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Accountability and Knowledge dissemination of the National Health Insurance through the Public Service Broadcaster

by

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Research Report Submitted in Fulfilment of the degree of

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my family; I adore you all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The following people are acknowledged in this study:

My Supervisor Professor Robert Van Niekerk, for his guidance and unwavering support.

I would like to express my gratitude to SABC for granting me permission to carry out my- research and for giving any needed support.

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Thank you so much to all producers and presenters of SAfm and Phalaphala fm, and all focus group participants who took time out of their hectic schedules to help me, I appreciate you and everyone who offered guidance and assistance.

DECLARATION

I, Lukoto Thivhudziswi, Student Number, 1790674, declare that this research is my work, and it has not been submitted anywhere else apart from the 'Research Report (PADM7213A)' course at the WITS School of Governance.

Signature : 

Date :30 August 2024

ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the conviction that SABC, as a public broadcaster, can make a substantial contribution to citizen education and empowerment by disseminating knowledge and upholding responsibility. This research aims to convey an overview of the planned study on the National Health Insurance (NHI)'s accountability and knowledge dissemination through public service broadcasters (PSBs) in South Africa, with a focus on SABC Radio. The study focuses on two radio stations: SAfm, an English-language station targeting listeners in urban areas, and Phalaphala FM, a Tshivenda radio station targeting listeners in rural Limpopo Province. The study covers how the PSB practices public accountability through a critical examination and analysis of the dissemination of information of the NHI to the citizenry of South Africa over a seven-year period covering the period of public consultation on the NHI White Paper to the NHI Bill stage (2015 to 2022).

ACRONYMS

ANC - African National Congress

BBC - British Broadcasting Corporation

BCCSA- Broadcasting Complains Commission of South Africa

CBS - Columbia Broadcasting System

CEO- Chief Executive Officer

NHI -National Health Insurance

PBS - Public Broadcasting Service

PSB- Public Service Broadcasting

PSM - Public Service Media

SABC- South African Broadcasting Corporation

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study is driven by the conviction that SABC, as a public broadcaster, can hold policy makers accountable through insightful and critical programming, thereby empowering and educating citizens about their role in policy creation. The South African government has proposed a significant overhaul of the healthcare system through the National Health Insurance (NHI) bill to improve the quality of healthcare in the nation and make healthcare available to the majority of citizens through universal provision. The study focuses on two radio stations: SAfm, an English-language station targeting listeners in urban areas, and Phalaphala FM, a Tshivenda radio station targeting listeners in rural Limpopo Province. It covers how public service broadcasters (PSB) practise public accountability through a critical examination and analysis of the dissemination of information on the NHI to the citizenry of South Africa over a seven-year period covering the period of public consultation on the NHI White Paper to the NHI Bill stage (2015 to 2022).

2. Background

The potential of public broadcasting to promote accountability and disseminate information is attracting increasing attention from the international development community. The media can affect how people understand and respond to governance and accountability by directly and indirectly influencing a number of crucial aspects of governance through its programming, including the eradication of corruption, the improvement of transparency and accountability, the promotion of informed participation in political, social, and economic processes, and the emphasis on more inclusive and equitable policies and actions (Malila, 2018). Brunetti and Weder (2003) assert that the media reveals and disseminates the chain of events, choices, and judgements that lead to certain knowledge understandings and results, especially those that serve the general public interest. This contributes to improving the accountability of prominent people and public servants. Finding the public responsible parties (politicians, interested citizens operating in the public interest, and so on) and having them participate in the media's knowledge-dissemination procedures may possibly greatly help to increase accountability. As per De Beer et al. (2016), anticipating this type of identification might also encourage more responsible decision-making and outcomes on public policies that are advantageous to the general population.

Public broadcasting can support public accountability and openness in addition to bolstering democratic processes, which are essential to good governance (Buckley et al., 2011). Through broadcast media, citizens can voice their thoughts and take part in social, political, and economic debates, creating an essential platform for public discussion of urgent topics. people can thereby express their ideas and complaints to the government and other people, a function that is especially important for poor and disadvantaged areas. Hence, broadcasting can foster a civic forum or public sphere, a system of ideas and information sharing that aids in the thorough and transparent investigation, filtration, and synthesis of issues impacting societies and communities so that they become a part of the public's perceptions (Buckley et al., 2011).

In Hodgetts et al. (2008), view, the media can also help citizens understand their rights to take part in procedures that aim to reduce socio-economic disparities and promote public discussions and engagements on health-related topics. As argued by Coleman et al. (2011), media has a significant impact on how individuals think. But Von Krogh (2007), suggests that it's equally crucial for the media to prioritise the interests of the broader public and be open and honest with the public. Clear and relevant information is required, and the programmes they offer should represent the diversity of their viewership.

In South Africa, national health insurance is one area that is crucial and requires effective governance, understanding, and involvement. The goal of the NHI is to improve the quality and accessibility of healthcare. London and Saunders (2018) argue that the South African healthcare sector is in crisis and the state of clinics, hospitals, and other medical institutions is terrible. Thus, those living in poverty make up the largest portion of the country's population. Moosa et al. (2016) are of the opinion that the South African health care system is disjointed and unfair. Because most impoverished people are in a precarious employment situation and cannot access the tax rebates that come with stable, continuous employment with a company or government, the middle class depends on medical aids, which are their primary means of accessing private healthcare. The health sector continues to be a focal point for discussions about the nation's inequalities and the deplorable living circumstances of the general public.

Laws intended to overhaul the health sector have been introduced in order to solve the crisis in the industry and provide marginalised populations with greater access to healthcare services. According to Benatar et al. (2017), this legislation aims to address South Africans' fundamental right to appropriate, high-quality healthcare. The NHI is one item of legislation that was initially introduced as a Green Paper in 2011. Moosa et al. (2016), asserts that the NHI is seen as an egalitarian way to pay for healthcare that will have a big impact on South Africans' health. Tshoose (2013) states that the NHI seeks to enhance service delivery by fostering equity and efficiency so that all individuals, regardless of socioeconomic level, can obtain affordable, high-quality healthcare.

Nonetheless, there are several problems with the NHI's implementation. One such problem is the lack of trust that different stakeholders have in the new system's introduction, particularly when it comes to concerns about fiscal affordability, the impact on the private health care system, and the public system's capacity to deliver healthcare on par with that of the well-managed and resourced private sector.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how the South African Public broadcaster, SABC, has made its platforms available for critical, informed discussion and engagement with the public on NHI in order to enable the public to use this knowledge to hold the government, private companies, and the public accountable. The SABC also ensures that important government policies that are being considered, adopted, or passed by Parliament are accountable to the public.

The study critically examined the NHI radio shows on Phalaphalafm and SAfm: Phalaphalafm, a Tshivenda station primarily serving rural Limpopo Province with listeners from Pampanga; and SAfm, an English-medium station in urban areas that targets Living Standards Measure (LSM) 7 to 10. The study focused on the years 2015–2022, which spans the time between the NHI White Paper and the NHI Bill.

3. Knowledge gap

According to a survey of the literature, there is not much research on South Africa's public broadcasters' accountability or their role in disseminating information. One of the studies was carried out by Berger and Jjuuko (2007) to investigate how the SABC's editorial practices struck a compromise between public accountability and editorial independence. Mathebula (2015) conducted a follow-up study to examine the extent to which the SABC encourages transparency and accountability. Molokome (2021) looked at SABC Television's role in South Africa after apartheid.

Berger and Jjuuko (2007) concluded that while the Public Broadcaster's editorial independence policies were implemented to strike a balance between editorial independence and public accountability, SABC is not subject to any rules that would allow it to be held accountable.

In Molokome's (2021) analysis, which focuses more on the financing of television shows, and concluded that a new funding model is necessary for the SABC to accomplish its mandate as an official public broadcaster, serving the interests of the public rather than marketers. The public broadcaster's sustainability should be guaranteed by the model through long-term funding. The public broadcaster's independence and the lack of sponsor influence over the content of the programming should be guaranteed under the new funding arrangement.

The goal of this project is to examine how the SABC executes its role as a public broadcaster accountable for informing the public on matters that interests them. Previous studies involving South Africa's national broadcaster have not focused on the accountability and knowledge-dissemination functions of the broadcaster, especially SABC radio, in the formulation and execution of specific policy initiatives in the country. This study will help close this gap by analysing the SABC Radio's contribution to the NHI.

4. Research problem statement

Accountability in public service broadcasting is a crucial yet contested issue, notably in the context of the SABC. The SABC is mandated by the Broadcasting Act of 1999 to ensure transparency, accountability, and public participation in government processes. However, concerns have arisen regarding whether the SABC is effectively fulfilling this mandate (Tandwa & Dhai, 2021). This is especially so in relation to the NHI bill, where a significant debate has been held due to the bill's implications of overhauling the country's healthcare system. The belief that a strong, independent, and free media significantly contributes to the strengthening of democracy by boosting public participation in democratic debates and holding the government accountable is common (Chuma et al.,2017). However, expanding democratic participation is challenging in young democracies like South Africa where government censorship is still high, the mainstream media is biased toward elite audiences, and unequal access to the media exists (Chuma et al., 2017).

Despite the SABC's responsibility to promote public awareness and engagement, evidence suggests that public knowledge of the NHI is insufficient. A study conducted at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital found that a significant majority of participants were unaware of the NHI, and those who were aware felt they had not been given the opportunity to influence its policy (Tandwa & Dhai, 2021). In addition, documents submitted by the Helen Suzman Foundation to the National Assembly's health portfolio committee (Benattar et al., 2017) show that the NHI Bill did not get adequate public input or consultation. This raises questions about the effectiveness of the SABC in using its platforms to educate the public and ensure that government policies like the NHI are subject to rigorous public scrutiny and debate.

Consequently, this study investigates whether the SABC is adequately using its radio platforms to inform the public and hold policymakers accountable regarding the NHI. The problem at hand is the potential gap between the SABC's accountability mandate and its actual practice in facilitating informed public participation and government accountability.

5. Research purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how the SABC, as South Africa's national broadcaster, fulfils its accountability mandate by using its radio platforms to inform and engage the public on significant policy decisions, specifically the NHI bill. This research will determine whether the SABC effectively promotes public awareness and participation in the NHI bill process and how it holds government policymakers accountable through its broadcasting. The study will also identify and assess challenges the SABC faces in executing this role and suggest strategies to enhance the broadcaster's effectiveness in ensuring government accountability and informing the public on healthcare policy.

6. Research questions

The study main research question

Does the broadcast programming of the SABC critically inform the public by holding government accountable for the ratification or the implementation of significant public policy as exemplified by the NHI?

Sub research questions

- How does SABC create an informed environment for the public to fully participate and deliberate on policy decision making processes on its Radio Stations?
- How does SABC critically engage with government on major policy decisions in a manner that is informed and accountable to the interests of the public?

7. LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly literature on public broadcasting, accountability, and knowledge dissemination is discussed in this section. This section looks at the various roles that public broadcasters play in making sure that the public is informed effectively and in holding the government, private and other stakeholders responsible.

