capitalise on them fully. In 2003, the government initiated an audit by Alex Stewart Assayers (ASA) to evaluate the operations and financial practices of major mining companies. Although the audit results were initially kept secret, they were leaked to the media in 2006. The revelations showed that these companies had overstated their reported losses by USD 502 million from 1999 to 2003, thereby significantly reducing their tax contributions to the Tanzanian government to just USD 132.5 million (Curtis & Lissu, 2008). This manipulation not only led to a substantial



loss of revenue, crucial to national development, but also highlighted serious governance issues in the management of extractive resources, particularly regarding revenue transparency. The issue of revenue losses and their scale was highlighted by the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in a 2007 report, which revealed that Multinational Companies (MNCs) had reported losses totalling USD 1.045 billion from 1998 to 2005 (Curtis & Lissu, 2008).

Table 1: Over-declarations of losses by mining firms (in USD)

| Companies | Tax-loss declared | Declared tax loss (profit) determined by the ASA audit | Tax-loss over-declared | Tax liability determined by the ASA audit |
|---------------------|-------------------|--|------------------------|---|
| Bulyanhulu | 760.3 | 589.6 | 170.7 | 51.2 |
| Geita | 193 | 35 | 158 | 49.8 |
| North Mara | 93 | 27 | 66 | 19.8 |
| Golden Pride | 68.4 | (38.9) | 107.3 | 11.7 |
| Total | | | 502 | 132.5 |

Source: Extract from Curtis & Lissu (2008).

Seven years later, in 2014, the Global Financial Integrity (GFI) report titled “Hiding in Plain Sight: Trade Mis-invoicing and the Impact of Revenue Loss in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda: 2002-2011” revealed:

More than \$8 billion in domestic capital drained out of the economy [in Tanzania] illegally from 2002 to 2011, and government coffers may have missed out on an average of \$248 million per year from trade-based tax evasion. These critical resources could have helped create more jobs, expand access to social services to improve the lives of average Tanzanians, and improve infrastructure vital to additional economic development...The illicit outflows came exclusively in the form of import over-invoicing, raising questions about Tanzania’s reliance on import duties to finance government budgets. The estimates of trade misinvoicing show that the vast majority of import overinvoicing transactions involve fuel imports, which are exempt from import duties for mining companies. This suggests that mining companies could be over-inflating their import costs to shift capital out of Tanzania illicitly, with the added kick-back of lower taxable income due to artificially inflated inputs (Baker et al, 2014, pp. 31, 32).

Similar sentiments were raised during the reign of the late president John Pombe Magufuli, who adopted a resource nationalism approach to ensure the country received its fair share of its resources. He established two presidential committees to investigate the country’s mining situation. One of the committee’s reports stated that between 1998 and March 2017, the country had lost a staggering USD 47 billion in unpaid taxes (The Citizen, 2017). Although some commentators questioned this figure, noting that it was a bargaining strategy, the fact remains that the country was losing more than it was gaining, as indicated by the three reports above: ASA, PAC, and GFI.

In all these, the call to ensure the extractive resources benefit the country and its people (current and posterity) should not be left to CSOs, international organisations, or the Executive; the media, arguably the Fourth Estate, should take its rightful role and oversee the industry by looking at the regulatory framework, revenue collection and allocation, as well social and economic spending.

Media and Extractive Industries: A policy framework and functional responsibilities

The role of the media in the extractive industry is stipulated in the National Natural Gas Policy of Tanzania 2013. The Policy states that the media should provide accurate and timely information to the public to increase public awareness and promote transparency and accountability in the sub-sector (Article 5.1.9). Realising that extractive industry journalism is a unique area of specialisation, the Policy calls for the media to strengthen their capacity to understand the sub-sector.

In their work, titled “Civil society’s role in petroleum sector governance: The case of Tanzania,” Dupuy et al. delineate four pivotal functions of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the governance framework of Tanzania’s petroleum sector: the dissemination of information, the provision of moral legitimacy to influence the resource governance agenda, the democratization of power in resource management, and the enforcement of accountability among industry’s stakeholders (Dupuy et al., 2019). While these functions are predominantly attributed to CSOs, they are equally relevant to the media’s oversight of EI, underscoring their significance for this paper. In executing its essential oversight responsibilities, the media must perform the following key functions: information provision, agenda-setting, oversight, and monitoring stakeholders’ accountability.

