



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**ASSESSING MEDIA PRACTICE IN BUILDING DEMOCRACY**  
**IN ETHIOPIA: THE CASE OF EBC**

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**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Daniel Jemal, entitled *Assessing media practice in building democracy in Ethiopia: The case of EBC* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication (multimedia journalism) complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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## **List of Acronyms**

<b>EBC</b>	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation
<b>EHRCO</b>	Ethiopian Human Rights Council
<b>EPRDF</b>	Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front
<b>ESAT</b>	Ethiopian Satellite Radio and Television
<b>GCAO</b>	Government Communication Affairs Office
<b>GRED</b>	Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
<b>HPR</b>	House of Peoples Representatives
<b>METEC</b>	Metals and Engineering Corporation
<b>MP</b>	Ministry of Peace
<b>MOFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>OMN</b>	Oromo Media Network
<b>PMO</b>	Prime Minister Office
<b>TPLF</b>	Tigrrian People’s Liberation Front
<b>UN</b>	United Nations

## ABSTRACT

*The absence of democracy, joblessness, lack of good bad governance, abuse of human rights and repressive nature the EPRDF government are the major factors that advanced the mass political discontent and protest against the government. The law and order are at risk in various parts of the country so the subsequent impact led the country to adjust its leadership and policy reforms. These turbulent political conditions are the reasons for the coming of new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. In fact, the transfer of power was peaceful and the new leadership launched unprecedented reforms to accelerate the country's path towards democratization. At this time, the focus of the media is mainly placed on access to information, freedom of speech and media's impact on the realization of democracy. However, vehement conflicts are happened here and there in different parts of the country in return the reform has confronted several internal and external challenges. To assess the study, EBC is selected thus the study focused on news and programs since this media house is dominant sources of hard news and information in the absence of a strong independent media outlet in the country at this time. Hence, the central objective of the study is to analyze the media practice in playing its roles in building democracy in Ethiopia, particularly, after Abiy Ahmed came to power. Towards that end, it employed qualitative research methodology by taking sources from Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC). Data collected from primary and secondary sources. Key informants were used as the basic source of primary data for this research. The study used purposive sampling as a tool to select the key informants on the basis of certain predefined purpose. Semi-structured interviews with key informants have been conducted. The major findings from the study indicate that EBC has not been playing significant roles in contributing to the development of democracy in the country. The study also found that limited access to information, fake news, self-censorship and weak institutional management are of the major challenges that the journalists have been facing while trying to report stories and produce programs that can promote democracy in the country.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

The history of early media in Ethiopia commenced before Menelik II came to power (Endalkachew, 2018). However, as far as the history of modern media is concerned, it is associated with the era of Minelik II (Nigussie, 2014).

During the imperial regime, the press was targeted to satisfy the interest of the imperial Crown and Royalty (Getachew, 2003). High media censorship and journalists' fear were the main characteristics of the regime. Succeeding to the imperial regime, the Derg regime found on a socialist political system in which the media chiefly served as a mouthpiece of the government, employed a strict censorship rule and a means to spread propaganda or political indoctrination (Yosef, 2005). Freedom of expression, media independence and other concepts associated with democratic system were absent; and it had no room for private rights and freedom in Ethiopia during this regime (Nigussie, 2014).

Whereas, during the EPRDF, there had been developments both in number and practice of media with the introduction of the dual ownership system that is the government and the private press for the first time in the nation's history. This is a milestone event in the history of the press in Ethiopia (Aregawi, 2001). However, Nigussie (2014) asserts that media infrastructure is underdeveloped and the media are independent only in name. The government had not granted complete freedom of the press in return the media cannot get its full independence in democracy due to constant government intervention in the media sphere through various ways. In a similar view, Ross (2010) intensified that comparing it with the aforementioned authoritarian regimes, there was only the recognition of press freedom in principle, whereas in practice all resembled. On this base Dagim, (2013:8) also entails that:

If media play vital roles in the democratic process of a given country, they have to be free and independent first. To be able to entertain the views of different political parties, which are important actors in a democracy, the media need to be

free from the control of the government. The so-called government media in Ethiopia do almost nothing more than flattering those in power.

The absence of democracy and repressive nature the EPRDF government raised mass political discontent and anti-government protests in and outside the governments. The law and order are in jeopardy in various parts of the country and its subsequent impact led the country to adjust the policy and leadership. Many agree that ensuing these turbulent political circumstances are considered as reasons for the resignation of the former Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and the coming of new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (Natinael, 2019:3-4).

Immediately, the incumbent government took decisions to reform many areas specifically related to the opening of the political space. It offers a vast opportunity for media and politicians to exercise their freedom of expression, in prisoned journalists were freed from jail and the public also expressed their grievances without fear (Natinael, 2019). The current political environment in Ethiopia offers opportunities for expanding the democratic space relative to where it was after the large political opening which ensued since April 2018 (Salih, et al., 2018:5).

During Abiy Ahmed, the focus of the media is mainly how freedom of speech has transformed and its impact on the realization of democracy. Attention is also placed on access to information and if there is any pressure or interference for private media outlets to perform their work (UN, 2019). However, though ambitious political reforms in the country, vehement conflicts are here and there. Because of this, the reform also confronts several internal and external challenges. This is creating suspicion towards the current political reform with respect to ensuring sustainable peace (Jiregna, 2020:3). Therefore, this study intended to examine media practice in playing its roles in building democracy in Ethiopia, particularly after Abiy Ahmed came to power.

## **1.2.Statement of the Problem**

Media and democracy are often considered as the two faces of the same coin. In reality, the existence of one can guarantee the presence of the other (Yared, 2016). In this relation, Stromback (2005:332) verifies that media facilitate the actualization of democracy through creating a system for the flow of information which initiates popular participation, being a forum for public discussion, and playing a watchdog function.

Curran (1991) argues that the free access and exchange of information is essential to the notion of democracy. This significant role of media in democratization has been advanced not only by government officials but also by several political science and communication science. The very character of democracy suggests that free and open communication through a variety of channels, is necessary to foster critical practices found in democratic societies. Based on this argument, the mass media in a stable democracy are the principal institutions from which members of the public can better understand their society. Fog (2013:1) also argued that “The mass media constitute the backbone of democracy.”

In Ethiopia, the mass protests were able to bring Abiy Ahmed into a premiership position. His appointment was marked as a landmark. The transfer of power was peaceful and the new leadership launched unprecedented reforms to accelerate the country's path towards democratization (Faleg, 2019:1). In light of this, Mulatu noted:

Soon after his appointment, he promised to bring changes in the country. One of the changes that he promised was to make the media free. Laws that can be described draconian, for example the Anti-terrorism Law and Mass media and Access to Information Proclamation are now under revision. Media policy is also under discussion. New Media Council to promote self-regulation has started functioning. Accountability of the public media sectors has now shifted from executive body to the parliament. All these initiatives have been done in this very short period (Mulatu, 2019:1).

However, the current political reform is not free from suspicions and challenges. It's surrounded by a lot of challenges and deficiencies (Jiregna, 2020:3).

With respect to the roles of media, much has been written about conflict and war, but little or no about their role in building democracy. Various pieces of literatures have been offered in connection with media effect, media 's role in violence and other related areas but there is little literature in the area of media 's role in building democracy (Yadesa, 2020).

The other literature in which most of its parts writing on the role media play in peace and stability than its role on building and promoting democracy after the reform. In light of this, most of the scholars attempt to study the role of media relating to conflict process, peace building and negative effects of the media (Natinael, 2019). Accordingly, the capacity of media for democracy building remained unexplored and rejected.

To assess the media sphere in this regard, EBC is selected due to the voiced state-owned media. Thus, the study focused on news, news analysis and editorials or commentaries because it is the strongest and voiced state-owned media. These genres are immediately discussed about current affairs. "They are also powerful in terms of sending the message and attracting the large audiences. Besides, major political issues including political controversies and conflicts in the country have been reported in those genres" Mulatu (2019:1). Choosing this media house is appropriate given the fact that this media house is dominant sources of hard news and information in the absence of a strong independent media outlet in the country at this time.