7.1 Public broadcasting service

Different scholars have given different definitions of Public Broadcasting Service, the majority have made an effort to link this type of broadcasting to a nonprofit that mostly gets funding from the government (Dlamini., 2003; Jjuuko., 2002). Rui (2020:5) defines PBS as a "media that is established, funded, and controlled by the public". Some countries, like South Africa, have undergone reforms, though, and the SABC is now mostly funded by advertising income. Being a significant public media organisation, the SABC may have a unique duty to educate the public on matters of national significance. However, Mpofu,(1996) and Chikunkhuzeni, (1999) argue that experts and policymakers cannot agree on what PBS actually means or what purpose this kind of programming fulfils.

Article 93 of the Swiss Federal Constitution, cited by Jjuuko (2005), describes the conditions that must be met by a public broadcaster: it must be affordable, universally accessible, contribute to social cohesion, provide education and knowledge, preserve national identity, take into account the needs of minorities, and represent diversity. Numerous scholarly investigations have emphasised the fundamental tenets that constitutes PBS, which encompass its independence from private entities and individuals that finance the programme, editorial autonomy, transparency and accountability, universal service and accessibility, diversity and plurality of programming to cater to the interests of the general public, and immunity from any excessive intervention that deviates from media professionalism norms (Mpofu, 1996; Hills, 2003).

This study demonstrates how the SABC, as a public broadcaster, can significantly contribute to teaching and empowering individuals about their role in formulating policy through information sharing and accountability, as well as how the PSB implements public accountability.

7.2 Broadcasting and accountability

The media serves as an accountability tool in three ways, as outlined by Just (2017). Making other stakeholders accountable allows them to function as watchdogs, or as the so-called Fourth Estate. By identifying and disclosing choices and activities that serve the public interest. Decision-makers

can be held accountable and responsible for their acts once the broadcaster identifies and exposes those involved. At that point, people will be. aware that they may be held accountable for misusing their positions.

Second, media self-regulation employs a variety of strategies and instruments, guided by the moral precepts that underpin journalism integrity, holds media members accountable to the public and to each other. Independent governance boards that are appointed by the public also guarantee accountability (Just, 2017). On the other hand, Tleane & Duncan, (2003) are of the view that since the public selected these board members, the public, not the government, is their boss.

Established as an independent statutory board, the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa was given the power to hear cases and render decisions regarding complaints made against broadcasters who had consented to follow its code of conduct. After a rigorous selection procedure that including conducting interviews and placing advertisements in electronic media, seven of the fourteen members of the BCCSA were selected to represent viewers and listeners. The seven that are left work as media professionals (Tleane & Duncan.,2003).

7.3 Information dissemination and broadcasting

Based on the research of Buckley et al. (2011), public radio and television play a crucial role in providing individuals with the means to voice their concerns, seek advice from professionals in real time, and find solutions. For example, community radio programmes often engage a large audience in meaningful talks in their native tongues about subjects that are important to them. Because of this, more and more individuals are competent and self-assured enough to formulate and analyse public policy concerns, participate in knowledgeable discussions, and put pressure on local politicians to act appropriately. The strategy aids in opportunity recognition and seizing, dispute resolution in interpersonal relationships, and deterring manipulation.

Albaek (2011) postulates that there has been a rise in people's readiness to expose wrongdoing and hold the government responsible.

In countries like Ghana and Indonesia, civil society organisations have named state officials who have embezzled public funds and abandoned long-promised projects using broadcasting platforms, resulting in proactive reactions (Chuma et al., 2017). Government representatives might be compelled to reconsider how they perceive their rights and responsibilities in light of such broad censure.

Broadcasting, in the opinion of Buckley et al. (2011), is an essential instrument for increasing and creating public participation in the expectations of public authorities as well as the lives of the impoverished in less developed nations. Freedom of expression and information is essential, as is a powerful blend of broadcasting ownership and uses known as public service, commercial and community broadcasting, to create and preserve an informed and engaged public. Broadcast media has a unique and significant function to play, in addition to providing voice to underprivileged and marginalised communities and assisting in the improvement of governance and accountability. This relates specifically to the ability, aptitude, and resources that various social groups possess in order to voice their needs and opinions regarding the standard of public governance in particular and to ensure that their views are represented in the media.

Everyone can access radio broadcasts, even the uneducated and semiliterate people living in rural locations (Heller, 2009). This type of programming has the ability to significantly alter how people view their surroundings and areas of interest. In numerous locations where individuals congregate to tune in to the radio, the broadcast messages readily provoke remarks and conversations. The topics that were previously banned became acceptable after people started referring to what they heard on the radio (Heller., 2009). As a result, radio broadcasting has the power to significantly and widely alter how people view issues that affect their daily lives.

7.4 Public interest and broadcasting

Many definitions of what the public interest is in relation to broadcasting can be found in relevant literature. CBS executive Frank Stanton offered one of these definitions. He states that when a sizable portion of the audience finds a programme fascinating, it is of public interest (Feintuck & Varney., 2006).

The word "public interest" refers, according to Australian regulator Gareth Grainer, to the interest that governments, legislatures, and decision-makers in democratic nations have to recognise and consider. Ensuring people's order, safety, peace and stability as well as the general welfare of the country and society is the aim of such interest (Buckley et al., 2011:7).

Brunetti and Weder (2003) state that it is difficult to keep the media's major focus on the interests of the general population. For decades, broadcasters and governments have been discussing this matter. While each of these conflicting interest groups professes to occasionally practise it, there is no obvious concentration on the public good in the media or on innovation in how human communication is mediated by technology.

Political parties, governments, commercial companies, and civil society organisations generally engage with the media in diverse ways, recognising opportunities and dangers to their own goals (Jjuuko., 2005).

Media companies also have their own unique internal and external dynamics. Each society's stakeholders therefore have different long-term goals. The media can achieve many public goals when allowed unrestricted access, though maybe not necessarily the ones that are most important to a society at that particular time. In addition to the constant need for an informed populace, there are also particular conditions involving issues with conflict, economic development, and democratic crisis (Buckley et al., 2011). Any one of these components by itself provides adequate justification for the need for rules and regulations that serve the public interest.

Feintuck & Varney (2006) state that the primary goal of promoting public interest in media and broadcasting is the fulfilment of the constitutional duty of effective citizen involvement. Enlightened citizens' engagement is equivalent to citizens' effective participation.

To compare and triangulate different points of view, a range of community members need to have access to various opinions in order for informed public engagement to occur (Feintuck, 1997). Any public problem therefore must have meaningful citizen participation. Therefore, public media can

promote greater public engagement and understanding while also strengthening public accountability and governance, all of which can play a role in social, political, and economic growth.

7.5 Public policy and the public broadcasting

Fourie (2017:14) states that for "critical debate about issues affecting the orderly functioning of society" and "exposure and questioning of anyone and anything that threatens or may threaten the values and norms of society and its orderly functioning," public broadcasters have an obligation to produce a variety of content. These functions should be free and available to everyone. The public broadcaster should provide excellent programming aimed at redressing historical injustices. Consequently, the public broadcaster should participate actively in governance.

It is expected that PBS would provide a venue for public discourse. Because it is available to everyone, PBS gives individuals, especially the underprivileged and marginalised, a platform to voice their concerns to the ruling class and government. These platforms facilitate the examination of societal concerns. Additionally, the public broadcaster can help shape policy decisions made by the government and encourage and strengthen public involvement in policymaking.

7.6 The case of BBC: International model

Crisell (2022) is of the view that most individuals equate the Public Broadcasting Service with the British Broadcasting Service. For this reason, it would be more relevant and beneficial to look at some of the traits that have influenced this broadcaster. The British Broadcasting Company LTD, or BBC, was established in October 1992 (Crisell, 2002). In January 1923, the Post Office gave it the only right to broadcast (Mills, 2016). The Royal Charter, whereupon the broadcaster was established, mandates that the BBC educate, inform, and enlighten (Andy, 2022).

The BBC is one of the most important institutions in Great Britain and the world's most reputable and well-known news organisation. However, Mills (2016) and Tleane and Duncan (2003) argue that the appointment of politicians to the BBC's Senior Executives and Board of Trustees, currently

known as the Board of Trustees, casts doubt on the organization's impartiality, accountability, and independence.

Public nominations and intense public interviews are used to select the SABC Board. The BBC board of governors is appointed by government representatives. Consequently, the board is now seen as reporting to the state and federal governments rather than the general public. According to Tleane and Duncan (2003), the government has the authority to request that the BBC broadcast any notification through the government secretary, who in turn can order any BBC station to cease any broadcast that is judged unsuitable. The BBC may find it more difficult to answer to the public as a result of these measures and the nominations made to the board.

7.7 Theoretical framework study

This section covers the study's theoretical framework. This study uses the Press' social responsibility theory and Accountability theory to understand how broadcasting accountability functions.

7.7.1 Accountability theory

Tetlock (1999) developed the accountability theory, which has been applied to organisational research with success. Vance et al. (2015) state that the accountability theory explains how someone begins to consider and feel responsible for their method of making decisions and judgements because they felt obliged to defend their actions to other people or organisations. If someone feels accountable for the choices they make and the outcomes they achieve, they are more inclined to thoroughly analyse and plan out their path of action.

Fox and Meyer (1995) define accountability as the obligation of the government and its representatives to the people to fulfil previously declared goals and to publicly answer for them. It is also believed that public officials must make a commitment to accepting accountability for their deeds and inactions, both individually and collectively. In this case, it is the duty of every public

servant to act in the public interest, in accordance with their conscience, and to solve every issue in a knowledgeable and inclusive manner.

Haque (2000) defined Public Accountability, as it relates to the overall governance system as the answerability of public officials to the public for their actions and inactions for whereby both internal and external penalties are applied. Depending on the sort of accountability used and the person, group, or institution that the public official answers to, accountability can take many various forms. The following are the most typical sorts of accountabilities.

7.7.1.1 Horizontal Accountability

This occurs when official public accountability bodies, including the parliament and the judiciary, exercise their autonomous power and official capacities to investigate illegal tactics used by a specific official in the performance of their duties, with the ultimate goal of penalising them. Put differently, horizontal accountability pertains to the capacity of public institutions to oversee transgressions committed by other arms of the government and public organisations. As a result, the judiciary and parliament are the main horizontal constitutional balances on the power of the administration, while the judiciary holds the executive branch legally accountable, parliament holds the executive politically accountable (Haque, 2000).

7.7.1.2 Vertical Accountability

According to Haque (2000), the process serves as a means by which civil society and the broader public cooperate to guarantee that public employees fulfil strict performance standards. It usually occurs in settings involving a classic principal-agent relationship when the agent has vertical accountability to their immediate superiors once the principle has granted them authority. The parliament is an important player in vertical accountability even though it is frequently recognised as a key institution in agreements of horizontal responsibility. Public hearings, committee investigations, and public petitions are some of the ways that parliament provides a forum for individuals and civil groups to question the government and, if required, seek parliamentary reprimand.

In summary, Accountability can be defined as the responsibility for results and the requirement that public servants who are either elected or appointed officials provide a reasonable justification for the use of the resources, power, and other privileges entrusted to them on behalf of the taxpayers (Kearns., 1994). The accountability theory is crucial to this study because it aims to create a society where the powerful are held accountable to the people, where pertinent information is shared and explained, where there is room for democratic initiative, and where people can freely express their opinions. The public holds the media accountable for providing platforms for the general people to participate in its programming.

7.7.2 The Press social responsibility theory

The guiding concept social responsibility theory of the press is that it should be free to fulfil its role of keeping the government accountable to the public, but it should do so responsibly (Okuna & Omenugha., 2012). This theory contends that government control over the media is necessary to persuade them to carry out their social obligations.