Media coverage of the extractive industry

The intersection of media and extractive industries (EI) has received limited scholarly attention, representing a significant gap in existing literature. While several studies have assessed media coverage in this context, the literature remains scarce, particularly those that employ the EITI standard as a critical lens. Given that limitation, this part will mainly document the literature on the general aspects of journalism reporting in EI.

Events and press releases drive EI reporting, and published articles appear more like public relations efforts for government and extractive companies than critical journalism (Schriffrin, 2009; Behrman et al., 2012; MCK, 2015; Katunzi, 2019). This tendency results in coverage that predominantly quotes pro-government and pro-business voices, while often leaving pressing developmental issues inadequately addressed (Behrman et al., 2012). Media and journalists rely on information subsidies from sources, mostly government and companies, and there are little or no efforts in investigative journalism in this field (Katunzi, 2019); thus, the media fails to convey the broader implications of EI-related actions (Behrman et al., 2012).

Sourcing presents a significant challenge for quality journalism in EI. Much of the reportage is poorly sourced. When studying Iraqi media coverage of the energy sector, Abdul Kareem et al. (2011) note that the quality of coverage suffers chiefly from inadequate sourcing, both in quantity and authority. Their analysis revealed that a significant proportion of articles were



either single-sourced or entirely unsourced, with governmental and corporate voices dominating narratives. Behrman et al. (2012) corroborate these claims, indicating that nearly 50% of media pieces in Nigeria, Ghana, and Uganda were single-sourced.

This lack of source diversity severely restricts citizens' access to the EI comprehensive reportage. Similarly, Abdul Kareem et al. (2011) found that 72% of the articles analysed in Iraq's energy sector were single-sourced, with 82% of these sourced from government entities. In Tanzania, Katunzi (2019) observes that 92% of the analysed news articles were based on events, indicating that journalists or media organisations tend not to develop their own story ideas. Instead, they rely heavily on information provided by their sources. Journalists often gravitate towards official stories, driven by event-based narratives and incentivised by informal arrangements, commonly referred to as "brown envelope" practices. This propensity is observed across multiple studies, including those conducted by Katunzi (2019), MCK (2015), Penplusbytes (2013), Behrman et al. (2012), and Abdul Kareem et al. (2011). This reliance compromises the independence and depth of journalistic inquiry, placing the media at the mercy of external stakeholders, particularly government and corporations.

Contrary to the high rates of single-sourcing observed in Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, and Iraq, a content analysis conducted by the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) found that only 24% of the analysed articles in Kenya relied on a single source (MCK, 2015). While this statistic presents a comparatively positive outlook on Kenyan media practices, it still highlights that the single-source issue persists within many media organisations. The prevalence of single-source reporting undermines the fundamental journalistic principle of utilising multiple sources. In their study, "Transparency initiatives and Tanzania's extractive industry governance", Poncian and Kigodi state that the media coverage centred on how much the government loses revenues from EI.

Content analysis...evidently shows that the question of how much the government gets and how much it loses in revenues from mining and oil and gas companies take[s] center stage in the media coverage of transparency reports. Particularly, greater media reporting and debates thereabout are on how the government loses revenues or is receiving less than it ought to receive. An analysis of all the newspapers ...from 2013 to 2016 reveals that there are ten news articles reporting about the government losing out in terms of revenues through tax evasion and poor contract terms (Poncian & Kigodi, 2018).

The study reveals three important issues: first, the media focuses on 'revenue', mirroring losses from the extractive industry (EI). Secondly, the reportage is drawn from official sources (TEITI transparency reports), and thirdly, the coverage remains scanty, with only 10 news articles over four years (2013-2016), an average of two news articles per year. Broadly, the current scholarship on media coverage of extractive industries reveals substantial limitations in journalistic practices, particularly in sourcing, depth of analysis, and coverage of transparency issues. The literature showcases a prevailing reliance on single sources, primarily governmental and corporate, which inhibits citizens' access to diverse and balanced information.