As far as the researches, journal articles and books under related areas to this study are concerned, there has been a little effort in examining media practice in building democracy in Ethiopia after Abiy Ahmed came to power. Therefore, the purpose of the study was thus filling the gap by reviewing the media practice in building democracy in Ethiopia with particular emphasis to Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC).

### **1.3.Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The overall objective of the study is to investigate how the media, specifically EBC, have been playing their roles in building democracy in the country after Abiy Ahmed came to power.

#### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives**

- To look into the roles played by EBC journalists in promoting democracy after the coming of Abiy.
- To investigate the coverage that EBC has offered in building democracy all through the reform.

- To assess the challenges that EBC has been facing in building democracy after the reform.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

- To what extent has EBC been playing its role in promoting democracy after the reform?
- To what extent has EBC been offering coverage for building democracy after Abiy Ahmed came to power?
- What are the challenges that EBC has been facing in the process of building democracy after the reform?

#### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The findings of this research have relevance in producing information to the government of Ethiopia about the roles and challenges of media in democracy building, which is in the process of democratic transition. The researcher also hoped that it has vital importance to the student of journalism and communication and public relations. In addition, this study may contribute requisite information for readers who need to comprehend the practice of EBC in democracy building. Moreover, since there are a few researches on roles and challenges of the Ethiopian media in building democracy after the reform, it contributes in filling the gap in the area understudy. It may also serve as a springboard for further study on the issue about the practice of media in building democracy in Ethiopia during the transition period.

#### **1.6. Scope of the study**

The study is limited to media practice in building democracy in Ethiopia after the coming of Abiy Ahmed with particular focus on Ethiopian Broadcasting corporation (EBC). The time frame of the study is organized to be beginning from after the coming of Abiy to power from April 2018 up to the present. This is the year of democratic transition but political turmoil escalated in return there are skirmishes, internal displacement, violations of human rights and instability after the coming of Abiy.

## **1.7. Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction under which background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study and organization of the study are presented. The second chapter covers literature review and theoretical frameworks of the study. The third chapter deals with the methodology of the study. The fourth chapter presents the major study findings, discussion and analysis. Finally, in the fifth chapter, the thesis deals with conclusion and recommendations.

## **1.8. Conceptual Definition of Terms**

With the view to establish common ground and framework for the discussions, some frequently used pertinent concepts are defined as follows:

**Media:** - is the reflection of our society and it shapes the society as well. Media, either it is printed, electronic or the web is the only medium, which helps in making people informed. It also helps in entertaining the public, educate and make people aware of the current happenings (Nity & Gaurav Singh, 2017)

**DEMOCRACY:** - is commonly a system of accountable and representative government that affords citizens choices and participation in the way they are governed and relate to the distribution of power within the system and the ground rules governing this process (Robinson and White, 1998).

**Politics:** - Politics has been understood differently by different thinkers and within different traditions. Politics has been viewed as the art of government or as ‘what concerns the state’; as the conduct and management of public affairs; as the resolution of conflict through debate and compromise; and as the production, distribution and use of resources in the course of social existence (Leftwich, 2004).

**Government:** - is the organization, machinery, or agency through which a political unit exercises authority and performs functions and which is usually classified according to the distribution of power within it (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary).

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **LITRATURE REVIEW**

This chapter encompasses the review of related literature where conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the study is explained in detail. For the purpose of the study, this part covers only topics which are directly or in directly related to the title of the study. Various scholarly studies have also been included in this chapter.

### **2.1. Concept of Media**

The media is not a monolithic entity but rather a broad term contains a variety of content provided to the public, or sectors of the public, over a range of platforms. For both media and democratization scholars, the mass media are regarded as one of the key democratic institutions vital in improving the quality of the electoral system, political parties, parliament, judiciary, and other branches of the state, even civil society, and safeguarding their democratic performance (Jebril et al., 2013:2). In democratizing contexts, the media tasks are generally included under the ‘accountability role’ which the media have been normatively ascribed as one of their main functions in a democratic society (Norris et al., 2006). The notion of labeling media as the ‘fourth estate’ connotes an act of a watchdog, revealing the wrongdoing of the public officials and other power holders within the democratic system. According to Norris (2000 cited in Jebril et al., 2013:6),

Freedom and independence are the most universally endorsed ideal characteristics of the media. The normative functions of the media are often based on the characteristics of representative or liberal democracies. These include serving as (1) a forum encouraging pluralistic debate about public affairs, (2) a guardian against the abuse of power, and (3) a mobilizing agent encouraging public learning and participation in the political process.

Media outlets have a crucial role in giving an emphasis to an issue through their coverage and interpretation. By covering an issue more and by using selected interpretations, the media can influence policy makers and news consumers (Johnson-Cartee, 2005). Media play a significant

role in democracy as a watchdog in the basis of alarming the people; it acts as informer of facts to the societies; and it engages in the society through music, dramatization, films, move, and so forth. Media valuable society as well as for business advertising in which their item acquainted with society through media and at last it brings about efficient development of the country, and media instruct individuals (Mailers, 2010).

## **2.2. Media Role**

The role of the main stream media like television is inevitable in educating, entertaining and disseminating information for the public (Rambau, 2010). Access to diverse information sources makes citizens thoroughly informed decisions. In the same manner, McQuail (1983) sates that media is a necessary condition for the operation of the public sphere in creating a sufficiently educated, informed, and interested body of citizens and create the potential for and informed and freely expressed public opinion. In line with this role of media, Curran broadly writes as:

...the media should keep people informed about public affairs so that individuals are adequately briefed when they take part in the process of self-government. The media should be fearless watchdogs, vigilantly examining the exercise of power and protecting the public from wrongdoing. The media should also provide a platform of open debate that facilitates the formation of public opinion. In addition, the media should be the voice of the people, representing to authority the citizenry's views and expressing the agreed aims of society (Curran, 2005: 120).

Further, McNair (2011: p.18) put the role of media as follows:

The functions of the media in societies that he called an 'ideal-type' democratic society are: (1) informing citizens of what is happening around them ('surveillance' or 'monitoring' functions), (2) educating citizens as to the meaning and significance of the 'facts', (3) providing a platform for public political discourse and facilitating 'public opinion' formation, (4) giving publicity to governmental and political institutions, and (5) serving as a channel for the advocacy of political viewpoints.

Basically, the media could be compared to what the Greeks agora called which was a public square in which the population assembled to discuss affairs of governance (Watson, 1998). In line with this, the media has an obligation to guard open discussion and accord against state mistreatment, and to feature maltreatment of the law and human rights by corporate forces. This activity is often referred to as that of the guard dog (ICHRP, 2002). As a media, it is required to be an alert in practicing the guard dog role specially during times of contentions.

As Strömbäck, in competitive democracy the roles of media are manifold. Some of these are explained as it should provide information that people can trust and act; the news should be proportional so as to prevent wrong directions; media and journalism should focus on political alternatives; media and journalism should monitor political elites; media and journalism should provide basic information about how society and the political system function (Strömbäck, 2005:338-339).

Parallel to the above model of democracy, deliberative democracy directs citizens to have a role that they should actively engage themselves in the public deliberation. For this, media could serve two main functions; that are, informative function through which media could provide information on the political discussion and facilitative function by which the media themselves serve as a forum for policy debates (Ettema et al., 2007). These scholars indicate that the role of media as it should actively foster political discussions that are characterized by impartiality, rationality, intellectual honesty, and equality among participants; it provides an arena for citizens with strong arguments and direct attention to those who can contribute to extra discussion; media also frame politics as a continuous process of finding solutions to common problems either consensually or at least acceptable to everyone.

In line with media role, there are three core values of journalism through which the media plays its significant role in building democracy. That, in turn, ensures peace and stability, the inclusion of marginalized group as well as rapid development in every aspect of a nation. Watchdog, agenda setting and gatekeeping role of the press make it contribute to democratic governance since the press “monitor and hold the powerful accountable (watchdog), cover issues of public significance that require the attention of citizens and policy makers (agenda setting), and facilitate the expression of a myriad of perspectives (gatekeeping) Waisbord (2000).