Though the press is free to criticise the government and other institutions, the idea also maintains that the press has certain fundamental obligations to uphold social order (Bittner., 1989). Stated differently, the media is free to criticise the government and other institutions, but it also has a responsibility to protect democracy by providing accurate information to the public and taking into account the needs and interests of society (Uzuegbunam., 2013). As such, the media cannot operate with the freedom that it would like.

This theory was developed by the Commission on Freedom of the Press, which recognised that the media was not fulfilling basic roles in society, such as providing self-sufficiency, information, entertainment, enlightenment, monitoring, and advertising. As a result, the Commission urged the media to:

- Serve as a platform for personal expression;

- Provide a comprehensive, perceptive, and truthful and contextualised report of the day's events, placing them in their proper context and
- Take responsibility for stating clearly and concisely the goals and principles of society; and provide free and unfettered access to the latest data.

In summary, the press's social responsibility doctrine mandates that press freedom be used while giving society's interests priority (Moemeka., 1991).

8. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

This section covers the methodology of the research. The research design, sample strategies, data collection and analysis methods, research paradigm, research approach, and research methodology are emphasised in the conversation. The methods used to guarantee the accuracy and dependability of the research findings are also discussed.

8.1 Paradigm for research

The interpretivism research paradigm serves as the foundation for the proposed investigation. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) present the interpretivism position, which holds that when doing social science research, it is essential to understand the attitudes, intentions, and logic of research subjects. This facilitated the interpretation of the collected viewpoints with respect to the study problem. Due to the fact that the study examines SABC Radio's role on NHI policy and legislation with regard to knowledge dissemination and accountability, it is imperative that we understand the phenomenon from the viewpoints of those engaged.

The study challenge was completely explored by closely examining the broadcaster's connections between different stakeholders and the ways in which they guarantee that the public interest objective is accomplished. With this thorough understanding, it was simpler to offer reasoned recommendations for improvement.

8.2 Research approach

The research paradigm of interpretivism serves as the study's compass as it employs a qualitative approach. The purpose of qualitative research is to investigate and make an effort to comprehend the meanings that people or groups assign to social or human problems (Creswell., 2014). Inductive analysis of the data is a step in the research process that involves collecting data from participants' settings. Qualitative research was selected for this study because it can provide in-depth details explaining the management of SABC Radio, Presenters, Senior Producers and Executive Producers' thoughts and ideas regarding the broadcaster's role in advancing NHI bill. The study's findings will include in-depth examinations of the broadcaster's operations, a catalogue of challenges it encounters, and suggestions for resolving those challenges.

8.3 Design of research

A research design, as observed by Creswell (2014), outlines the approaches and methods utilised to conduct research. The general assumptions of the research as well as the techniques for collecting and evaluating data are described in these plans and processes.

The proposed study used a case study design and adhered to the qualitative research approach. A case study, as defined by Yin (2016), is a thorough examination of a research question within the framework of the real world, supported by a range of evidence sources. This study critically investigated Phalaphala FM and SAfm, the two radio stations owned by SABC, in order to gain a better understanding of their responsibilities in information distribution and accountability in NHI. Senior Producers, Executive Producers, and Presenters of the two SABC Radios will be interviewed in order to gather fresh insights into the research problem and the public broadcaster's performance with regard to information dissemination and accountability.

There were also two focus groups with the listeners. The researcher looked at the words guests used and the listeners reactions in relation to NHI-related programmes on both stations.

8.4 Techniques for research

This section addresses the research techniques that were used in the proposed study. The methods for data gathering, data analysis, and sampling are a few examples of these.

8.4.1 Population and sampling

Collis and Hussey (2014) define a population as the entirety of all items, subjects, or participants that have the same set of characteristics. Senior Producers, Producers, Presenters and Executive Producers from SABC Radio took part in the study.

From this demographic, a sample was selected. A sample is a subset of the population, according to Bryman (2016). According to Babbie (2012), there are two categories of sampling approaches available for selection: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. The sampling strategy employed for the proposed study was non-probability sampling because it is the category of sampling procedures most strongly associated with qualitative research. Non-probability sampling is a group of sampling methods where it is unknown how likely it is to choose a specific object or unit (Bryman, 2016). Consequently, the SABC Radio Producers, Senior Producers, Executive Producers, and Presenters who participated in this study were chosen through a non-random process. Experts in SABC Radio's accountability and knowledge-dissemination duties, as well as the public broadcaster's involvement in NHI policy, legislation, and implementation ideas, were needed for the study. Consequently, only those who were aware of this were chosen. There were 24 people in the sample overall.

Additionally, two focus groups were utilised to get feedback from listeners regarding how the two radio stations are distributing information about NHI.

8.4.2 Selection criteria

The selection of participants for this study was driven by the need to gather in-depth and informed perspectives on the SABC's role in disseminating information and ensuring accountability in the

context of the NHI bill. To achieve this, purposive sampling was employed to identify individuals who had substantial knowledge and direct involvement in the operations of SABC Radio or had expert knowledge relevant to media and policy dissemination were included in the study.

For the SABC staff, the selection criteria focused on individuals who were directly involved in the development, production, and dissemination of content related to public policy, especially the NHI. These individuals were selected based on their roles in decision-making processes within the radio stations, their experience with public broadcasting mandates, and their familiarity with the accountability functions of the SABC. On the other hand, for focus group participants, the selection criteria aimed to include listeners with an active interest or professional expertise in media, communication, or public policy. Participants were chosen based on their ability to critically assess the SABC's programming and its impact on public awareness and engagement with the NHI bill. This included media studies scholars, former news professionals, and communication experts who could provide both lay and expert evaluations of the SABC's performance. Table 1 summarises the research's inclusion-exclusion criteria.

Table 1: Inclusion-Exclusion Criteria

Category	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
In-depth interviews: SABC staff	• Direct involvement in producing or overseeing content related to NHI or public policy. • Expertise in SABC's accountability and knowledge dissemination roles.	• Staff not involved in content related to public policy or NHI. • Administrative or technical staff not involved in editorial or production processes.
Focus group Participants (Listeners and Experts)	• Active listener of Phalaphala FM and SAfm with an interest in public policy. • Professional background in media, communication, or public policy. • Experts in media studies or public communication with relevant academic or professional	• Individuals without an active interest or professional expertise in media, communication, or public policy. • Casual listeners without regular engagement with NHI-related programming.

Category	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
	qualifications (e.g., PhD in Media Studies, MBA in Communication).	

8.4.3 Data collection method and protocol

Both primary and secondary sources of information were used in the study. A collection of data has been made, and this material is called "primary data." When it comes to research, secondary data is defined as information that has been analysed and documented to address a different research problem than the one that is currently being studied, while primary data is defined as information that was recorded, experienced, or observed immediately following an event and offers a more precise depiction of the event (Baker, 2012). Secondary data for this study were obtained from recordings of earlier NHI-related shows on the two selected radio stations. Such information allowed for a good understanding of the research problem from a number of perspectives. To obtain the recordings, the researcher sent an information request to the SABC radio archive for any recordings of programmes which discussed the NHI bill in some way between 2012 and 2022. From their query of archived programmes, only three recordings were found and availed to the researcher for analysis. This shows that there was very little coverage of the NHI bill by SABC radio during the period where debate about the bill was prominent.

Interviews that were semi-structured were used to collect primary data. The primary benefit of semi-structured interviews in this study was the use of open-ended questions, which allowed interview subjects to express themselves freely without being restricted by predefined replies. This made it easier to fully comprehend the study challenge from the perspective of people who were already familiar with the situation. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher was also able to ask participants for more details in order to better understand and go further into their answers.

Due to scheduling and availability restrictions, each participant chose the preferable mode of interviewing—online or in-person. With permission from each participant, audio recordings of the

interviews were made in order to properly capture their comments. To augment the audio recordings, notes on important topics were required.

The study also used two focus groups to get the views of listeners. According to Muijeen et al., (2020) a focus group is a research method that uses group discussion to gather data. A few carefully chosen individuals made up the small group that met to discuss a certain subject. The method was employed to look into people's thoughts as well as their thinking processes and reasons for holding certain opinions. It was especially helpful for examining people's knowledge and experiences. Six to ten participants were selected and programmes from the two stations on NHI were played to them. Participants were asked what they derived from the programmes and find out whether they felt like the stations were providing enough information. Have they been given sufficient platforms for them to participate and contribute in the NHI bill process?

8.4.3 Analysis of the data

The data for the study were analysed using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that finding themes or patterns in a dataset is the process of doing a thematic analysis. The study's conclusions are then examined in light of the identified themes. Transcription of the audio recordings was the initial stage of the data analysis procedure. After that, the researcher went over the field notes and the data transcription multiple times to become acquainted with the issues raised by the participants.

Coding data segments that link to similar topics within the study challenge was the following stage. The coded data was then be used to generate themes and sub-themes. The data was arranged into themes and sub-themes, which made it possible to exhibit various data segments in an organised manner. After that, the themes were organised to better fit the study's objectives and research questions. Following that, a discussion of the literature review's conclusions in light of participant comments about the identified themes took place.

8.5 Trustworthiness

Historically, the credibility of quantitative research has been guaranteed by impartiality, validity, and dependability (Cohen et al., 2010). This resulted from the fact that this research usually uses standardised tools for data collecting. However, qualitative research rarely employs standardised tools and typically uses smaller, non-random samples.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that the plausibility and dependability of the information and data analysis affect the degree of trustworthiness and proposed four criteria—credibility, transferability, dependability, and reproducibility—to evaluate the reliability of qualitative research. We go into further detail about these below.

8.5.1 Credibility

Credibility, according to Babbie (2012), is the degree of reliability connected to data and data analysis. In quantitative research, credibility and internal validity are synonymous terms. Credibility is mostly determined by the calibre of the information obtained rather than its quantity (Devine & Heath, 2012). To verify the study's legitimacy, the results were examined with a few of the participants to make sure their perspectives were appropriately portrayed.

8.5.2 Transferability

Transferability, according to Cohen et al. (2010), is the degree to which the research findings are applicable in different settings. Researchers use the term "transferability" when discussing their findings. The methods employed was thoroughly explained to ensure the study's transferability. Furthermore, a comprehensive rationale for employing these methods was given.

8.5.3 Dependability

According to Babbie (2012: 28), dependability is "the capacity to ensure that the research findings are consistent and repeatable." The standards applied to the research's implementation, analysis,

and presentation determine how reliable the findings are. This study's dependability was guaranteed by the full publication of all the procedures used to conduct it, guaranteeing that any researcher seeking to repeat the study would receive results that were comparable.

8.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the extent to which the collected data substantiate the research conclusions. The procedure determines whether the researcher was biased during the course of the study. A comprehensive and comprehensible explanation of the methods used to conduct the inquiry and the decision-making process is included in order to ensure that the research's findings may be independently validated.

8.6 Research limitations

The following limitations are notable:

- The study only focused on two SABC radio stations, SAfm and Phalaphala FM, which may not be representative of all SABC radio stations. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to other SABC radio stations or other public broadcasters in different countries.

- Additionally, the study relied on focus group discussions and interviews, which may not be representative of the views of the broader South African population. The sample size was also relatively small, as is usually the case with qualitative primary research, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Quantitative research based on a large sample of listeners, non-listeners and broadcasters could provide more illuminating perspectives.