Material and Methods

The study utilised an explanatory mixed-method research design, as described by Creswell and Clark (2011), commencing with quantitative data collection through quantitative content analysis, followed by qualitative data collection to provide context and depth to the quantitative findings. This approach, supported by scholars including Bryman (2006) and Greene (2007), offers multiple advantages, including enhancing the credibility of research outcomes, contextualising quantitative results with qualitative insights, illustrating data findings, increasing utility for applied research, and presenting diverse perspectives through participant interaction.

To fulfil its primary objective—exploring media coverage of extractive industry transparency in Tanzania—the study engaged respondents from various sectors, including media professionals (newspapers’ managing editors, business editors and senior journalists who report on EI (18), secretary generals of civil society organisations (3) based in Mtwara, Lindi and Geita—three regions where extraction takes place and a representative from the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiatives TEITI.” In total, 22 respondents participated in KII, a number deemed sufficient for in-depth analysis rather than generalisation (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006). A purposive sampling technique was employed to select knowledgeable participants who could provide rich, detailed insights. The ‘heterogeneous or maximum variation’ category of purposive sampling was selected to include participants with diverse backgrounds, thereby enhancing the credibility and variability of the findings.

For the quantitative content analysis, the population comprised Tanzania’s nationally registered newspapers. The study narrowed its scope to five major newspapers—two in Swahili and three in English—utilising a multistage sampling approach. Firstly, five major newspapers: *Mwananchi*, *Nipashe*, *The Citizen*, *The Guardian*, and the government-owned *Daily News* were selected, based on their national reach and having been in the market for a long time. Secondly, the research focused on specific years (2009, 2014, and 2019) and employed a composite week sampling method to select newspapers. Aust, Lacy, and Riffe (1993), cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2011), consider this approach superior to random and consecutive-day sampling in media content analysis. In this sampling methodology, a composite-week approach was employed, with a specific day of the week designated for each month during the sampling period. The 2009 inaugural edition was released on Thursday, January 1, 2009. Subsequently, the samples were collected on a structured basis: the second week featured a Friday, the third a Saturday, the fourth a Sunday, and this pattern continued throughout the entire sampling duration. This systematic sampling yielded 720 editions, as detailed in the accompanying table.

Table 2: Newspapers sampling

| Years | Months | Newspapers | Newspapers’ editions per week | Total newspapers per year |
|--------------------|--------------|------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2009 | 12 (Jan-Dec) | 5 | 4 | 240 |
| 2014 | 12 (Jan-Dec) | 5 | 4 | 240 |
| 2019 | 12 (Jan-Dec) | 5 | 4 | 240 |
| Grand Total | | | | 720 |

Source: Field data



Thirdly, for each sampled edition, units with EI transparency content were selected, with at least two units included from each edition across various content types. However, because most editions lack relevant units, we included all applicable media units from the selected editions. If an edition lacked relevant content, the next edition was selected until the target number of units was reached.

Results and Discussion

The results indicate a concerning distribution of media units related to EI. *The Citizen* tops the list with 16 media units, accounting for 30.8% of the total, followed by *The Guardian* with 13 units (25%) and the *Daily News* with 11 units (21.2%). Both *Mwananchi* and *Nipashe* report six media units each. Notably, English-language newspapers tend to have slightly more media units than their Kiswahili counterparts. Additionally, hard news accounts for the majority (82.7%) of newspaper formats, whereas editorial pieces and news analysis each account for 1.9%, as shown in the table below.