According to Curran (2002: 225), the watchdog role of the media is protective in that they disclose any wrong deeds that may have a detrimental effect on democracy. However, as him, the media could also be an agency of information and debate which facilitate a better functioning of democracy. “The media provide a forum of debate in which people can identify problems, propose solutions, reach agreement and guide the public direction of society” (ibid).

It is apparent that the watchdog function of the media does not necessarily mean that the media only scrutinize actions of the government. The notion that media are watchdogs of the state only seems to stem from the belief that the state is the seat of power, which is accountable for all the misgovernance. However, other political institutions and non-state forms of power could also be sources of abuse for which the media need to commit more of its resources to scrutinizing and holding to account these institutions (Curran, 2005: 129).

Ideally, the media provides citizens with information about their world, by fostering debate about various issues and by encouraging informed decisions to be made about available courses of action. The media are also a position of competition in which diverse positions are advanced, significant opinions are heard, interests and inner-workings are exposed, and input is received. These all contribute to public debate (Curran, 1991). Perhaps, the media play different roles at different stages of democratic development. Or the media may play no role at all, with democracy emerging quite independent of the press and other communication freedoms (ibid). Many of the studies on media and the democratic process take either the macro-level approach and look at media systems and how they affect politics, or take the micro-level approach to examine how political communication affects the individual, such as during elections.

By the same token, Ansah (1988: 14) contends that “the press in its watchdog role should, as a matter not only of right but also of duty, expose and criticize bureaucratic incompetence, corruption, abuse of power and the violation of human rights”. Further, Ansah explains that in a democratic society, if there is no such mechanism of regulating, monitoring, and evaluating the deeds of the government, ‘there is a great likelihood of the government falling into complacency, unresponsiveness, and irresponsibility’ (ibid). It is for this reason that the media have always been described as the fourth estate of the political realm that monitors power.

However, not all the democratic functions of the media are carried out successfully. These days, the media are highly decried for the remarkably increasing commodification of their content because of which political issues are driven out of the focuses of media practice and instead entertainment is taking a superseding coverage. Other criticisms on media performances as ‘political journalism has become too *elitist* or *insider-oriented*’ and political reporting has tended to be cynical could be mentioned (McNair, 2000: 5).

Overall, media has a prominent role to play in modern society. It can bring about radical changes and improve social situation as it influences our social, civil, cultural, political, economic and aesthetic outlook. Thus, the media plays a number of different roles in society, including being informative, educational or entertaining.

### **2.2.1. The role of media in the current Ethiopia’s political dynamism**

Ethiopia has made leadership and policy reforms recently as a result of the struggle made by the general public especially from two ethnic groups Oromo and Amhara at the front. The major factor for the resentment is discrepancy between promise and actual reality created by EPRDF which includes violation of rule of law, joblessness, lack of democracy, governance and violations of human rights (Getent, 2018). Even though the youth took initiative to sacrifice itself to bring this change, it is not possible to carry out country wide protest without the proper media of communication. Even if the lion share of the protest is fostered by the social media, the mainstream media are also part of the communication ways to feed the public about what is going on the country ‘s politics.

In Ethiopia main stream media is considered to be failed to serve the public interest as intended to set agendas, initiate goals, organize and guide the people. But this is not actually to mean that these media have not contributed anything to the current reform. This indicates that the public media contribute insignificant to the country’s overall development. Because these media are preoccupied by legitimizing the policies and actions of the government albeit it deviates from the constitution and culture of the country. Whatever the public media says or play any role it is not its own but it belongs to the government, it is servant of the government than Ethiopian people (Natinael, 2019).

To enhance the above statement, Natinael entails that the media still continued to play its traditional role even after the current new administration come to power. Here it is worth to mention some examples (Natinael, 2019:18):

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed made a speech to the parliament that government has violated human rights. After this speech many TV channels and print, outlets were found to expose violation of Human rights by government especially in prisons. The other example we can refer is about the critics and revealing poor performance on the Metals and Engineering Corporation (METEC) and construction of Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) by the new prime minister. After this, Media came with documentary films to expose corruption and mal-administration of mega projects of the country. The problem is not why they expose that secrete but, why they wait until the prime minister or other minster initiate the truth.

In light of this, it is obvious that these huge corruptions, human right violations, secret deals and other related problems are to be awaited until to be directed by high officials is not known yet. What is known is Ethiopian media are tools of government interest than the public which lack institutional sovereignty to discharge its responsibility (Fekadu, 2019).

According to African Center for Studies (2018), after the disputed 2005 elections, the EPRDF resorted to brutal violence to maintain power, the party started a developmental state model, characterized by active state intervention in the economy as a way to boost its political legitimacy even the Ethiopian protests are the culmination of a long-building series of grievances. However, this effort was accompanied by a heightened muzzling of critics and the media as well as controlling access to information. In a similar view, Nigussie (2014) argued that media infrastructure is underdeveloped and the media are independent only in name. The government had not granted complete freedom of the press in return the media cannot get its full independence in democracy due to constant government intervention in the media sphere through various ways. But the current political environment in Ethiopia offers opportunities for expanding the democratic space relative to where it was after the large political opening which

ensued since April 2018 Attention is also placed on access to information through freeing both government and private media outlets.

### **2.3.Democracy**

The origin of the term democracy is a Greek word, combining two shorter words, demos and Kratos. Both terms had more than one meaning. Demos could mean the whole citizen body living within a particular polis, or city-state, but might also be used to mean ‘the mob’ or ‘the rabble’ or ‘the lower orders. Kratos could mean either ‘power’ or ‘rule’: the two are not the same (Arblaster, 2002:15).

Based on the above etymological meanings prescribed to demos and kratos, by ‘democracy’ Greeks meant ‘a rule by the people’. However, during the Athenian times of democratic exercise, albeit directly, not all were given an equal opportunity to participate in decision-making. In support of this view, Birch (2001) writes that the Greeks only provided us with the word not with a model of democracy. Strengthening this argument, Birch continues, ‘the assumptions and practices of the Greeks were very different from those of modern democrats. The Greeks had little or no idea of the rights of the individual, an idea that is tied up with the modern concept of democracy.’

According to Birch (2001), the word ‘democracy’ was started to be used in its modern sense during the nineteenth century to denote a representative system of government wherein free competitive elections are used as measures implemented to choose representatives agreed that most male citizens are permitted to cast their vote. This assertion would lead us to the review of definitions of modern democracy.

Rozumilowicz (2002) chronologically presents twelve political scientists’ different interpretations of the term ‘democracy’. Of these varying definitions of democracy by different scholars, the researcher prefers to bring Pennock’s, Huntington’s and Vanhanen’s definitions.

Democracy is defined differently in different contexts. In a broad sense, democracy referred to a society where equal rights for all are upheld, rather than a system based on hereditary or class distinctions, and it is a system with tolerance for minority views (Craig, 2007:29). In this case, for a democracy to endorse equal rights for citizens, accommodate minority view and achieve

over all development of the life of citizen in particular and the nation in general, people ought to have access to information by which they exercise their rights and express their opinions through political institutions like the media. In relation to this “mass media serve as agents of development by spreading democracy,” McQuail (1994:85).

Democracy is a popular political notion in today’s world, fair and free elections are the prerequisite of democracy and rule of law, protection and freedom of human rights and supremacy of the constitution are important elements in true democratic system (Hanan, et al. 2016). It is commonly a system of accountable and representative government that affords citizens choices and participation in the way they are governed and relate to the distribution of power within the system and the ground rules governing this process (Robinson and White, 1998).

Beetham (1992) maintains that democracy is a mode of decision making about collectively binding rules and policies over which the people exercise control and where all the members of the society enjoy equal rights to take part in decision making directly and that is to say which realizes to the greatest conceivable degree the principles of popular control and equality in its exercise. Kendall (2003) also entails that “democracy in the international discourse widely accepted as leading to increase development and equality, decrease conflict specifically one perpetrated by the state within the state and increased civic engagements”.