- Moreover, the study did not explore the impact of social media and other digital platforms on public understanding and participation in discussions related to policy decision-making processes. While there was some mention of the radio stations' use of other media for engaging listeners, it could be more interesting to explore the importance of such engagements, and how social media affects the extent to which listeners feel more engaged with the radio stations.

- Due to time and budget constraints, the study used a small sample size. A large-sized sample cannot be covered in the allowed time due to time constraints and the study's reliance on time-consuming in-depth semi-structured interviews and recorded programmes.

- Another disadvantage of the researcher positionality was that some participants were unwilling to give truthful information about the research questions in order to support their opinions. This limitation made some subordinates afraid to speak the truth for fear of reprisals from their superiors. The researcher developed several substitute questions with follow-up questions to get honest answers in order to resolve this problem. In case they were worried that their supervisors or coworkers may overhear, some of the identified participants were additionally interviewed online in a private setting. Because participants were assured anonymity and privacy, this restriction had less of an effect.

8.7 Ethics

The study made every effort to conduct this research in accordance with ethical norms. Resnik (2015) described Ethics as a process, approach, or way of thinking on how to make decisions and analyse difficult issues and dilemmas.

According to Sales (2000) ethical norms encourage the values that are crucial to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness, as research frequently includes a considerable degree of cooperation and coordination among many different people in various fields and institutions. For instance, numerous ethical standards in research, such as authorship standards, copyright and patenting laws, data sharing laws, and peer review confidentiality regulations, are created to safeguard intellectual property rights while promoting collaboration. Researchers want to be acknowledged for their work and do not want their concepts to be misappropriated or revealed too soon.

Resnik (2015) explains several ethical guidelines to follow when conducting research. First, norms support the goals of research, including truth, knowledge, and error prevention. Prohibitions on

creating, manipulating, or misrepresenting research data, for instance, serve to minimise mistake and advance the truth.

Second, as research frequently entails extensive collaboration and coordination across a wide range of individuals from many institutions and disciplines, ethical norms support the principles of accountability, trust, respect, and justice—values that are fundamental to collaborative work. For instance, a lot of ethical standards in research, such authorship guidelines, copyright and patenting policies, data sharing policies, and peer review confidentiality rules, are made to safeguard intellectual property rights while promoting cooperation. The majority of researchers prefer to be acknowledged for their work and do not want their concepts to be stolen or made public too soon. Third, public support for research is bolstered by adhering to ethical standards in the field. If people have faith in the calibre and objectivity of the research, they are more inclined to support it.
Ultimately, several research standards uphold a host of other significant moral and social ideals, including legal compliance, animal welfare, social responsibility, human rights, and public health and safety. Research ethics violations can have a serious negative impact on the public, students, and subjects, both human and animal. For instance, a researcher who falsifies data in a clinical study could endanger the health and safety of patients or perhaps cause them injury. Similarly, a researcher who disregards rules and laws on biological safety or radiation safety could endanger the lives of patients or cause harm to themselves (Resnik ,2015).

A written request for permission to gather data from SABC was sent to management. Data collection could not start until official organisation authorization was received. Research participants had the choice to engage willingly and provide informed consent. As a consequence, nobody felt pressured to take part in the study. Potential participants were given sufficient information about the study, the participation processed, and any associated hazards before deciding whether or not to accept the invitation to participate. Participants were required to complete a permission form stating their agreement to participate in the study.

Anonymity of participants was also preserved in this investigation. The data was carefully screened to make sure it could not be connected to any particular study subject, even though the researcher may have been familiar with the research subjects and the information they supplied.

Consequently, participant identities were not included in any research-related document. Each participant's data was identified by a letter from the alphabet. Additionally, the privacy of the data gathered will be protected. This data will not be available to anyone who is not directly working on the study project. Electronic data will be secured by passwords that are known only to the researcher, and documents will be maintained under lock and key.

8.8. Study Outline

There are five chapters in the report for this study. Below is a brief synopsis of each chapter's contents.

Chapter One provides a summary of the study from chapter one. The research background, topic, goal, objectives, and questions are covered in this chapter, along with the significance of the study.

The theoretical and conceptual basis of the study is presented and examined in chapter two. Examining the theoretical underpinnings of the research as well as actual investigations on public broadcaster accountability and information dissemination responsibilities.

The third chapter provides an overview and explanation of the research technique. This chapter discusses the research philosophy. This chapter covers the research design and methodology, sample strategy, data gathering strategy, and data analysis strategy. There is also discussion of ethical concerns and the reliability of research.

The analysis of primary and secondary data is described in chapter four. Discussion of themes identified through data analysis is supported with viewpoints from the literature and interview replies.

The results, conclusions, and suggestions for methods to strengthen SABC's accountability and information-dissemination responsibilities in NHI matters are covered in the fifth and final chapter.

9. PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study into the role played by SABC as a public broadcaster in disseminating information relating to the NHI bill. Results are based on qualitative primary and secondary data gathered for the study. Primary data were collected through interviews with individuals working at SAfm and Phalaphala FM, the two radio stations selected to represent the SABC, as well as two focus groups with listeners of the stations and other key informants. Meanwhile, secondary data were sourced from recordings of past programming from the stations on matters that concerned the NHI bill. This chapter covers the radio stations' handling of the NHI bill in their programming, the relationship between the SABC and the South African government, as well as the viewers' perspectives on the SABC's programs relating to the NHI.

9.2 SABC radio handling of NHI-related programming

One of the study's goals was to explore the SABC's handling of content relating to the NHI bill. Key areas focused on by this study include the extent of time allocated to discussing the bill on air, the quality of guests invited for such discussions, and the content covered.

9.1.1 Interviewees Coding

Table 2: Description of participants

Pseudonym	Description
Interviewee 1 Recording	Government Representative
Interviewee 2 Recording	Private Health Care Representative
Interviewee 3 Recording	Private health Cre Representative
Interview Participant 1	Executive Producer
Interview Participant 2	Producer
Interview Participant 3	Presenter
Interview Participant 4	Senior Producer
Interview Participant 5	Producer
Interview Participant 6	Producer
Interview Participant 7	Senior Producer

Pseudonym	Description
Interview Participant 8	Presenter
Interview Participant 9	Producer
Interview Participant 10	Producer
Focus Group Participant 1	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 2	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 3	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 4	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 5	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 6	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 7	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 8	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 9	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 10	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 11	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 12	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 13	Community Member
Focus Group Participant 14	Community Member

9.1.2 Coverage of the NHI bill

Using secondary data sourced from recordings of radio programs, it was observed that both SAfm and Phalaphala FM had dedicated very little time to programming related to discussing the NHI bill. From the information request sent and the subsequent database search, only three recordings were availed. One recording had four individual interviews, while the other two recordings had one interview each, making a total of six interviews. The interviews covered the topics of clarification of the NHI bill, discussions on the bill's implications for South African citizens, and providers of medical insurance and services, and issues around the constitutionality of the bill. Figure 1 shows a word cloud generated from the six interviews, showing the most mentioned words throughout.



Figure 1: Discussing the NHI bill: Most frequently mentioned words.

From Figure 1, some of the keywords provide insight into the kinds of discussions that were held by SAfm and Phalaphala FM around the NHI bill. For instance, the word "Doctor" mostly refers to the designations of the guests on the shows, "government" was mentioned as the originator of the bill, the "private" sector was mentioned in line with the bill's implications for private healthcare providers, and "people" were mentioned as the targeted beneficiaries.

While analysing the content covered during the radio programmes, evidence suggested that the radio stations were playing a crucial part in interrogating key issues around the bill, entertaining diverse perspectives, and ensuring the general public becomes better informed. For instance, in the programme which had four interviewees, the guests included the Deputy Director General of the NHI, a healthcare consultant, an officer from the Government Employees Medical Scheme, and the CEO of Discovery Health. The discussions show that the radio stations allowed government representatives to present their case, while also allowing private-sector practitioners to comment on how they think the bill will affect them. When asked about how the bill will relate to private-sector providers, the government representative had the following to say:

> *"Yes, well, the NHI will contract with public and private providers. So, your GP will now be part of the system. We anticipate your specialists as well as other private providers would be part of this system so that all South Africans will access services from public and private providers based on their choice about who they think would provide them with the most appropriate service and the convenience, etc".* ***Recording 1, interview 1***

While the NHI representative was confident that the new system will incorporate all stakeholders, private practitioners had their own reservations. Perspectives from private healthcare providers show that they believe the NHI will not completely replace them as intended. The following quotes attest:

> *"As you've heard from several of the other guests, I think there's no doubt that even over the very protracted implementation period and thereafter the NHI is never going to meet all of the needs of all of the people in this country."* ***Recording 1, Interview 2***

> *"Once the NHI is introduced, all citizens will have access to a basic set of services funded through the fund through some form of taxation. Thereafter, any services that the fund does not provide can be procured through top-up purchasing. At that point, I would anticipate that other medical schemes would still be provided".* ***Recording 1, Interview 3***

From the above quotes, the radio stations were notably playing their roles of allowing perspectives from different groups to discuss the same bill. Other recordings analysed also corroborate this, with one recording including an interview with a representative of a political party which was challenging the constitutionality of the bill. From that interview, the political party was able to freely air their reservations about how the bill will affect intergovernmental relations, the high R256 billion anticipated cost, and the impact of the bill on the increased citizen tax burden. Based on the content of the interviews and the quality of guests invited, the researcher posits that the SABC radio stations were playing a fair role in interrogating the bill and informing the public. However, a major limitation noted was the evidently limited time dedicated to discussing the bill, potentially leaving listeners still uninformed. Similarly, in line with Buckley et al. (2011), the radio interviews crucially lacked discussions with non-experts who are still affected by the bill, a key component of a public broadcaster's information dissemination role. The next subsection

interrogates the radio stations' information dissemination further by considering the extent to which they provided listeners with a platform to engage the bill.

9.1.3 Provision of a platform for audiences to engage with the bill

As Feintuck and Varney (2006) content, public broadcasters should be providing the general populace with a platform for engagement, especially in matters of public interest such as the NHI bill. For this study, perspectives of both SABC radio broadcasters and listeners were collected through interviews and focus group discussions to establish whether the radio stations were providing a sufficient platform for listeners to learn about and engage the bill.