Table 3: Demographic distribution of newspapers’ media units

| Variable | Number | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| The Citizen | 16 | 30.8 |
| The Guardian | 13 | 25.0 |
| Daily News | 11 | 21.2 |
| Mwananchi | 6 | 11.5 |
| Nipashe | 6 | 11.5 |
| Format of newspaper piece | | |
| Hard news | 43 | 82.7 |
| Opinion or commentaries | 5 | 9.6 |
| Feature | 2 | 3.9 |
| News analysis | 1 | 1.9 |
| Editorials | 1 | 1.9 |
| Total | 52 | 100.0 |

Source: Field data

The data analysis indicates that the legal and institutional frameworks were the most frequently covered topics, appearing in 28 out of 52 media pieces. This was followed by revenue collection and social and economic spending, each of which received attention in 10 media pieces. Lastly, revenue allocation was addressed in only 4 media pieces. Among the four EITI (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) standards used in this analysis, the legal framework and fiscal regime were predominantly included in the “legal and institutional framework” category, accounting for 15 media pieces (29%). In the “revenue collection” category, 8 media pieces (15%) covered tax and revenue disclosures. The contribution of the extractive sector to the economy was highlighted in the “social and economic spending” category with 5 media pieces (10%), and revenue management and distribution were discussed in the “revenue allocation” category with 3 media pieces (6%). The table below illustrates this distribution.

Table 4: Newspapers' coverage of EI transparency

| LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK | NUMBER OF PIECES | PERCENTAGE |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Legal framework and fiscal regime | 15 | 29 |
| Contract and license allocation | 6 | 11 |
| Register of licenses | 0 | 0 |
| Beneficial ownership | 0 | 0 |
| State participation in the ES | 7 | 13 |
| Sub total | 28 | |
| REVENUE COLLECTION | | |
| Disclosure of taxes and revenues | 8 | 15 |
| Sale of the state's share of production or other revenues collected in kind | 0 | 0 |
| State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) transactions | 1 | 2 |
| Subnational payments (by companies) | 1 | 2 |
| Sub total | 10 | |
| REVENUE ALLOCATION | | |
| Distribution of revenues | 1 | 2 |
| Subnational transfers (transfer between national and subnational governments) | 0 | 0 |
| Revenue management and distribution | 3 | 6 |
| Sub total | 4 | |
| SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SPENDING | | |
| Social and environmental expenditures by companies | 2 | 4 |
| Contribution of the extractive sector to the economy | 5 | 10 |
| Environmental impact of extractive activities | 3 | 6 |
| Sub total | 10 | |
| GRAND TOTAL | 52 | 100 |

Source: Field data

The startling revelation is that newspapers pay little attention to EI coverage. The presence of 52 media units from five national newspapers over three years, or roughly 1,000 days, is alarming. Evidently, most of the reportage (83%) is event-based, meaning the print media do not play their watchdog role in uncovering critical issues within the industry, but rather, as Behrman et al. (2012) noted, publish content that looks like 'public relations exercises' for companies and government. Even editors, who carry the voices of newspapers in editorials, do not pay attention (only one piece). One of the respondents, a managing editor, noted:

We [the print media and journalists] have often overlooked the extractive industry, which is crucial to our national economy. Our coverage has been essentially minimal and reactive, focusing on immediate stories rather than delving into their complexities. Given the industry's significant contributions to the economy, it is vital to increase in-depth reporting that addresses not only economic factors but also other issues...by doing so, we can provide a balanced view, inform public debate, hold stakeholders



accountable, and promote transparency in the sector (Newspaper Managing Editor 1, June 2025).

Although the respondent uses the word ‘overlooked’, based on the quantity of media units published in three years (only 52), the appropriate word would be ‘neglect’. This neglect is even more alarming, given the industry’s contribution to national GDP. Data indicate that the industry’s contribution to GDP has been increasing. In 2015, it contributed 4.3% to the GDP, 2016 (4.9%), 2017 (4.4%), 2018 (5.2%), 2019 (5.3%), 2020 (6.8%), 2021 (7.3%), 2022 (9.1%), and 2023 (9.0%) (National Bureau of Statistics (2022); Economic Survey Report 2023; TEITI 2025). To expand on this, the industry’s (in this case, mining and quarrying) share of GDP exceeds that of manufacturing (7.0%), financial and insurance activities (4.5%), and real estate (2.7%). Unlike other sectors, the extractive industry’s resources are non-renewable; once depleted, they cannot be replenished. So, the newspapers ‘lack’ of coverage of EI transparency in a way that oversees the industry is unhealthy both to the industry and the country at large.