Hence, democracy is referred to as a society where equal rights for all are maintained, accommodate minority view and achieve over all development of the life of citizen in particular and the nation in general, people should have access to information by which they exercise their rights and express their opinions through political institutions like the media (Craig, 2007:29). In this relation, McQuail (1994:85) also states that “mass media serve as agents of development by spreading democracy”.

## **2.4. Media and Democracy Building**

Mass Media are often referred to as the fourth branch of government because of the power they have and the oversight function they exercise. In this regard, Curran (1991) argue that the free access and exchange of information is indispensable to the notion of democracy. The very

character of democracy suggests that free and open communication, through a variety of channels, is necessary to foster critical practices found in democratic societies. According to this argument, the mass media in a stable democracy are the principal institutions in which people can better understand their society.

The key roles of the media in contributing to democratization and good governance are being a watchdog over the powerful, providing a civic forum for political debate and serving as an agenda-setter for policy-makers (Norris, 2000). Media is served well as a means to globalize the democratic exchange of ideas and issues capable of challenging authority and fostering an atmosphere of optimism (Alfaro, 2006).

Indeed, it is through the media that the public discourse about the scope and nature of democracy is circulated especially in fledgling democracies. Alfaro (2006) asserts that today the media constitute a crucial source of civic education and legitimization of democratic power. Political elites legitimize themselves or join protester discourses through their interactions with Newspaper, magazines, radio and Television. The Notion of political authority, political values and general understanding of nation's political institutions are consolidated through the daily programmers of mass media and particularly via News. The national and international agenda emerges from a daily mass media process of production and consumption. Mass media have served remarkably well as a means to globalize the democratic exchange of ideas and issues capable of challenging authority and fostering an atmosphere of optimism. The promise of democracy rest on the rights and responsibilities of each nation's citizens. How these citizens respond to such an opportunity is not only the question of political organization, but also has much to do with how they have been encouraged to think about and participate in democracy through the news and entertainment media citizens (ibid).

The media also can play a positive role in democracy only if there is an enabling environment that allows them to do so. There should also be mechanisms to ensure they are held accountable to the public and that ethical and professional standards are supported. Media independence is guaranteed if media organizations are financially viable, free from intervention of media owners and the state, and operate in a competitive environment. The media should also be accessible to as wide a segment of society as possible (Coronel, 2003). Efforts to help the media should be

directed toward the protection of press rights, enhancing media accountability, building media capacity and democratizing media access.

Democracy requires an informed citizen that could actively involve itself in political life, but this could be realized into media. On the other hand, media have also been criticized for not creating citizens that democracy needs, and even sometimes they are blamed for contributing to the creation of politically apathetic public through a trivialized content (Dagim, 2013). In fact, the news media play unquestionably necessary role in granting the central political role of citizens and applying democracy. To enhance, Gans (2003) asserts that the news media have a power to assist the idea of democracy through coverage of diverse issues that are indispensable to the society. However, with all the critics and the obstacles, the media still have a lot to play in democracy.

In Ethiopia, press freedom was an obvious right to be granted by the Ethiopian transitional government when it came to power in 1991. The government adopted a middle of- the-road approach where private print media outlets were allowed while the few government newspapers continued to exist (Skjerdal, 2012). The press is an important mechanism for circulating and exchanging information, which is vital for the functioning of a democracy. Several examples from the African continent show that democratization and liberalization have not always guaranteed wider margins of freedom for the media. The media is one of the most criticized institutions in modern life (Norris, 2000). Yet, it is still of importance to note that freedom of speech and free access to the media for information are particularly pertinent for political organization. Three key roles of the media in contributing to democratization and good governance include: being a watchdog over the powerful, providing a civic forum for political debate and serving as an agenda-setter for policy-makers. Therefore, the hopes of African and economic renaissance depend to a very large extent on what key tasks the media play in African states (ibid).

Media in all countries serves as a watchdog, as a source of information, a civic forum and an agenda setter. On the other hand, journalists can play significant role to the public sphere by maintaining and managing a space for public debate, circulating ideas and opinions, extending freedom and diversity for the public, use as a connector between citizens and government, and

prompting mobilization toward civic engagement. Thus, the media works as a means for providing citizens with the most important information, from the point of view of their political activities, and guiding public discussion and these functions are taken for granted in contemporary journalism (MaQuail, 1994).

Mass media and democracy are always related to each other. Media is a mirror of the society and how democratic society can be represented using media. Opinion leaders influence the public opinion that are the political leaders and political system of any country. The media has the ability to fortify public perceptions of what it means to be a citizen in a democracy (McNair, 2011). In addition, Wilson asserts that in countries where aggressive newspapers and advanced broadcasting systems exist, like America and Britain, democratic accountability works through the media than it works through the parliament (Wilson, 1996: 176). This idea manifests that the media's importance and it's inevitable for that matter, contribution that media could have in a democratic state. It is also evident in the account that for the media to have the articulated contribution to democratic accountability, they need to be strong and aggressive. Hence, media has an influential role in strengthening democracy.

However, few would not have consent on the role of media that affected by factors pertains to the characteristics of media institutions, for instance, the policies of media, its financiers, and the working conditions of journalists. But what matters is countries where media is controlled by state, are naturally very conservative, and thus cannot perform their various roles due to official censorship and regulating laws. On the other, states where media is largely owned by private agencies and groups are less under the influence of government and it is more citizens oriented. Yet private ownership has one disadvantage that it may promote and lead to hegemony of unilateral views and ideas (McQuail, 2013). In light of the aforementioned discussion, it could commonly be agreed that for the media to pursue democratic roles, freedom of the press has to be guaranteed (McNair, et al., 2000). Thus, but with common foundations, the free press is deemed to be as democratic function that could survive in the environment of democracy.

The media are also expected to provide a monitoring function, commonly referred to as being "watchdogs," on government, industry, and society. Garnham (1992) states that it is "axiomatic that some version of communicative action lies at the heart of both the theory and practice of

democracy.” He calls mass media the “connective tissue of democracy.” O’Neil (1998) writes that without the freedom of communication mass media provide, the foundation of democratic rule is undermined.

## **2.5. Media and Government**

The relationships between media and government are very important in defining the role of media in the political process. This relationship inevitably affects the media practice either positively or negatively. Similarly, when the media tend to report truthfully and objectively, positive relationship could be secured and when the reverse happens, the relationship would turn out to be unfavorable. In line with this, Ansah (1988:8) points out that the relationship between the government and the press in Africa generally characterized by tension and conflict where there appears to be no tension. The reason for this, that either the media has been cowed into submission or it has become the ruling parties’ appendage. As a result, when the government puts illegitimate sanctions, including censorship, on the media, the negative effect prevails. This problem could still be seen in Ethiopia.

The attitude of media institutions towards government is partly defined by degrees of interference, regulation for a given media industry, and ideological position of given media business, or even their proprietors, towards the rights of the state, within their own idea of the media-audience relationship (Burton, 2005:20). With respect to the relationship between media and government, the government ‘a mutual need of politicians to appear in the media to have a platform for their positions’, and that of the media ‘to have the politicians appear so that they might attract an audience by having access to authority figures’ (ibid). However, as Kumar and Jones (2005:227) the government-media relationship on the surface is an acrimonious one albeit the institutional relationship between media organizations and the government is continuous in which cooperation between the two prevails with the intent of getting the most out of it. On top of its function of carrying information between the government and the public, media influence political decisions and functions by disclosing what officials usually prefer to hide from the public and by monitoring and the government and other governmental political institutions’ power (Kumar and Jones, 2005).

The influence of government on media is chiefly regulatory that affects the conduct of media organization harmfully as it puts an impediment on freedom of expression and of the press. However, a certain positive influence could be seen in some regulations on the media that are made to secure the protection of human rights. To support, Kumar and Jones (2005:234) view that the government pressures the media, all the three branches of government consistently serve as an influence on the organization, operations, and actions of news outlets. Government actions run the range from measures taken to regulate news organizations to procedures used to protect the routines and products of news media.