The responses from various broadcasters provide insights into their perceptions of how SABC Radio serves as a platform for facilitating audience engagement and discussion on the NHI bill and other legislative matters. Several recurring themes and perspectives emerged from their answers. To begin with, many broadcasters highlighted the multifaceted approach that SABC Radio employs to engage its audience in discussions related to the NHI bill. Participant 1 emphasised the utilization of various mediums, such as radio, WhatsApp, Twitter, and email, to encourage participation. The participant further mentioned that engagement begins before the live radio program through platforms like Facebook and Twitter. According to most participants, these interactions on social media build up the conversation and encourage active participation from listeners. The following quote attests:

> *"...we produce a programme which definitely after that when the programme goes live on air, we also give them a chance to participate live on air. That is telephonically, and they also have a chance to communicate through WhatsApp and also through Twitter and we also engage them through e-mail."* ***Interview Participant 1***

Furthermore, multiple broadcasters underlined the transformation of SABC Radio into an interactive platform facilitated by advancements in technology and social media. One participant mentioned that over the past decade, SABC Radio has become highly interactive, providing

citizens with diverse means of communication, including social media, to connect with both broadcasters and those in positions of power. This is supported by the below quote:

> *"…with the advent of social media that has changed and expanded the level of communication with the citizenry and that has played quite a significant role in expanding the level of connectedness…"* ***Interview Participant 8***

Moreover, respondents highlighted that SABC Radio provides a platform for a diverse range of perspectives on the NHI bill. Listeners are not only encouraged to share their views, but the broadcaster also facilitates discussions with stakeholders, including those who may oppose the policy, to present a balanced and comprehensive picture. The following quote attests:

> *"…we give our audience this ability to voice their concerns on the National Health insurance… we have also invited stakeholders who are also raised concerns about the NHI…"* ***Interview Participant 3***

The above quote is however only partially supported by the findings from radio excerpt recordings. As noted earlier, these recordings did not contain any discussions with ordinary citizens, but rather NHI representatives, political parties, and private medical insurance providers. Regardless, several broadcasters still argued that they value public input in shaping the content of radio programs. Many suggested that listeners often contribute ideas and topics for discussion. This implies that audience feedback and interests influence programming decisions, ensuring coverage of subjects that resonate with the public. The following quote supports this:

> *"SAfm gives an opportunity to our listeners to be part of the conversations and also at times they are the ones who give us pointers in terms of what to talk about as well."* ***Interview Participant 4***

However, some broadcasters 6expressed concerns about time limitations within current affairs programming, leading to reduced focus on important issues such as the NHI bill. They feel that due to reduced time slots, there's a constraint on engaging listeners in-depth on complex topics

like the NHI bill. This lack of time may lead to insufficient education and information-sharing with the public. This argument is supported by the following quote:

> *"...we have very limited time that we get to share with our listeners… we have to make sure that we squeeze in as much as we can use wisely and definitely make sure that we take time to get to engage the listeners and get to hear their views…"* ***Interview Participant 6***

The study also considered viewpoints from listeners on their involvement in radio programmes discussing matters of public interest. Analysis of focus group results revealed several themes. To begin with, listeners countered the broadcasters' views that there has been sufficient coverage, as they expressed that there is a lack of comprehensive information available to the public about the NHI bill. Many indicated that they find it difficult to grasp the full scope and implications of the bill due to fragmented and incomplete information. Some participants mentioned that they had attended public hearings on the NHI and still felt confused about its details and consequences. This lack of understanding contributes to public apathy and scepticism. The following quote supports this:

> *"Not much information was provided with the medium-term budget speech... they're still at the planning phase, they're still talking about policies... not much budget was committed to this NHI... we don't know what is going to happen with the NHI."* ***FGD Participant 2***

While commenting after listening through recordings of radio programmes covering the NHI bill, several participants expressed disappointment with the depth and breadth of media coverage on the topic. They felt that the media, including radio programs, had not adequately explored the NHI and its various aspects. Participants specifically pointed out that the media had not sufficiently questioned politicians or experts about critical issues surrounding the NHI and how it will affect the ordinary South African. The following quote relates:

> *"I don't think much time was given and I cannot say confidently that it left me... not enough questions were asked, which would leave listeners wiser."* ***FGD Participant 1***

In addition, listeners highlighted the need for platforms that allow the public to engage with policymakers, experts, and representatives on the topic of the NHI. They felt that there were limited opportunities for listeners to directly ask questions, seek clarification, and voice their concerns to those in positions of authority, such as government officials and Members of Parliament. Some participants compared the public engagement opportunities for NHI with those provided during election campaigns, suggesting that similar forums could be beneficial for this policy. Meanwhile, listeners from rural and underserved areas shared their unique challenges and concerns regarding healthcare access. They raised issues related to dilapidated hospitals, lack of clinics, and the difficulties faced by those who must travel long distances for medical care. These participants highlighted the potential impact of the NHI on improving healthcare access in these areas. This information showed that the discontent and reservations that individuals still have about healthcare in South Africa in general, and the NHI bill in particular, have still not been clarified despite media coverage of the subject. The following quotes the first one on the availability of health equipment and the second on infrastructure and human resource deficiencies attest:

> *"We've got a backlog of cases that are renal... all the good hospitals in urban areas, we don't have any... I don't understand how they're going to roll out this NHI."* ***FGD Participant 2***
>
> *"You will find that in communities there's a lack of clinics and availability of doctors... people are being transported to nearest hospitals by cars from homes. There is a lack of emergency services."* ***FGD participant 4***

The focus group discussions revealed disparities in perceptions between broadcasters and listeners regarding the coverage and impact of the NHI bill. In the earlier analysis, the broadcasters highlighted their efforts to engage with government officials, experts, and policymakers on the bill. They believed that they provided a platform for discussing the policy and its implications. They also acknowledged some challenges in terms of obtaining clear and consistent information from official sources. However, they saw their role as mediators of information between experts and the public. On the other hand, the listeners expressed dissatisfaction with the depth of coverage and public engagement opportunities related to the NHI. They perceived a lack of comprehensive information, questioned the accountability of politicians, and called for more open forums for

direct public engagement. They also emphasized the importance of disseminating information clearly and transparently, particularly to rural and underserved communities.

Overall, while broadcasters acknowledged their efforts to cover the NHI bill, listeners highlighted the gaps they perceived in terms of comprehensive information, public engagement, and media accountability. The discussion suggests that there is room for improvement in the way media, particularly radio, informs the public about complex policies like the NHI and provides opportunities for meaningful engagement. This comparison of views underscores the importance of bridging the gap between media professionals and their audiences to ensure that information is effectively communicated and understood. The next section further unpacks the SABC's role by discussing the listeners' awareness of the NHI bill.

9.2 Listeners' awareness of the NHI bill

Both interviews and focus group discussions collected some responses on the extent to which listeners of SABC radio programmes were aware of the NHI bill. In the focus group discussions, participants were asked to first listen to the recordings of previous programmes covering the bill, then later asked to indicate whether listening to the programmes improved their understanding of the topic. Results are presented in this section.

9.2.1 Level of awareness

The responses obtained from 10 interviews with broadcasters shed light on the extent to which South Africans are aware of the NHI bill. These broadcasters, who are engaged in disseminating information to the public, offer diverse perspectives that collectively highlight the limited awareness and understanding of the NHI bill among the South African population.

One key perspective related to the limited understanding and lack of information about the bill. Several respondents highlighted the lack of understanding and information regarding the NHI bill among the general population. One participant, for instance, expressed that through interactions with listeners, it became evident that there is a substantial lack of information among people,

especially those who engage with their programs. One listener's misconception about the NHI bill's implications, particularly the misconception that private practitioners would be eliminated, underscored the extent of the misunderstanding. Participants attributed this lack of understanding to the inadequate explanation of key concepts related to the NHI bill. The following quotes attest to this narrative:

> *"I believe they do not have enough information containing the NHI... People don't understand that their private practitioners will never exist the way it is."* ***Interview Participant 1***

> *"I think people don't know much about it. I think people are not even aware, if I'm to call including my parents at home, I'm sure that they still don't know but, they're avid listeners of radio stations. So, I don't think people are familiar with it, especially because not much is being said unless it is something that comes up within the government."* ***Interview Participant 2***

Moreover, a common theme that emerged from the broadcasters' responses is the insufficient coverage of the NHI bill on media platforms. Some respondents even indicated that they had no response to the question, suggesting that the NHI bill has not received significant attention. Others suggested that while there is some awareness about the NHI bill, it is not extensive due to inadequate engagement and interrogation by both the media and the SABC. The influence of commercial interests on programming decisions was also highlighted. Respondents pointed out that the shift towards revenue generation and commercial mandates has impacted the focus of media content, with topics related to revenue generation often overshadowing public education, including information about the NHI bill. The following quotes are in support:

> *"The SABC now is no longer like a public broadcaster of the way to us. It's now operating like a commercially registered business."* ***Interview Participant 1***

> *"Because of the nature of the funding model... we are looking at them as consumers that can bring in the numbers that will intend bring in revenue for the broadcaster and make it sustainable."* ***Interview Participant 8***

However, while some broadcasters indicated that some South Africans do understand the NHI bill to a certain extent, they cautioned against generalizing this awareness to the entire population. These participants mentioned that engagement with listeners on their radio shows provided insights into varying levels of understanding. Other broadcasters echoed a similar sentiment, suggesting that although listeners react to discussions about the NHI bill, their understanding is influenced by political parties and activist organizations, indicating the need for more public education.

> *"You can engage on it with our listeners... some people who do understand it, but you can't necessarily say that all South Africans are aware of this."* ***Interview Participant 3***
>
> *"I don't think a lot of people can unpack what NHI is... because news moves fast... I don't think we have had time to sit and talk about it."* ***Interview Participant 4***

Several respondents emphasized the importance of public education and engagement regarding the NHI bill. Participants expressed that people are not familiar with the bill and attributed this to the lack of substantial information sharing, especially on platforms like SABC Television. Respondents further stressed the need for investment in public education to ensure that the public receives accurate and comprehensive information about the NHI bill. They also noted that the funding model and commercial interests have shifted priorities, leading to a reduced focus on public mandate stories like the NHI bill. The following quotes attest to this:

> *"Surely if it was important for us, as the SABC, to share that information, surely that was a good platform..."* ***Interview Participant 2***
>
> *"They mainly react to what political parties are saying. Activist organizations. But their understanding? No, I think they are not well-educated about what the bill is about."* ***Interview Participant 10***

Overall, the broadcasters' responses collectively indicate that South Africans generally lack a comprehensive understanding of the NHI bill. While there are varying levels of awareness among different segments of the population, the prevailing sentiment is that more needs to be done to

provide accurate, accessible, and well-explained information about the NHI bill. Commercial influences and shifts in media priorities have contributed to the limited coverage and engagement on the topic. The influence of commercialisation will be further explored in 4.4. Responses on awareness underscore the importance of public education and engagement efforts to improve awareness and understanding of the NHI bill among South Africans. The next section analyses listeners' perspectives on the extent to which listening to radio programs improved their understanding of the NHI bill.

9.2.2 Influence of SABC radio programming on awareness of the NHI bill

Regarding the influence of radio programmes on listeners' awareness of the NHI bill, most emerging perspectives were similar to the previous discussion on whether listeners felt they were being given a sufficient platform. For instance, several participants expressed concerns about the depth and breadth of information provided in the SABC radio programs. They felt that the topics related to the NHI were not adequately covered, and the interviews lacked a comprehensive exploration of the subject. One participant pointed out the follows:

> *"I don't think much time was given, and I cannot say confidently that it left me. I also think that the structuring of the questions in my view... didn't uncover much. More could have been done to interrogate the issues deeper."* ***FGD Participant 6***

This sentiment suggests that the radio programs may have fallen short of addressing listeners' need for in-depth analysis and comprehensive explanations of NHI-related issues. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of listener participation and questioning in enhancing understanding. They noted that forums in which listeners can directly ask questions to politicians or experts were rare in the SABC radio programs. As a result, the coverage remained lacking despite the level of expertise of the guests invited. One participant stated:

> *"There are a lot of questions which I feel are not asked... I don't think that the media, so far, has created that platform which will make people a bit wiser."* ***FGD Participant 5***

This indicates that listener engagement and the opportunity to ask probing questions were seen as crucial elements missing from the programs. Furthermore, participants voiced concerns about the lack of political will and the delayed implementation of the NHI bill. Some participants viewed the NHI as a bill that could potentially address the imbalances in healthcare access, especially in rural areas. They questioned why the implementation of NHI had been delayed for years, highlighting governance failures as a significant issue. One participant asserted as follows:

> *"If you check the scope of NHI so far... there's no political will to do it because... the very same national government that's supposed to implement this NHI bill is not doing enough."* ***FGD Participant 7***

This theme underscores the participants' scepticism about the government's commitment to implementing the NHI effectively, and the lack of sufficient media coverage to clarify on such grievances. In rectifying such issues, listeners expressed their belief that media, including the SABC, should play a role in public awareness and education about the NHI. They emphasized the need for the media to educate the public about the policy's implications, benefits, and challenges. The following quote attests:

> *"There's not been a level of engagement at the level of the community... people need to understand what this NHI is about, so we can use media and also radio to try and advance the idea or the cost of what do we mean by NHI."* ***FGD Participant 3***

In line with Heller (2009) and Buckley et al. (2011), this theme highlights the role of media in bridging the information gap and facilitating informed public discourse. With radio programs providing coverage even in remote areas, there should be little to justify why a crucial bill like the NHI bill is not widely understood across South Africa.