One of the critical areas in the EI is contracts. Various actors in the country, including CSOs, MPs, religious organisations and the general public, have raised concerns about whether the contracts the government signs with EI companies are favourable to the country. The key question is whether the country is benefiting from its resources under the terms of the contract. A review of newspapers published in 2009, 2014, and 2019 identified a single article focusing on the EI contract. News coverage surrounding contracts and their disclosures was dismal. Of the analysed articles, only one significant story, the leaked addendum to a Production Sharing Agreement (PSA)—a contract between a host country and a multinational firm—involving the Norwegian State oil company (Statoil), now Equinor, was published in 2014 and garnered media attention, both nationally and internationally.

In 2007, the Norwegian State Oil Company, now known as Equinor, was granted a license to operate Block 2 in Tanzania, leading to a significant natural gas discovery. This discovery resulted in the signing of a Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) with the Tanzanian government, represented by the Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation (TPDC). However, the details of this agreement remained undisclosed until a notable addendum was leaked in 2014, sparking controversy and public debate. The leaked addendum revealed that Statoil (Equinor) would pay the Tanzanian government no more than 50% of the profits from natural gas, which is significantly lower than the 60-85% profit share outlined in the Model PSA. This discrepancy raised concerns about potential revenue losses for the country, with analysts estimating that Tanzania could lose up to USD 900 million annually due to deviations from the Model PSA (Makoye & Dawson, 2014).

Media reactions in Tanzania varied: the *Daily News*, a government-owned newspaper, defended the government’s stance, stating that it would earn 61% of the revenue, whereas most other newspapers adopted a critical perspective. Articles from *The Citizen*, *The Guardian*, and *Mwananchi*, all privately owned, emphasised that the country would incur substantial losses under the addendum’s terms, essentially echoing the sentiments of politicians and CSOs, who vocally challenged the PSA’s terms. The head of TPDC criticised the media’s coverage as misleading. The corporation issued a statement stating:

We would like to inform the public that such information [media coverage] is incorrect, misleading and has not been thoroughly researched and analysed, and was disseminated by people with no broad understanding of gas exploration activities (TPDC, 2014).

It accused the media of spreading unsubstantiated claims, which damaged the country's reputation and discouraged investors. Nevertheless, public sentiment, including grassroots critiques emerging on online platforms such as JamiiForums (now Jamii Africa), expressed significant frustration over the perceived lack of transparency and the financial implications of the addendum.²

This concern brought about a critical response from various CSOs, which banded together in September 2014 to demand transparency in the natural gas contracts (Policy Forum, 2014). They called for public discussions on the contracts and the release of all signed contracts, signalling a collective push for accountability. The implications of the addendum and the broader discourse surrounding Tanzania's natural gas wealth were amplified by international media³, raising questions about systemic governance and revenue management issues within the country. The overall narrative was straightforward: many citizens and organisations were alarmed by potential financial losses and advocated reforms to ensure that natural resources benefited the country and its people.

The necessity of transparency in the extractive sector has gained prominence with the introduction of Requirement 2.5 of the 2023 EITI Standard, which requires companies to disclose their beneficial owners. Beneficial owners are individuals who ultimately own or control an entity's interests. In alignment with this, Section 16(1)(b) of the Tanzania Extractive Industries Transparency and Accountability (TEITA) Act obliges the Tanzania Extractive Industries (Transparency and Accountability) Committee (TEITI) to ensure that the names of individual shareholders with stakes in the extractive industry are publicly available.

Moreover, Regulation 13 of the Tanzania Extractive Industries (Transparency and Accountability) (General) Regulations of 2019 delineates the necessary information to identify beneficial owners effectively. This includes not only the individuals' names but also critical details such as their nationalities, countries of residence, national identity numbers, dates of birth, and residential addresses. This requirement is particularly important when considering politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) who may hold interests in extractive companies.

Despite the significance of this issue, the media have mainly neglected beneficial ownership in their coverage of the extractive industries. The analysis of newspapers' coverage of the real owners of extractive companies has been off-the-shelf. In fact, there was zero coverage on this critical subject. The watchdog went silent for more than 1000 days. This is a cause for concern, considering the media's role in EI.