## **2.6. Media and Politics**

Media and politics are deemed to be the two sides of the same coin. This suggests that it could not be possible to detach media and politics. To demonstrate the close relationship between media and politics, scholars affirm that, the media should fulfil the political role through disseminating the full range of political opinions so as to enable the public to make political choices. (Chobanion, 2015). In this 21st century, “no single political party or government can pursue its purposes without securing the assistance of the media” (Cook, 1998). Politicians need the media for publicity and to inform the people about their activities.

Media have power in creating and shaping reality. It can influence people through the representation of their issues, culture, religion and thought. Today news system evolves under pressures of commercial profit and political spin in return diminishing space for serious political news itself (Bennet, 2004). This is the reason why world powers and businessmen contend for the control of the media.

The controlling or watch dog role of the media of checks and balance over the political system and the political elites in a representative democracy enabled them to be labeled as the fourth estate. But, Shultz (1998) showed that this labeling is maintained as far as five elements, “central to the rhetoric”, are maintained by the media. To name them, “political purpose and independence, the importance of public opinion, the diversity of information and viewpoints presented, the degree of accountability, and commercial priorities.” Consequently, knowing their facilitative role of public opinion and the political purpose of their existence as a fourth estate,

the media are required to arrange themselves well for sound functioning and maintaining of their political responsibility.

Media and politics always have close connection (Zielonka, 2015). In the contemporary world no government or particular political party can pursue its functions without having the patronage of the media. To enhance, Fourie (2004: 463) states as governments are the most important of these institutions. The media have been the principal source of political information for citizens in any society. Mass media has a massive influence both on people and politics since it shapes public opinion, and its role becomes more powerful especially during elections. Therefore, whether the ruling government is democratic or undemocratic the media plays a decisive role to accelerate their political agenda and influence the society's perception towards them.

In democratic societies, the media are a communication channel which ensures the exchange of thoughts both in power and general public, governments and political parties (Zielonka, 2015). In contrast, in an undemocratic political system, the media supply as a means of mass manipulation in favor of those in power. They are determined to fulfil the interest of the ruling class. Assessing the link between Ethiopian media and the Ethiopian political system in the country's history, it couldn't be difficult to notice that 'media and politics in Ethiopia are highly intertwined and the media has been highly shaped by the governments which ruled over different periods' (Nigussie, 2014). Further, as him, no independent media are existence in Ethiopia throughout all time. In the past regimes the governance system was authoritarian and the media were given no space to become the voice for the voiceless, but to serve the interest of those in power.

As many African countries, media systems and politics in Ethiopia have at all times been a close relationship (Gregory, 2000). In fact, Ethiopia's politics and media system is not far apart from the rest of African other nations as it is vividly seen that the media institutions are driven by the politics. Accordingly, whatsoever the type of government, the Ethiopian media houses are blowing as per the direction of the ruling parties who came to power at various times of country's history (Kemal, 2013).

Thus, Media and politics are the two most decisive bodies in a given nation. Both of them can be used either to construct or destruct a society (Zielonka, 2015). In many of the cases these two crucial bodies are intertwined. The Notion of political authority, political values and institutions

are consolidated through the daily programmers of mass media particularly via News. Hence, they are inseparable and no matter what a certain government seize power, the media is the center to control power so as to play the role being bridge between the government and the public.

## 2.7. News

“Journalism is a form of writing or broadcasting that tells people about things that really happened, but that they might not have known about already. People who write journalism stories are called journalists. They might work at newspapers, magazines, and websites or for TV or radio stations” (Niles, 2007) in (Natinael, 2019:26). Journalism can be expressed in the form many ways. Among its ways news can be the basic one. It may exist in forms of news or opinion.

There are different definitions for the word news. The word news originates from the Latin nova and it means new things (Keeble, 2005). As stated by Cowie (1989), “News is new or fresh or recent information reported in the media”. News defined by (Tuchman, 1978) as timely, noteworthy information about a recent incident, important finding, notable opinion, or upcoming events. In the same manner, McLeish mentioned as:

“News is that which is new, interesting and true. ‘New’ in news is that it is an account of events that the listener has not heard before or an update of story previously broadcast. ‘Interesting’, in the sense of the material being relevant, or directly affecting the audience in some way. ‘True’, because the story as told is factually correct.” (McLeish 2005:53).

Gans (2004:80) describes news as information which is transmitted from sources to audiences with journalists in summarizing, refining, and altering what becomes available to the sources in order to become the information suitable for their audience. According to Strentz (1989) news is defined in a simple manner like it is something that you know today and that you didn’t know yesterday. It is selected part of the reality. In similar view, news a product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories (Hall et al., 2013: 54).

News is at this time considered to be a basic source of information. It has the power to cover the most important worldwide issues. With a great speed, the news has potential to disseminate relevant information to the audiences. To highlight this notion, Roscho (1999) relates that it is a human desire to know the state of the surrounding social and physical environment. It should provide citizens with fair and full information in order to make citizens to have sound decisions in matters of comprehend the complex political issues and interpret politics so as to enable citizens to understand and act through breaking which emphasizes on telling about an event as it happens, or it could be feature story which looks at something interesting that is not breaking news and also it could be enterprise or investigative stories that uncover information which few people knew.

But pertains to news worthiness, Millions of events which occur daily in the world, only a minute proportion ever become visible as potential news stories; and of this proportion, only a small fraction is actually produced as the day's news in the news media. But the function as a selective stratagem is obscure even for those who professionally know people (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009: 163). In line with this, as per (Walsh, 2017), news values are entities that a news media puts into account while making and selecting news to its audience or news values are deemed to be while determining what should or should not become part of today's news. They also detect the following basic news values.

Timeliness: an event is more newsworthy the sooner it is reported, Proximity: events are more news worthy the closer they are to the community reading/watching or listening about them, Impact: events are more newsworthy when they affect a greater number of people, Prominence: events are more newsworthy when they involve public figures, Oddity: events are more newsworthy the more the ordinary they are, Relevance: events are more newsworthy when they involve an issue that is top of mind in the public and Conflict: events are more newsworthy when they involve disagreement (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009: 163).

As a whole, though many scholars are tried to define news in different perspectives, virtually all scholars touch and come in terms with the same notion that news is something that is about people, events, and issues which is interesting, current and is presented through print, broadcast,

and internet; and it is timely report of any accurate facts or opinion that grips the interest of a considerable number of people.

## **2.7.Theoretical Framework**

This section discusses the theoretical supports of the argument that media serve for the democracy building through the presentation of issues on the media. This study is essentially focused on public sphere theory, normative theory of media and agenda setting theory. The theories clearly specify the media should function responsibly to play a significant role in building democracy.

### **2.7.1. Public Sphere Theory**

The public sphere is a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed and access is guaranteed to all citizens (Habermas, 1974: 49). He asserts that the communication that exists in a large public body needs a means for transmitting information and influencing those who receive it which is nowadays facilitated by what he called ‘the media of the public sphere’ that are newspapers and magazines, radio and television (ibid).

As stated by Habermas (1991: 49), a segment of the public sphere exists in every discussion where private individuals come together to form a public body and the individuals behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. They rather behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion-that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions-about matters of general interest. In this connection, the classical liberal theory states that the public sphere is the space between government and society in which private individuals exercise formal and informal control over the state through the election of governments and through the pressure of public opinion respectively (Curran, 1997: 29).

Based on the above assertion, it could be argued that the democratic ideals such as effective representation, public deliberation, a government response to the people, and rational choice could be achieved through the public sphere as it is in the classical liberal theory. Habermas (1974) labels this kind of public sphere as ‘political public sphere’ against the literary one.

According to him, this distinction comes when the public discusses on issues that are connected to the activities of the state. Further, Habermas (1974: 50) clarifies that the public sphere as a sphere that is mediator between the society and the state, ‘accords with the principle of the public sphere—that principle of public information which once had to be fought for against the arcane policies of monarchies and which since that time has made possible the democratic control of state activities.