There was however a small group of listeners who expressed that they understood the NHI bill, partly contributed to by the SABC radio coverage. Such participants were able to provide some outline of their understanding of how the NHI will be working in the future, and how ordinary individuals will be affected.

"After going through those recordings of the National Health Insurance bill, the background that I could give is the fact that through this National Health insurance, they'll be bringing a change, at least they want it to be fair or rather we as individuals can be at the same level where we look at public hospitals and private hospitals." ***FGD participant 1***

Overall, the focus group discussions revealed that participants had mixed views on whether listening to SABC radio programs enhanced their understanding of the NHI bill. While some participants felt that the programs lacked sufficient coverage and engagement, others emphasized the need for more comprehensive public education and awareness campaigns. Participants expressed concerns about political will, policy implementation, and the broader healthcare system. The analysis highlights the importance of providing more comprehensive, engaging, and informative programming to enhance public understanding and participation in discussions related to the NHI bill. However, as noted by scholars such as Jjuuko (2005) and Mills (2016), public broadcasters' performance of their duties is often negatively impacted by political interference as well as other mitigating circumstances such as commercialisation. Such issues may affect the coverage of issues and the quality and trustworthiness of information disseminated to the general populace. The purpose of the next section is to explore how the SABC's relationship with the South African government affects its coverage of key public interest matters.

9.3 The SABC Radio and government relationship

A key consideration of the study included exploring the South African government's ties with SABC radio. This investigation set out to investigate the ways in which the government supports the SABC and the ways in which that support impacts the public broadcaster's independence. Upon the analysis of data, several key themes regarding the relationship between the SABC and the government were revealed. These themes include the level of financial support from the government, the impact of such support on the independence of the SABC, and the political influence of the government on the SABC's programming.

9.3.1 Provision of financial support

The financial component of the partnership between the government and SABC was brought up by a number of responders. Respondents compared the financial support of SABC to that of BBC, emphasizing the discrepancy with only 12% of funding from the government for the SABC, while the BBC receives more than 75% of its funds from the British government. This limitation in funding, respondents noted, meant that the SABC has to rely on massive commercialisation to stay afloat, leading to the public broadcaster prioritising programming that generates revenue. Fundamentally, this leads to challenges whereby public interest issues such as the NHI bill take the back seat while commercially funded projects obtain more airtime. The following quote supports this:

> *"The SABC now is no longer like a public broadcaster of the way to us. It's now operating like a commercially registered business. I will have 4 programmes in a month which are talking about NHI. Everything now is the issue of money, so that simply means that there are so many private players utilising the airtime."* ***Interview Participant 1***

Additionally, due to the funding limitations for the SABC, respondents were of the view that either alternative funding models for the public broadcaster should be explored, or rather the government undertake to purchase airtime to ensure issues such as the NHI bill be discussed at length on air. One participant had the following to say:

> *"…if maybe the government was maybe providing a platform to debate the like with the health program that we have. When we are approaching elections, for example. The IEC will buy programs for the whole month, educating people about the voting process registration process. But it has never happened with the NHI bill. Government needs to invest in educating the public about the bill, and how they are going to benefit from the bill, otherwise with us as news and current affairs, we will only get to report about it when it is on the news."* ***Interview Participant 10***

The above discussions reveal a central challenge with the broadcaster's ability to educate the public about the NHI bill. If the bill is not in the news due to some conflicts such as parties challenging elements of the bill, or if there are any court cases involving the bill, broadcasters tend to stay away from covering it. In that case, if the government were to purchase airtime to ensure broad deliberations about the bill, broadcasters will be incentivized to cover it. However, while this view was shared by the majority of respondents, they also countered it by noting that financial dependence on the government raises concerns about SABC's independence, as highlighted by respondents who expressed doubts about the broadcaster's ability to remain unbiased due to the government's involvement. This is unpacked further in the next subsection.

9.3.2 Independence of the SABC

Participants had many things to say regarding the independence of the SABC from the government, especially given how the public broadcaster relies partly on government funding. Two of the 10 broadcasters who participated in the interviews declined to answer the question relating to the SABC radio's independence, citing it as a politically charged question. From the obtained responses however, it was clear that the matter of the public broadcaster's independence is an ongoing discussion issue, with various points and examples raised. For instance, as previously stated, the broadcaster's reliance on government funding was noted to be an issue that possibly compromises its independence. The following quotes attest:

> *"Why haven't we looked at other options for funding the public broadcaster in order for it to maintain its independence? Look, your independence is not there if there's someone who's funding your independence… you know what I mean? If for you to be independent, I must fund you, then your independence is compromised because if I pull back on what I'm funding you, what are you going do?"* ***Interview Participant 6***
>
> *"Though in public people appear saying we are partial and independent the hidden interference still exists."* ***Interview Participant 7***
>
> *"Though the SABC claims to be independent and impartial, it is vulnerable to government influences. That is the nature of their relationship where we have to rely on government funding."* ***Interview Participant 9***

Furthermore, participants emphasized a sense of mistrust in the relationship between the government and SABC. Some noted that the relationship hasn't reached a healthy level due to mutual criticism and lack of acknowledgement of achievements by the government. Several participants discussed historical problems of interference by political powers throughout the continent's public broadcasters, including SABC. The recent example of criticism during the elections highlighted a recurring tension between the broadcaster's role and government expectations. Such mistrusts create an environment of tension which can easily compromise the public broadcaster, as supported by the following quotes:

> *"There is a mistrust between the two governments have view, it feels... relationship as if It's not good between them and the media."* ***Interview Participant 5***

> *"The politicians and the government will always want to intervene... most governments do not realise that , they always want to have a say or even control of what is disseminated by the public broadcasters."* ***Interview Participant 8***

Still, on matters of independence, participants stressed SABC's role in providing government information to citizens while maintaining editorial independence. They argued that SABC does not act as a government mouthpiece but rather scrutinizes and presents information objectively. However, they also raised concerns about political pressure and attempts to influence stories, particularly during elections. This theme reflects the delicate balance between being a conduit for government information and maintaining journalistic integrity. The maintenance of journalistic integrity was however found to be a challenging one in an environment where politicians possibly can influence board composition and job security of individual personnel at SABC.

> *"You'll realise that there was this lady who was heading the news, the way she was running news within the SABC, she was doing things the way they have to be done. So, the arms of the government were never happy with the way she was handling things. You remember when one of the ministers, by then, Fikile Mbalula, said very openly that they lost the municipal elections because of SABC. In other words, they were saying that SABC was not campaigning for the ANC. And this is something which was not to be done, but it has been*

done for a long period of time so the more they feel bitter about that then they made sure that the lady should be released from the SABC." ***Interview Participant 1***

"The broadcaster has been compromised for such a long time. It's not that it's being compromised just now. It's been compromised for such long just from the apartheid period. Nothing changed when they instituted a new government, when we say we are in a democratic government, nothing changed. It's only that now Blacks are leading, but they also took charge of how SABC should be run. So, it means that they will be dictating while they were outside the SABC. If you check clearly, you will realise that these new members of the board, most of them are ANC members. So that thing is done deliberately to compromise the SABC and the work it does." ***Interview Participant 3***

The above direct quotes show that political interference with the SABC's operations could be fairly easy as long as politicians can have access to editorial decisions made by the broadcaster. As a result, the researcher notes that implementing measures that further shield the public broadcaster from outside interference would be crucial.

Participants further discussed the challenge of striking a balance between reporting government initiatives objectively and not appearing biased. They highlighted the delicate nature of interpreting government actions while avoiding perceptions of bias. This challenge is especially relevant when reporting on government initiatives that might be met with both support and criticism. One participant had the following to say:

"So you need to strike that balance of not being biased or even influenced by government when it comes to some of the initiatives that the government is trying to disseminate to the wider audience, through our various platforms." ***Interview Participant 3***

Others however downplayed the perception of interference in the newsroom's work, emphasizing that there isn't direct interference affecting story selection or reporting. This suggests a complex challenge of reconciling the perceived notion of interference with the actual editorial autonomy exercised by the newsroom.

"I cannot say that there's an interference in how we do our work... being in the newsroom myself, I haven't exactly experienced that." ***Interview Participant 4***

Meanwhile, others acknowledged external pressures and attempts to influence SABC's independence but emphasized the broadcaster's efforts to remain impartial and independent. The challenge lies in balancing these pressures while maintaining the public's trust and an independent journalistic stance.

"It is trying by all means to be independent as far as I can and it's not compromising the public broadcaster... the public trusts the public broadcaster." ***Interview Participant 5***

Overall, the analysis of the participants' responses revealed a spectrum of challenges in SABC's relationship with the government, including historical compromises, perceived bias, mistrust, funding-dependent independence, interference concerns, and the intricacies of balancing editorial independence while engaging with government initiatives. These challenges underscore the complexity of maintaining journalistic integrity within a context of financial dependence and external pressures. A question can arise hence to say, given all these challenges brought about by the SABC's relationship with the government, how does the broadcaster still manage to put the interests of the public first? This discussion point is further unpacked in the next subsection.

9.3.3 Ensuring public interests are put first

The SABC broadcasters interviewed all emphasized the importance of putting the public interest first in their programming. They highlighted the need to inform and educate their listeners, and to give ordinary people a voice in the policies that affect them. Some participants emphasized the importance of focusing on the listener's perspective. They highlighted the practice of tailoring content to audience preferences and needs, ensuring that topics are relevant and beneficial to listeners. Such an approach involves actively seeking feedback and addressing concerns raised by listeners to maintain engagement. The following quote attests:

"For me, I've always yearned to know what people want... constantly listening to my listeners... the views of my listeners are very important..." ***Interview Participant 2***

Other broadcasters discussed the engagement of listeners in topics of public interest. They highlighted the value of allowing listeners to express their views on government policies and initiatives. By providing a platform for open dialogue, SABC radio aims to incorporate diverse perspectives and empower the public to engage directly with government matters. This is supported by the quote below:

"...So, that's how we put their interests first by bringing the government to account on some of the concerns that have been raised with the National Health insurance... engaging with government directly to raise their concerns." ***Interview Participant 3***

In addition to engaging with public input, some participants described how SABC strives to humanize policies and educate the public. Through stories of ordinary people, SABC radio provides a platform to explain policies' impacts, empowering listeners to understand and engage with important matters. This approach aims to bridge the gap between government policies and individual experiences.