²<https://www.jamiiforums.com/threads/mkataba-wa-gesi-umevuja-tanzania-kupoteza-shs-1-6-trilioni-kwa-mwaka.685504/>.

³The *Economist* Magazine story: "Sharing the spoils", Thomson Reuters Foundation "Leaked Tanzania gas contract stirs fears that government is bilked of natural resource wealth"



Revenue from the EI—including taxes, royalties, production shares, fees, and bonuses—constitutes a significant share of fiscal income for many resource-rich countries, including Tanzania. The transparency of these revenue streams is essential for promoting informed public discourse regarding EI governance. In the EITI framework, revenue disclosures encompass a comprehensive range of components, including tax and revenue collections, subnational payments from corporations, State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) transactions, and the monetisation of the state’s share of production or other revenue collected in kind. The findings show that the newspapers primarily focused on taxes and revenue disclosures (28%), with a secondary emphasis on subnational payments from companies and SOE transactions (4%). However, the findings reveal a notable absence of coverage regarding the state’s share of production and other revenues generated in kind.

Newspaper coverage of taxes and revenues primarily highlights issues such as gains and losses, mineral smuggling, and ineffective law enforcement, which collectively hinder governments’ ability to collect necessary revenues. The narrative in this coverage often leans toward discussing how much revenue the government fails to secure rather than what it successfully earns, with the emphasis on losses overshadowing any gains. The reportage frequently indicates that the country is losing substantial sums due to various issues such as smuggling, inaccuracies in production figures, tax evasion through over-invoicing, unfavourable contract terms, and inadequate enforcement of laws.

For instance, a news report in *The Citizen* noted that the country suffers an annual loss of approximately Tsh2trillion from smuggling and tax evasion (Msinde, 2014). Another article titled “How mining firms are milking Tanzania dry” highlighted an even higher estimated yearly loss of USD 1.87 billion due to various malpractices, including misinvoicing. Over five years, these losses could accumulate to around USD 6.25 billion—sufficient funds to construct 10,000 kilometres of tarmac road. This loss of potential revenue is echoed in the findings of Poncian and Kigodi (2018), whose research, which partly assessed newspaper coverage of EI transparency in Tanzania from 2013 to 2016, found that, of 14 articles examined, 10 focused on government revenue losses. They concluded that a significant portion of newspapers’ reportage centred around the theme of government under-collection of revenues.

The government’s engagement in the extractive industries is predominantly carried out through TPDC for oil and natural gas, and STAMICO for mining. TPDC’s portfolio includes a comprehensive suite of activities, including oil exploration, extraction, and the management of various components of the petroleum value chain through its subsidiaries. Currently, TPDC plays a pivotal role in the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project, working alongside Total, Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC), and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC). This landmark initiative aims to establish a 1,443-kilometre pipeline with a capacity of 216,000 barrels per day, facilitating the export of Ugandan crude oil from Hoima to Chongoleani, Tanzania, thereby enhancing the accessibility of Ugandan oil to international markets. Additionally, TPDC is advancing a substantial Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project in collaboration with Equinor and Shell, positioning Tanzania strategically within lucrative LNG markets across Europe, India, and Southeast Asia. Despite its substantial involvement in EI, TPDC was notably absent from the newspapers’ editorial agenda. The coverage of TPDC was limited to the Statoil-leaked addendum (see above) and did not reflect the broader issues associated with its participation in EI.