The public sphere needs information that it could hinge on to carry out its functions. In this respect, Habermas (1974: 49) contends that the political public sphere could win an institutionalized influence over the government wherein law-making bodies are the instrument only when the democratic demand that the public should access information comes first to the political function of the public sphere. In the same manner, Curran (1997: 29) notes that the media are the principal institutions of the public sphere thereby distributing information necessary for a reasonable choice of citizens and by facilitating public opinion formation through the provision of discussion forums.

Thus, this theory of the public sphere guides the current study for two major reasons. First, it clearly articulates the functions that the public sphere, so to speak, as an institution that helps citizens exercise control over the ruling, has in strengthening democracy through keeping governments accountable. Second, it considers the media (newspapers, magazines, and radio and television stations) as the principal institutions that facilitate the information needs of the public sphere so that it can successfully carry out its political functions.

### **2.7.2. Social Responsibility Theory**

The mass media are assumed not only to have certain objective impacts on society, but also to serve a social purpose. This means that some of the effects that have been observed are both intended and positively valued. These include the effects of transmitting information, how media operated under the various social, economic and political environments or within specific system of social values, expressing various voices and views, assisting public opinion to form on issues and facilitating debate. Many entertainment and cultural activities of the media can also count as approved purposes (McQuail, 2010).

As the intended effects are concerned, we can often detect who existed beyond the media. This chiefly point out those who own or direct the media and work in them as well as those for whom the media provide as a tool of communication, including governments, authorities and individual communicators. Not wondering, there are many different ideas about just what the media ought or ought not to be doing and on how well they are performing, but there is no doubt that much is expected. The ideas of right and responsibility that underlie these expectations of benefit from the media to individuals and society (Ibid).

In most democracies there is a close link between democratic political institutions and the role of the media as carrier of news and former of opinion albeit media in a free society do not, for the most part, have any responsibility to carry out many of the positively valued purposes that have been referred to and that are taken for granted. They are not owned by the government, nor do they work on behalf of community. Their legal responsibilities are largely similar as those of other citizens and organizations within a society and thus mainly defined in negative terms. They are expected to do no harm. Besides, the media are free to choose, or avoid, various positive ends (McQuail, 2010)

But the responsibility theory offers room for media freedom on one hand but with need for external controls on the other hand. “The basic assumption of the theory holds that the press must be free but with a responsibility to serve public good whether by way of state regulation or self-censorship” (Elebute, 2015). It balances the clamor for press freedom with the need for responsibility. It states that in the interest of public interest and true depiction, both sides of an incident should be stated. “The social responsibility model is premised on the inkling that media can be free but also have a moral duty to humanity to deliver satisfactory information for people to make informed decisions” (ibid). This theory also responsible to curtail abuses in form of fake news, disinformation, hate speech, misinformation, propaganda etc.

According to Dennis McQuail, the main foundations of social responsibility theory of the press are described in the following manner:

...an assumption that the media do serve essential functions in society, especially in relation to democratic politics; a view that the media should accept an obligation to fulfill these functions—mainly in the sphere of information, and the

provision of a platform for diverse views; an emphasis on maximum independence of media, consistent with their obligations to society; an acceptance of the view that there are certain standards of performance in media work that can be stated and should be followed (McQuail, 1983: 90).

The notion of social responsibility is an extension of liberal philosophy in that the media recognize their responsibility to resolve conflict through discussion and promote public opinion, consumer action, private rights and important social interests (McQuail, 1983). Further, Schultz asserts that the idea of this theory of media function was reports truth, accuracy, objective and balanced report (Schultz, 1998: 21). The media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional standards. Under some circumstances, society may need to involve in public interest (Hocking, 1983: 124). The media has an obligation or responsibility to the society.

According to McQuail, the main principles of this theory of the media accept and fulfill certain obligations to society; these obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance; and in accepting and applying these obligations, media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions and avoid whatever might lead to crime, violence or civil disorder or give offence to ethnic or religious minorities (McQuail, 1983: 91).

Along with social responsibility theory, the media, so as to contribute to the democratic processes of a given political system and to meet the needs of the society, the media should not be influenced by an ever-increasing commodification of news and other media content and the negative freedom that came owing to an unregulated press (McQuail, 1983). Instead, “the media outlets in democratic societies have made philosophical shift required to ensure the free press remains free” (Hocking, 1983: 147).

The media provides a truthful, comprehensive and rational explanation of the day's event in a context which gives them meanings. The media serves as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism. The media offers the projection of representative pictures of the constituent group in society. The press has to help in the presentation and clarification of the goals and values of the society. Hence, as it is deduced from the above statement the objective of media is to inform, document, analyze, interpret, mediate and mobilize by creating and suggest remedies.

### 2.7.3 Framing Theory

Framing is defined by various scholars differently albeit it lacked either clear operational definitions or weaknesses of translating framing definitions into operational steps (Matthes, 2002). The media study is primarily concerned on the information content and flows. The way information transferred to their readers comes through various forms of communication, all of which are framed to meet the goals of the providing sources. The role of framing comes here in. It describes the way media portray the stories, issues, events or how to tell the stories for audiences'/readers' consumption. A number of influential scholars in the evolution of framing theory, including Entman (1993) define the concept; framing, as a process of selecting some aspect of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in order to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, and moral evaluation. Robert Entman, one of the founders and father of framing, defined the term as, the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation (ibid).

“Framing is broadly unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for the audience or people who rely on their reports” Tuchman (1978: 106) quoted in (Yadessa, 2020:25). It is a significant reference set by the media to interpret public issues. Mass media actively set the frames of reference that audience or readers employ to interpret and discuss public events (ibid). It can be employed as a paradigm for both understanding and investigating communication and related behavior in a wide range of disciplines (Fortunato, 2005).

According to Entman, who is the father of framing theory, is identified four frames of locations in the communication process:

who communicate- often lead by his mental organizations, perceptions and belief systems called schemata, the communicator consciously or unconsciously decides what to add or exclude in framing an issue? The text- consist of frames which are manifested by the inclusion/exclusion or presence/absence, of certain key words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of data, and sentence that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments. The decoder- who may

have his own frames of an issue or frames that arise from internal structures of the mind/schemata, but this may or may not be shown in the text. The culture- is demonstrated in executing common frames among the society Entman (1993: 52).

As said by him, these four locations of framing perform the same roles which are selection and salience. These roles of framing are essential to construct arguments about problems, causation, evaluation, and suggest remedies that justify treatment for the problem and predict the possible effects.

The process of framing is the other very imperative part of framing. First, frame constructing refers to factors that influence media institutions or journalists in the process of creating news frames. The factors might be internal or external to journalism. The internal case can be journalists' ideology and organizational culture. The external factors, for instance, can be the continuous communication that journalists form with elites may affect journalists' judgment in constructing frames (Fortunato, 2005). Second, frame setting that displays the interaction or communication between media frames and individual's prior knowledge and predispositions (De vreeze, 2005). In brief, it deals with the effects of media frames on the audience or public attitudes towards a certain issue. Third, the individual and societal level influences of framing may contribute to shaping community's political actions and decision-making processes.

There are two important approaches that helps to detect frames in the news. These are: inductive and deductive approaches.

An inductive approach of analyzing news texts helps create frames in due course of analyzing news. This analyzing process permits the researcher to come up with his own inclusive frames of the information accessible at hand. But, the drawback of relying on inductive method is it demands small amount of information and the frames created by this method are not easy to replicate. On the other hand, the deductive approach, deals with a priori defined frames that are formed and operationalized prior to the investigation. Most scholars are in favor of practicing deductive approach than inductive because deductive approach is reliable and can be replicated. In other way, deductive approach works parallel with journalism

practice. However, its drawback is that it expels frames that could otherwise be identified in the inductive approach (De vreeze, 2005 in Yadesa, 2020: 27).