"We put the public first to say ordinary people, this is how an issue affects you as an individual, that this is what is going to either promote your interest or affect your interest in this manner." ***Interview Participant 5***

The above however is disputed by the researcher's own analysis of previous programmes as well as broadcasters' own admissions that their coverage of public interest matters is hampered by the commercialisation of the SABC. With government support limited, there is tension between limited public funding and the need to secure revenue through commercialisation. Regardless, participants still highlighted SABC's effort to cover a wide range of topics to keep its diverse audience interested. They mentioned SABC's focus on both local and international news, inviting listener participation, and incorporating their views into programming. This approach ensures a

balanced and comprehensive coverage that resonates with various segments of the audience. The following quote supports this:

> *"So, you try to cover as much wide spectrum of news as possible... make sure that those views come across and we put those views to the relevant people..."* ***Interview Participant 6***

However, broadcasters also discussed challenges related to disseminating information about government initiatives, like the National Health Insurance. For instance, they pointed out the lack of proper details and communication partnerships between the Department of Health and SABC. Despite the willingness of SABC to inform the public, challenges arise when official support is lacking in terms of purchased airtime. As a result, the SABC's ability to educate the public becomes negatively impacted, as supported by the below quote:

> *"But the willingness as well from the officials of the department also plays a role here wherein you try by all means to try to knock at the door of the departments... you don't get that support that one should get from the people who are rolling this important national programme."* ***Interview Participant 7***

Overall, the analysis of the broadcaster-provided responses revealed that SABC radio employs a listener-centric approach to prioritize public interests in programming. This involves actively seeking and incorporating listener feedback, engaging with public input on important topics, humanizing policies, fostering open dialogue, and maintaining a balanced and informed perspective. Despite challenges, data from programme analysis suggests that the SABC is putting efforts towards its commitment to its diverse audience to inform, engage, and empower the public through its programming. These views are partly supported by listeners who participated in focus group discussions, with some of them noting that they were impressed by the quality of programming and coverage of the NHI bill. Specifically, there were listeners who were impressed by how some programmes appeared to provide balanced views and involved knowledgeable guests. The quotes below attest to this:

"So, when listening to what the presenter was saying, it was quite interesting and the way he was presenting the content, he was maintaining objectivity, which is one of the newest virtues. The quality of the show was also good because he could get to hear each and everything they were saying, although some of the things were not that clearly, they were not actually clear, but I would also gather a lot of information about the NHI bill and the way which was presented, objectivity against was maintained." ***FGD Participant 5***

"I managed to listen to the to the clips, and I think for me one of the most important aspects of things that we must look onto is to try to have a more public awareness of the importance of NHI in terms of how it can be a tool that can level the uneven playfield in terms of access to healthcare." ***FGD Participant 4***

Not all listeners were impressed by the SABC radio's coverage of the NHI bill, as focus group participants highlighted not only the limitations with the programs they listened to, but also their own views about the platform they have been offered to engage the bill. For instance, one participant argued that the coverage of the bill, while including knowledgeable guests, did not allow room for listeners to ask questions from these guests to obtain clarity. Additionally, others argued that the substance of the interviews was simply not deep enough to leave viewers well informed about the NHI bill. The following quotes illustrate these issues:

"I'm also asking myself whether the SABC's platforms have given listeners a chance to ask questions. Could we say that in the SABC tackling of this topic, listeners are given a platform to ask those guests whether it's Government representatives, health ministers, or whatever questions are lingering about this NHI? It's been dubbed a very controversial proposal in the sense that people are saying if you are going to centralise the health system, you will cause problems. ***FGD Participant 1***

"Just listening to these recordings, I don't think much time was given and I cannot say confidently that it left me knowledgeable. I also think that the structuring of the questions in my view did not necessarily do justice to the enhancement of the knowledge because it sounded to me that OK, sufficient time was not provided and even when the interviewer interviews there, the politicians can overflow in words, but I felt it was just a tick box. It

didn't uncover many questions, which would leave listeners there wiser, and I also listened to the Sunday programme. ***FGD Participant 3***

As can be seen therefore, there is still debate among the broadcasters and listeners on whether SABC radio played a strong role in educating the public about the NHI bill. The researcher's own analysis of recorded programmes revealed the diversity of guests, reasonably robust deliberations, and some coverage of developments. However, there was a gross limitation in the amount of time dedicated to covering this issue, leading the researcher to posit that listeners were left still without sufficient information on the subject. Ensuring a centeredness on public interests by the public broadcaster will hence require a new approach that allows the public broadcaster to dedicate as much airtime as is required to educate the public. Otherwise, the well-meaning intentions of broadcasters will not be alone in covering the bill, especially since it is not always in the news such that it could be considered "newsworthy" for general coverage.

9.4 Chapter summary

The analysis discovered that relatively little time was spent on programming pertaining to the NHI bill on the SABC radio stations, SAfm and Phalaphala FM. However, the content covered during the limited programming showed that the radio stations played a crucial role in interrogating key issues, entertaining diverse perspectives, and ensuring the public becomes better informed. The interviews included government representatives and private-sector practitioners, allowing for a balanced discussion. However, listeners expressed a lack of comprehensive information about the NHI bill, leading to confusion and scepticism about the bill's potential implications on the ordinary South African. They also felt that the media, including radio programs, had not adequately explored the NHI and its various aspects, and had not sufficiently questioned politicians or experts. Overall, there is a need for more comprehensive and in-depth coverage of the NHI bill, as well as platforms that allow the public to engage with policymakers and experts.

The next chapter summarises the study's findings, suggests recommendations, and makes an overall conclusion.

10. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

10.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on thematically presenting findings which emerged from the primary data collected from SABC radio personnel and the general public. Results explore issues around how SABC radio covered the NHI bill, the extent to which SABC radio provided listeners with a platform to air their views, and how SABC radio relates to the South African government. This chapter presents a summarised view of these findings specifically in line with answering the study's two research questions, then provides suggested interventions for the government and for SABC radio and offers the study's overall conclusion.

10.2 Summary of findings

10.1.1 How does SABC create an informed environment for the public to fully participate and deliberate on policy decision-making processes on its Radio Stations?

The research explored whether the SABC creates an informed environment for the public to participate and deliberate on policy decision-making processes on its radio stations through an exploration of programming on the NHI health care reform bill. The study found that the SABC radio stations, SAfm and Phalaphala FM, dedicated very little time to programming related to the NHI bill. Only a few recordings were availed by the stations, which included interviews discussing various aspects of the bill, such as its implications for citizens and private healthcare providers, as well as its constitutionality. However, the content covered during the limited programming provided evidence to conclude that the radio stations played a crucial role in interrogating key issues, entertaining diverse perspectives, and ensuring the public becomes better informed. The interviews included government representatives and private-sector practitioners, allowing for a balanced discussion.

The research evidence further indicates that SABC radio stations played a significant role in interrogating key issues around the NHI bill, allowing diverse perspectives to be heard. They provided a platform for government representatives to present their cases while also allowing

private sector practitioners to voice their concerns. However, a limitation noted was the limited time dedicated to discussing the bill, potentially leaving listeners uninformed. Additionally, the absence of discussions with ordinary citizens, who would be directly affected by the bill, was a notable shortcoming. In line with this, the study further explored whether SABC Radio provided a platform for audiences to engage with the NHI bill. It found that SABC Radio employed a multifaceted approach, utilizing mediums like radio, WhatsApp, Twitter, and email to encourage audience participation. Engagement often began before live radio programs through social media platforms. However, some broadcasters expressed concerns about time limitations within current affairs programming, which restricted in-depth discussions on complex topics like the NHI bill. Furthermore, listeners expressed a lack of comprehensive information about the NHI bill, leading to confusion and scepticism about the bill's potential implications on the ordinary South African. They also felt that the media, including radio programs, had not adequately explored the NHI and its various aspects, and had not sufficiently questioned politicians or experts. Overall, listeners expressed a need for more opportunities to engage with policymakers, experts, and representatives on the topic.

The study's findings align with previous research that highlights the importance of public broadcasters in providing comprehensive and trustworthy information to the general populace (Feintuck & Varney, 2006; Buckley et al., 2011; Heller, 2009). However, the study also acknowledges that political interference and commercialisation can negatively impact public broadcasters' performance of their duties. In the context of public broadcasting, the study's recommendations in 5.4.1 suggest interventions for the SABC to improve its coverage of key public interest matters, such as the NHI bill, to enhance public understanding and participation in discussions related to policy decision-making processes.

10.1.2 How does SABC critically engage with the government on major policy decisions in a manner that is informed and accountable to the interests of the public?

The research further aimed to explore how the SABC critically engages with the government on major policy decisions in a manner that is informed and accountable to the interests of the public. The investigation discovered that the SABC and government's relationship is complex and strained, with several key themes emerging from the analysis of data. One of the central themes that emerged from this objective is the issue of financial support from the government to SABC. Respondents emphasized the significant discrepancy between the limited funding

provided by the South African government and the substantial support received by the BBC from the British government by comparison. This financial constraint places SABC in a precarious position, forcing it to rely heavily on commercialization to sustain its operations. Consequently, programming that generates revenue often takes precedence over public interest issues like the NHI bill. This financial dependency raises concerns about SABC's independence, as it may be influenced by commercial imperatives rather than public service obligations. Moreover, respondents suggested that alternative funding models should be explored or that the government should consider purchasing airtime to ensure in-depth discussions on important policies like the NHI bill. However, this proposal was met with scepticism from some participants who believed that such financial dependence on the government could compromise SABC's editorial independence. The delicate balance between financial support and editorial autonomy remains a critical concern.

The research also highlighted the ongoing debate surrounding SABC's independence from government influence. Participants expressed doubts about the broadcaster's ability to remain unbiased due to its reliance on government funding. This funding dependence raises questions about whether SABC can operate independently and serve the public's interests without fear of political interference. Mistrust between the government and SABC was evident, with participants noting mutual criticism and a lack of acknowledgement of achievements by the government. Historical instances of political interference with public broadcasters in South Africa and across the continent were also discussed. These instances, both historical and recent, contribute to an environment of tension that could compromise the independence of the public broadcaster.

Despite the challenges, SABC broadcasters emphasized the importance of putting the public interest first in their programming. They highlighted a listener-centric approach, actively seeking feedback and incorporating listener perspectives. This approach aims to inform, engage, and empower the public through balanced and comprehensive coverage of topics relevant to their lives. Participants also discussed the challenges of balancing government initiatives objectively while avoiding perceptions of bias. However, the research findings revealed discrepancies between broadcaster perspectives and listener experiences. While some listeners were impressed by the quality and balance of SABC's programming, others expressed dissatisfaction with the depth and breadth of coverage, as well as the limited opportunities for direct public engagement with policymakers. Overall, findings on this research question

underscore the complexity of maintaining journalistic integrity within a context of financial dependence and external pressures, highlighting the challenges faced by SABC in critically engaging with the government on major policy decisions.