STAMICO's mandate entails securing mineral exploration and mining rights and conducting operational engagements in these sectors through various joint ventures and subsidiaries. STAMICO has evidently grappled with significant financial challenges. Reports indicate a staggering 58% decline in its gold production from 2015 to 2018, attributed to excessive debt and insufficient investment, which has severely undermined its operational capacity. By 2019, STAMICO's outstanding debt stood at Tshs67 billion (HakiRasilimali, 2020a, p. 3). The parliamentary standing committee on energy and minerals corroborated these findings, identifying inadequate financing as a critical impediment to STAMICO's operational efficacy (Bunge la Tanzania, 2020; Parliament of Tanzania, 2019; 2018). In its 2017–2018 report, the committee highlighted that STAMICO's functional limitations stemmed from insufficient funding, which impeded project initiation and effective execution of its responsibilities (HakiRasilimali, 2019). Despite being allocated a budget of Tshs 13.6 billion for the 2018/2019 financial year—of which only Tshs 2.7 billion was disbursed, primarily for salaries and operational costs—STAMICO continued to face immense operational constraints (HakiRasilimali, 2019).

Despite numerous challenges, STAMICO was notably absent from the editorial agendas of major newspapers in 2009, 2014, and 2019. However, the researcher identified several articles on STAMICO from other years. Notable examples include the 2017 article titled “Stamico Top Brass Grilled Over Misdeeds” published in the *Daily News*, and in 2018, “MPs Want Stamico Dissolved for Poor Performance” featured in *The Citizen*, and in 2019, “Pay Dividends Before Next Fiscal Year,” in *The Citizen Online*. These stories demonstrate one important fact: the government's involvement in EI, through STAMICO, was not yielding positive results. It is important to note that after the government increased funding support to STAMICO, the company underwent changes and began paying dividends. From the fiscal year 2018/19 to 2023/24, it has delivered a total dividend of Tsh 9 billion to the government (STAMICO, 2024).

What explains the findings?

The key question here is: What explains the findings? Why would newspapers and journalists relegate their watchdog role to mere reportage of events for a critical industry like EI? Interviews with respondents from the media, CSOs and TEITI revealed multiple reasons: EI is not a subject that people (the audience) are interested in; secrecy surrounding EI information, as it is considered a preserve of those in executive and in the C-suite; lack of competent journalists to report on the industry, as it requires journalists who understand the industry; and suppression of critical reportage in EI, particularly those targeting the government.

One of the primary reasons identified for the limited coverage of EI is the general disinterest among audiences. Some respondents argue that many people prioritise more immediate or sensational news over complex EI topics. They noted that newspapers, driven by audience preferences, choose to focus on stories that attract higher readership (and viewership), often sidelining issues that require sustained attention and understanding. Explaining this, a managing editor with one of the newspapers, remarked:

Our audiences have a strong preference for softer news, showing a keen interest in football, music, and celebrity gossip. To succeed and stand out in an increasingly



competitive market, most media have actively shifted to curate and deliver content that aligns with their audiences...additionally, if you consider the economic challenges facing the media in the country, it is commercially make sense to produce entertainment news as it consumes less resources than to venture into hard-hitting journalism in extractive industries that requires financial resources (Newspaper Managing Editor 2, June 2025).

While it is true that the audience is more inclined towards entertainment news, it is equally valid that the media have a responsibility to focus on critical issues affecting people and society at large. News media and journalists are obligated to oversee the national economy by ensuring that natural resources are properly governed and ultimately serve the people. Neglecting this cardinal duty merely because people are not interested in the topic does a disservice to the public.

The EI often involves secrecy. Critical industry information is as hard to get as gold. This secrecy creates barriers for journalists, who may find it challenging to access the information needed to conduct in-depth reporting. In heavily regulated or economically significant industries, such as oil and gas, the executive suite may tightly control information flows, making it difficult for journalists to uncover and report on critical issues. This lack of transparency can inhibit public discourse and accountability, as stakeholders remain in the dark. Access to the EI information is not only a challenge for journalists but also for government bodies, including the parliament and TEITI. The challenges in obtaining beneficial ownership information are highlighted in the 14th TEITI Report, covering fiscal year 2021/2022, released in June 2024. The report discusses the issue of nondisclosure, stating that, while the beneficial owner is recognised under Tanzanian laws—including the Finance Act of 2020 and the TEITA Act of 2015—as a natural person exercising substantial control over a company or arrangement, few extractive companies disclose such information (TEITI, 2024).