In light of these approaches, the researcher has to require to know the devices that assist to indicate frames in a news story. According to Entman (1993), the frames in news can be identified by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments. On top of that, Tankard identified more comprehensive frames, for instance, Headlines, Subheads, Photos, Photo captions, Leads, Source selection, Quote's selection, pull quotes, Logos, Statistics and charts, and concluding statements and paragraphs (Tankard, 2005). In similar view, In the same manner, Iyengar (1990) in Natinael (2019:31) classified "the generic news frames as episodic and thematic framing". Episodic framing defines public issues as concrete or specific events that are the result of actions by individuals. Thematic one discussed as public issues as abstract instances and put responsibility on abstract society.

The use of framing theory also allows us to detect journalistic bias. A group of studies has identified various types of framing, (conflict, human interest, economic consequences, attribution of responsibility, diagnostic and prognostic). Hence, framing provides a better understanding of how the media influence public opinion through the way they present the story to their readers.

Conflict framing is used to reflect conflict and disagreement among individuals, groups or organizations as a means of capturing audience interest. In particular, it commonly focuses on the media's role in defining the dispute and altering the naming and blaming among constituents. In conflict situations, framing is evident in two processes: discourse use and development of the issues (Entman, 2007). In discourse use, framing is performed through the naming or labelling of events, the use of words that imply blame, and explanations about the nature of a situation. Parties construct them through a continual process of assessing and reassessing issues in light of attacking arguments, information exchange, and interpretations of events. In effect, stakeholders, and particularly the media, frame issues through naming what the conflict is about, exploring the causes for it, and providing explanations for ongoing events (Ibid). For example, the uprising, turmoil, unrest, demonstration, and so on caused by social anger, lack of good governance and other factors driving people to protest. The development of issues refers to the turning points

within the conflict that shows dramatic movement in which the conflict shifts in a new direction. The reason behind the use of conflict frame might be because journalists think that conflict is one way to catch the attention of more readers. For example, political debate, election campaign news is framed mostly in terms of conflict. These shifts represent the actual as well as reporting changes due to the escalating situation (Ibid).

Human Interest Framing is known by bringing a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem (Entman, 2007). It refers to an effort to personalize the news, dramatize or emotionalize the news in order to capture and retain audience interest; employs adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy caring, sympathy, or compassion. Journalist and media practitioner eager to produce that captures audience interest. Framing a story in human interest terms is one way to achieve this. In such frame, news can be personalized, ‘dramatize & emotionalize’ in order to attract readers’ attention. The frame is also referred as “human impact” frame and is considered the second common frame in the news next to conflict frame (Ibid). Emphasizes how individuals and groups are affected by the event, issue, or problem; news items go into the private or personal lives of the actors. Moreover, they found most stories can easily capture the audience attention. The subject also seems to have captured the imagination of Hollywood screenwriters and television producers. In a crisis situation; the frame stimulates the psychological pulse of people, which ultimately leads them to a more negative attitude toward the crisis.

Economic Consequence Framing reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, groups, organizations, or countries. News is often framed in terms of the actual or potential economic impact or consequences on the audience (Neuman, 1992). The economic impact of an event has an important news value, and it has been suggested that news producers often use the consequence frame to make an issue relevant to their audience. A problem or an issue that will have economic consequences of individual or group or institutions. When an issue or event has a wide impact on finance, it adds value to the news, and its economic consequences are often vital.

Attribution of Responsibility Framing (sometimes called “second-level agenda setting”) demonstrates how news media emphasis on particular characteristics of an issue or a person can

affect attitudes. When a desirable attribute of an object is stressed, it will lead people to think about it more positively than when an undesirable feature is emphasized. Either it presents an event or issue in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to the government or to an individual, group, party or institution; news items suggest the issue or problem requires urgent action. Since frames reflect a specific viewpoint or mindset, therefore, the purpose of conducting framing analysis is to determine how stories are framed involves looking at a story's content and seeing how reporters connect its topic to the typical stories that already exist within people's minds. This is in line with the argument of de Vreese which expresses frame setting is the interaction between media frames and individual's prior knowledge and predispositions (de Vreese, 2005). Present an issue in a way as to attribute responsibility to its cause or solution (i.e., who should be credited or blamed for events). It gives more emphasis on why events happen. However, the attribution of responsibility does not always reflect the objective facts of a situation accurately and can be distorted based on how events are described (ibid).

Diagnostic Framing serves the function of identifying a social problem and then linking that negative aspect of social life to a certain cause. When a story focuses too heavily upon diagnostic frames without at least dealing with a potential solution to this problem, will be most likely ineffective, as the problem will seem unsolved (Corrigall-brown & Snow, 2005). This frame emphasizes identifying a problem and attributing blame and causality. It engages identifying a problem and its causes. A major task of social movement is to draw attention to and stress the seriousness of some perceived problem. In such case, activists must make attributions as to the cause of the problem concerting efforts to persuade people that expected to be the victim of unjust administration. Sometimes different branches of the same movement agree on the problem, but not on its causes.

Prognostic Framing provides a solution to the problem by specifying what needs to be done. Overemphasizing on this frame would most likely fail to motivate individuals that are not directly related to the victimization that is being dealt with (Corrigall-brown & Snow, 2005). This frame can also be described as a solution frame, which specifies what needs to be done This type of framing highlights a proposed solution to the problem that has been diagnosed, including a strategy for solving the problem. Different branches of the same crisis may propose different

solutions. Therefore, by identifying the above frames, the study intends to understand some of the underlying messages that the two media inadvertently sent to their readers (ibid, 2005).

There are various scholars who have discussed the functions of frames. One of a frame's functions is for audiences; to make individuals act without putting much cognitive energy to the task. Particularly, a frame functions to affect the audience's perceptions of topics or issues by addressing certain values, considerations or facts with more obvious relevance to the topic than they might have under another frame. He also suggests that framing is based on "the assumption that subtle changes in the wording of the description of a situation might affect how audiences think about issues". Entman (1993) plainly point out that frames perform four functions for the media organization when reporting a certain issue or event. Entman (1993) defines these functions of frames as the following; Frames define problems, determine what a causal agent is doing and the costs and benefits usually measured in terms of cultural values; diagnose causes identified the forces creating the problem; make moral judgments-evaluate causal agents and their effects. According to a framing theory as explained by Billings (2004), "the three functions of media frames are: selected (who/what to show), emphasis (how much to show), and exclusion (what not to show)". He states that the media by selecting issues, angles, words and expressions; by emphasizing on certain aspect of the issue and omitting information, they control the information the audience receives.

Media presents issues or events by shaping them in a certain way. This particular way of presenting issues is framing. It is also the way information transferred to their readers comes through various forms of communication, all of which are framed to meet the goals of the providing sources. Accordingly, "media framing indicates the way in which issues are selected and emphasized in and by the media. Framing works to shape and alter audience interpretations and preferences through priming" (Elebute, 2015). That is, "frames introduce or raise the salience or apparent importance of certain ideas, activating schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way" (ibid). Therefore, framing serves as a better realizing of how media influence public opinion through the way they present the story to their audiences. It is the way media represent the stories, issues, events or how to present the stories for audiences or readers consumption.

Overall, these conceptual and theoretical frameworks are an important entity that serves as a frame for the study because which are highly associated with the main purpose of the paper in return which have relevance to justify the major findings of the study.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter states about how the data is collected, and briefly explains about the population size and sampling techniques and procedures are employed and discussed to achieve the purpose of the study. This chapter also deals with the design of the study, methods of data gathering, organizing and analysis, data sources and ethical consideration are the main points discussed in this section.

### **3.2. Research Design**

The research design helps the researcher to answer the research questions effectively and also serve as a guide to select the appropriate data required for the study. As stated by Grix (2004), the research design refers to the overall strategy chosen to integrate the different components of a study in a coherent and logical way, thereby ensuring that the work effectively addresses the research problem. It is the complete scheme or plan of the research.

### **3.3. Methods of the Study**

Research methods are plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This plan involves decisions which approach should be relevant to study a topic. The selection of a research method is also based on the nature of the research problem or issue being addressed for the study. Basically, there are three approaches of research: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. For the purpose of this study, the researcher employed qualitative research techniques.