In the context of the literature, the study's findings align with previous research that highlights the importance of public broadcasters' independence in providing comprehensive and trustworthy information to the general populace. The study also highlights the need for public broadcasters to be accountable to the interests of the public, rather than the interests of the government or commercial entities. In the context of public broadcasting, the findings underscore the challenges faced by SABC in balancing financial sustainability with its public service mandate. The issue of funding and independence is a well-documented concern in the literature on public broadcasting. The research findings align with the broader discourse on the need for sustainable funding models that do not compromise editorial independence. The tension between government support and editorial autonomy is a recurrent theme in public broadcasting worldwide. The research findings reflect the global struggle to ensure that public broadcasters can fulfil their mission to inform, educate, and engage the public while maintaining their independence from political pressures.

10.2 Theoretical implications

10.2.1 Alignment with the accountability theory

The study's theoretical framework draws upon Tetlock's (1999) Accountability Theory, emphasising the significance of individuals feeling accountable for their decisions and actions, particularly in the context of organizational research. The Accountability Theory posits that public servants who are either elected or appointed officials have a responsibility to provide a reasonable justification for the use of the resources, power, and other privileges entrusted to them on behalf of the taxpayers. As a public broadcaster with the responsibility of informing and educating the people, the SABC is considered relevant to this study. As noted by Haque (2000), there may be a gap in meeting the accountability requirement of public service if SABC radio stations only cover a small portion of the NHI bill. There seems to be some scrutiny surrounding SABC's responsibility, both vertically and horizontally.

For instance, the study found that the SABC did not provide critical information on the NHI bill to the public. The SABC's programming did not hold the government accountable for the

ratification or implementation of significant public policy as exemplified by the NHI. This finding is consistent with Kearns' (1994) definition of accountability, which emphasizes the responsibility for results and the requirement that public servants provide a reasonable justification for the use of resources, power, and other privileges entrusted to them on behalf of the taxpayers.

Moreover, the study's evidence aligns with Vance et al.'s (2015) notion that accountability prompts careful consideration of actions. In the case of SABC, the limited programming on the NHI bill may indicate a need for the broadcaster to reassess its commitment to providing comprehensive information, considering the potential impact on the public's understanding of a crucial policy decision.

Furthermore, the study found that the SABC did not create an informed environment for the public to fully participate and deliberate on policy decision-making processes on its radio stations. This finding appears to be inconsistent with the Accountability Theory, which aims to create a society where the powerful are held accountable to the people, where pertinent information is shared and explained, where there is room for democratic initiative, and where people can freely express their opinions (Fox & Meyer, 1995; Haque, 2000).

10.2.2 Alignment with the Social responsibility theory of the press

The Social responsibility theory of the press, as discussed by Okuna and Omenugha (2012), emphasises the press's role in holding the government accountable while operating responsibly. This theory acknowledges the freedom of the press but emphasises the duty to maintain social order and uphold democracy (Bittner, 1989). The findings of this study suggest that the SABC did not effectively uphold its social obligations as a public broadcaster. For instance, the study found that the SABC did not critically engage with the government on major policy decisions in a manner that is informed and accountable to the interests of the public. This finding is inconsistent with the Social responsibility theory of the Press, which emphasises the government's duty to exert control over the media to persuade them to uphold their social obligations.

In addition, the study's findings shed light on how SABC navigates its relationship with the government concerning major policy decisions, particularly focusing on the NHI bill. The

financial constraints faced by SABC, as highlighted by the participants, raise questions about the broadcaster's ability to maintain independence, a critical aspect of the Social responsibility theory. The study identifies a trade-off between financial support and editorial autonomy, echoing concerns raised by Bittner (1989) about the potential influence of external factors on the media's ability to fulfil its societal responsibilities. The strained relationship between SABC and the government, coupled with historical instances of political interference, suggests challenges in maintaining the press's social responsibility.

The study further reveals that the SABC engages with government on major policy decisions and includes diverse perspectives in its programming. However, listeners expressed a lack of comprehensive information about the NHI bill, indicating a need for the media, particularly radio programs, to explore policy issues more thoroughly and question politicians and experts. This finding is inconsistent with the Social responsibility theory of the press, which emphasises the media's responsibility to provide comprehensive and accurate information to the public. This implies that the media should uphold their social obligations by providing a balanced and informed discussion on important policy matters.

Overall, this study has key implications for both the Accountability theory and the Social responsibility theory of the press, underscoring the interconnectedness of accountability and social responsibility in the context of broadcasting. The limited coverage of the NHI bill on SABC radio stations not only raises questions about horizontal and vertical accountability but also highlights challenges in balancing financial constraints with editorial independence.

10.3 Recommendations

Based on the study’s findings, the following recommendations are suggested for SABC radio and for the South African government:

10.3.1 Suggestions for SABC radio

- A top reported challenge for the SABC is the limitation in government funding, which results in the broadcaster prioritizing the airing of commercially booked content. In line with this, it is recommended that the SABC explore alternative funding models to

reduce its financial dependence on the government. This could include seeking partnerships with private entities, and philanthropic organizations, or pursuing revenue generation strategies that don't compromise its editorial independence.

- A large number of listeners argued that they feel SABC radio is not providing sufficient coverage to matters of public interest. Consequently, it is suggested that SABC radio increase the amount of programming dedicated to discussing key public interest matters, such as the NHI bill, to enhance public understanding and participation in discussions related to policy decision-making processes. Additionally, the SABC should strengthen its engagement with the public by actively seeking listener feedback, addressing concerns, and involving the audience in discussions related to government policies. Platforms for direct engagement with policymakers and subject-matter experts should be created or enhanced.

- Another issue noted by the study is the lack of public confidence in the public broadcasters' independence. This was corroborated by broadcasters who indicated that their programming is to some extent affected by how politicians respond to SABC radio's programmes. It is therefore recommended that the SABC promotes transparency in its operations and financial management. This can be achieved by regularly reporting on the allocation and utilization of government funding to demonstrate accountability to the public and avoid perceptions of financial impropriety. Moreover, the SABC should implement measures to safeguard its editorial independence. This might involve adopting transparent editorial policies, ensuring diverse board composition, and establishing mechanisms to protect journalists and editors from external pressures.

10.3.2 Suggestions for the South African government

- Referring to the challenge of limited funding towards the SABC, it is recommended that in cases where important policy decisions like the NHI bill are concerned, the government, through the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DOC&DT) should engage with the SABC to secure dedicated airtime for comprehensive discussions. This would ensure that public interest topics receive adequate coverage without compromising SABC's financial sustainability.

- It is also suggested that the government should commit to non-interference in SABC's editorial decisions. The government and individual politicians should respect the broadcaster's independence and avoid exerting undue pressure on its programming and reporting. In achieving this, the government can explore legislative and regulatory reforms that strengthen public broadcasting in South Africa. This might involve revising funding mechanisms, governance structures, and accountability frameworks to enhance SABC's public service mandate.

10.4 Proposed directions for future research

Based on the findings of the study as well as some limitations noted in 5.4, the following research areas are suggested for future empirical study:

- A comparative study of SABC radio stations to explore the similarities and differences in their programming (how they handle matters of public interest) and the SABC's association with the government.
- A study that explores the impact of social media and other digital platforms on public understanding and participation in discussions related to policy decision-making processes.
- A study that explores the impact of the SABC's programming on public opinion and policy decision-making processes.
- A study that explores the impact of the SABC's programming on the political participation of the South African population.

10.5 Overall conclusion

The study examined the role of SABC radio in disseminating information about the NHI bill, based on qualitative primary and secondary data gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, and recordings of past programming. The findings revealed mixed views among participants regarding the effectiveness of SABC radio programs in enhancing understanding of the NHI bill. While some participants felt that the programs lacked sufficient coverage and engagement, others emphasized the need for more comprehensive public education and

awareness campaigns. The study found that while SABC radio stations played a crucial role in interrogating key issues and entertaining diverse perspectives, there is a need for more comprehensive and in-depth coverage of key public interest matters, such as the NHI bill, as well as platforms that allow the public to engage with policymakers and experts. The study also highlights the need for the South African government to increase financial support to the SABC, ensure its independence and accountability to the public, and avoid political interference in its programming. Overall, this study provides important recommendations for SABC radio and the South African government to enhance public understanding and participation in discussions related to policy decision-making processes and suggests avenues for future research to build on these findings.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview schedule

Section A: Demographic information

1. Please indicate your gender

Male	
Female	

2. What is your position at SABC Radio?

Producer	
Senior Producer	
Executive Producer	
Programmes Manager	

3. For how long have you been working for SABC Radio?

1 to 5 years	
6 to 10 years	
11 to 15 years	
16 years and above	

Section B: Interview questions

4. How does SABC Radio offer its audiences platforms for sharing their views and debating on NHI policy and legislation as well as the implications of the initiatives on the country's health system?
5. To what extent do you think that people in South Africa are aware of the NHI?
6. To what extent do you think SABC Radio is providing the public with quality information on NHI?
7. Please explain the relationship between government and SABC Radio. Highlight issues such independence of the public broadcaster.
8. What are some of the challenges that arise in the relationship between government and SABC Radio?
9. How does SABC Radio is putting the interests of the public in the forefront in their broadcast

APPENDIX B: CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE: WSG-2022-78

PROJECT TITLE: Accountability and Knowledge dissemination of the National Health Insurance through the Public Service Broadcaster

INVESTIGATOR	Thivhudziwi Lukoto
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	School of Governance
DATE CONSIDERED	30 October 2022
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	Minimal Risk
EXPIRY DATE	Date of submission of the Research Report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 30 October 2022

CHAIRPERSON Rekgotsofetse Chikane

Rekgotsofetse Chikane

cc: Supervisor:

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and ONE COPY returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

31 /01 /2023

Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix C: Permission Letter

HR: Learning & Development
Radio Park Cnr Artillery and Henley Roads Auckland Park 2092. Private Bag X1 Auckland Park 2006
Johannesburg Gauteng South Africa
Tel +27 11 330-8520
www.sabc.co.za

SABC



Date:14 December 2022

Dear Mr Lukoto Thivhudziswi

LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SABC

This letter serves as authorization for Lukoto Thivhudziswi to conduct the research project under the topic "The research will critically examine the radio programmes dealing with NHI for a seven-year period (from 2015 to 2022) – which covers the period of the NHI White Paper leading to the NHI Bill - on two radio stations: Phalaphala FM, and SAfm." This research will take place at the SABC in Auckland Park until end of March 2023.

Upon a review of the letter sent to us by your institution, we are glad to offer you an opportunity to conduct the same study in our organization. All interviews, filed surveys, observations around the site and the distribution of questionnaires are approved and will be duly supervised by the SABC Learning and Development division.

We hope that this research opportunity will be fully beneficial to your studies.

If you have any concerns or require additional information, feel free to contact the division.

Many thanks.

Zama Longwe

Ms Zama Longwe
SABC Learning and Development manager
011 714 2482
082 443 2522
LONGWEZ@SABC.CO.ZA

South African Broadcasting Corporation SOC Limited: Registration Number: 2003/023915/30
Non-Executive Directors: Mr B E Makhathini (Chairperson); Mr M Mohlala-Mukaudzi (Deputy Chairperson); Prof S Cooper; Adv M B B Lekalakala; Mr D M Mamelo; Mr M G Markovitz; Mr D K Mohuba; Mr J Patel; Mr J H Phalane; Ms M S Papayya; Dr M Socikwa
Executive Directors: Mr M T Mbakwe (Group Chief Executive Officer); Mr I C Phatijes (Chief Operations Officer); Ms Y van Biljon (Chief Financial Officer); **Company Secretary**: Ms L V Bayi