Access to PSAs remains restricted, not just for media but also for Parliament. Following the leak of the Statoil addendum (see above), the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) requested all 26 signed PSAs and their addenda since 2012, but TPDC declined to provide them. They argued that the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the Attorney General's Office have indicated that these contracts are not publicly disclosable, due to concerns about potential litigation from investors (Katunzi et al., 2025a). This raises a significant question: What rationale supports denying Parliament access to contract information, which represents the public and has the authority to legislate? The arguments notwithstanding, there are legitimate reasons for withholding EI information, such as national security (Le Billon, 2015), economic interests and resource control (Ross, 2012), and maintaining a competitive advantage (Friedman, 2010). However, a body of literature shows that governments, particularly in developing economies, withhold EI information primarily due to political control. Commenting on the lack of access to information, a managing editor of a daily newspaper remarked:

The refusal to disclose signed contracts to the public and media raises serious concerns about what the government and Multinational Companies (MNCs) are trying to hide. It is troubling that information about our natural resources, how they are extracted, and who receives what [revenue share] is being withheld under the pretext of

protecting investor interests. Who is more supreme, the people or the investors?
(Newspaper Managing Editor 3, personal communication, May 27 2025)

Reporting on EI requires specialised knowledge and understanding of industry concepts, practices, and regulatory frameworks. However, many news media face resource constraints and may not invest in training journalists to cover these complex topics adequately. As a result, coverage may be limited, lack depth and accuracy, further dissuading audiences from engaging with EI news.

In some contexts, critical journalism—especially when it questions government practices or corporate behaviour—can be met with severe punishment. This suppression might come from government pressure, self-censorship by media organisations, or closure of newspapers. News media and journalists may fear backlash, leading to a more cautious approach to covering EI or leaving sensitive areas altogether. The government’s 2017 closure of newspapers, such as *Mawio*, and executives’ intimidation have precipitated a culture of self-censorship among journalists and their sources (Katunzi et al., 2025b). This environment significantly hampers the news media’s and individual journalists’ capacity to conduct compelling extractive-industry journalism, thereby undermining the critical role of watchdog journalism in holding power to account.

Generally, the interplay of audience disinterest, limited access to information, a shortage of specialised reporters, and the suppression of critical voices creates an environment in which newspapers and journalists may struggle to fulfil their watchdog role effectively in the extractive industry.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper discusses the newspapers’ coverage of EI. It evaluates the newspapers’ watchdog function regarding natural resources, particularly EI transparency. The findings reveal that, despite its significant contribution to GDP, EI transparency is not part of the editorial agenda of national newspapers. It receives minimal coverage, only 52 media units in three years. Much of the reportage is public relations-driven and thus lacks depth. Contract disclosure, a critical aspect of EI, is largely overlooked, with only one piece—the leaked Statoil addendum, published over three years. Beneficial ownership is not covered, having been relegated behind the editor’s desk. EI revenue has received more coverage than the other EI transparency areas, with reporting centred on the extent of revenue losses, citing smuggling, tax evasion through over-invoicing, and unfavourable contract terms as reasons the government has not realised greater revenue from extractive resources. The study has contributed to the understanding of the nature of print media coverage of EI transparency, using EITI standards. This area has received little attention in the scholarship globally and in Tanzania.

Based on the findings of this study regarding the coverage of the extractive industry (EI) in Tanzania, several actionable recommendations are presented to enhance the media’s role as effective watchdogs: News media should foster a culture that encourages in-depth reporting and critical analysis that better fulfil their watchdog role in EI transparency. Journalists must receive specialised training on the complexities of the extractive sector, including legal frameworks, financial practices, and governance and transparency issues. This knowledge will empower journalists to critically assess the operations of multinational corporations and



the effectiveness of governmental oversight. News media should actively collaborate with CSOs and other stakeholders involved in advocacy for transparency and accountability in the EI. Such partnerships can facilitate the sharing of vital information and resources, leading to more informed reporting and heightened public awareness.

In terms of further research, and considering that this area is not adequately studied, future researchers may consider covering a more extended period of study, say 10 years, to establish robust data that may inform journalism capacity-building interventions and policy regarding public access to EI, as stated in the National Natural Gas Policy of 2024.

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