Qualitative inquiry helps to explore views, experiences and ideas of our research participants, the ways that perceptions, institution, discourse and relationships work and the importance of meanings that they produce (Mason, 2002). Accordingly, the study was conducted through analysis of relevant literature, perceptions and interpretations of various policy outputs and agreements. In terms of this, to study the practice of media in building democracy in Ethiopia

after Abiy Ahmed came to power; the comments, views, words and expressions of the texts written on the issues and suggestions of different individuals are considered as the main input of the study.

There are also some other aspects of the object under investigation whose data cannot be expressed and analyzed through quantitative methods. Accordingly, Creswell (2009) holds that a qualitative approach is best suited for detailed and complex analysis of a given issue as well as for problems that cannot easily be quantified. Since the research is not concerned with quantifying its results through statistical summary or analysis, it is best to employ the qualitative approach. Thus, this study used qualitative approach since it enables the researcher to qualitatively collect and analyze the data that are relevant to the subject under the study.

### **3.4. Subject of the Study**

To assess the roles and challenges of the Ethiopian media in building democracy after the coming of Abiy Ahmed (Prime Minister of Ethiopia), the researcher intentionally selected the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) for the reason that it is the strongest and voiced state-owned media. It has a wide range of coverage about democratic issues in the country and its programming includes news, sport, music and other entertainment, but this study focuses on news stories because by its nature, news is powerful to disseminate information in accurate manner. Further, to make the data manageable and to deal about the subject, the researcher purposely chosen news stories and editorials as a genre after Abiy Ahmed became a prime Minister of Ethiopia.

### **3.5. Sampling Techniques**

In this study, the researcher employed purposive sampling thereby samples are selected from Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) programs concentrating on the practice of media in building democracy in Ethiopia after the coming of Abiy. “Purposive sampling is one of the most common sampling techniques in which subjects or groups are pre-selected with the criteria of their relevance to the particular research question” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:95). Occasionally, it is stated as judgement sampling. The informants are those who possess the required status, experience or known to have special knowledge to provide information the researcher demanded (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). In line with this, the researcher is employed purposive sampling to

select the informants and institution on the basis of certain predefined purpose. With respect to the time frame, the study is organized to be beginning from after the coming of Abiy to power from April 2018 up to the present. This is the year of democratic transition but political turmoil escalated in return there are skirmishes, internal displacement, violations of human rights and instability after the coming of Abiy. The news reports of EBC are employed to analyze the study.

### **3.6.Sources of Data**

Primary and secondary sources of data are employed to conduct this study. These are:

**Primary Sources of Data**, which are considered to be more accurate, are prepared by individuals who are participants in or direct witnesses to the events that are being described (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). For the purpose of this study, key informants serve as the basic source of primary data. They are those individuals who have a privileged social position in the research setting in turn they give specialist knowledge about other people, processes and happenings. Information from key informants is valuable and useful, since it is likely to be more extensive, detailed and privileged than ordinary peoples (Kumar, 1989). In this case, the informants were news producer, program producer and the journalists who are selected from Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC). Also, content analysis is employed in this study to collect primary data.

Whereas **Secondary Sources of Data** refer to the data or information which have already been collected and analyzed by someone else. While the researcher employs secondary data, at that time the researcher has to explore different sources where he can find the data. The secondary sources include published books, research papers, policy documents, journals, articles, official websites and a variety of publications and magazines and others relevant to support the findings of the study.

### **3.7.Data Collection Tools**

For the purpose of this study, the researcher employed semi-structured interview and content analysis as an instrument for collecting data qualitatively.

### **3.7.1. Semi-Structured Interview**

The researcher employed semi-structured interview as a tool for gathering the primary data. It employed to explore the views of the selected key informants. With this respect, Denscombe (2007:176) states as in semi-structured interviews the interviewer still has a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered. In the semi-structured interviews, the interviewer is prepared to be flexible, the answers are open-ended and perhaps more importantly, to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher. For this study, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) was chosen as a subject because it is the strongest and voiced state-owned media. EBC is the national public broadcaster owned by the government of Ethiopia. Therefore, 8 key informants are selected from EBC and then semi-structured interview was employed as an instrument to collect data from these informants.

### **3.7.2. Qualitative Content Analysis**

Qualitative content analysis is in use at this time. “It is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of the text information through the systematic classification of coding process and identifying themes or pattern” (Hsieh, Shannon, et. al., 2005). In this regard, Mayring (2000) states that qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or mining objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text. This means that it allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but a critical and a scientific manner.

Content analysis is the analysis of what is contained in a message. Largely content analysis may be viewed as a method where the content of the message forms the basis for drawing inferences and conclusions about the content (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1976). It can be used for studies that are more qualitative in nature. It is basically a symbolic method to investigate symbolic material or media text. It is also a research method for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action (Krippendorff, 1980).

According to Denscombe (2010) in qualitative research, content analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted so as to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge. In addition, it is a systematic interpretation of textual, visual, or audible matter, such

as newspaper editorials, televisions news, advertisements, public speeches, and other verbal and nonverbal units of analysis (Krippendorff, 1980). Hence, the content analysis aspect mainly focuses on the news text concept, written script, discussed the theme and structure. For this study, qualitative content analysis was employed. The contents of news stories which are mostly focused on assessing media practice in building democracy in Ethiopia. In this case, the Ethiopian Broadcasting Service (EBC) media house is analyzed after the coming of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

In light of the aforementioned discussions, in a qualitative approach a code is usually a word or short phrase that symbolize a summative, salient, essence-capturing and evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2015). The coding is based on types of news sources, attributions, news topics, and news location. To analyze the contents of the news, coding sheet is developed by the researcher from the review of literature. This is pertinent to assess the frequency of coverage, tone, themes, sources of information, and frames of news. Content analysis was used for the analysis of the general message, implication and the intent of the news. This means that content analysis is about the general message the content of the news rather than counting words and terms. In light of this, by scrutinizing the detail of the message of the news; it is possible to deduce pertinent things that serves as an input about media practice in building democracy after the coming of Abiy. For the purpose of this study, themes were detected under the content analysis and it was used as the checklist of content analysis. As to the theme, in this study the researcher systematically categorized the news stories. The codes were given for each news stories that were analyzed in the study. In this study, as it is discussed above, respondents will be carefully chosen through purposive sampling. The interview questions were improved in accordance with the comments to assure the trustworthiness of the instruments.

### **3.8. Trustworthiness/ Credibility**

Credibility is the equivalent of internal validity in quantitative research and is concerned with the aspect of truth-value which asks whether the researcher has developed and articulated a certain level of confidence in the findings based on the phenomenon under investigation (Lincoln, 1995). The truth value derives from an in-depth exploration of the human experience as it is performed by the participants (Krefting, 1990). Credibility is the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. It establishes whether the research findings represent

plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Parallely, credibility deals with the question how congruent are the findings of the reality (Merriam, 1998). It also deals with the focus of the research and the sureness in how well the data address the intended focus (Polit & Beck, 2012). Credibility is useful for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research in which the researcher ensures that those participating in research are identified and described accurately. In this regard, Lincoln and Guba also argued that ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this case, the purpose of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the research findings are worthwhile. Thus, trustworthiness in qualitative research points out the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods that are employed to ensure the quality of a study.

### **3.9.Data Presentation and Analysis**

In this study, the researcher organizes and summarize data in a meaningful, dependable and accurate manner; examine and discover meanings, drawing implications, and presenting the study finding in a way that has an air of acceptability. These whole range of activities are categorized under qualitative data analysis method. Data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to this mass of unstructured data (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). According to Creswell (2014) data analysis and interpretation involves preparing the data for analysis, moving further and more profound into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data. In this case, Creswell (2007) also stated as data analysis in qualitative research comprises of getting ready and arranging the information (i.e., text data as transcripts, or picture information as in photos) for investigation, at that point lessening the information into topics through a procedure of coding and consolidating the codes, lastly presenting the data in figures, tables, or discussion. It is mentioned that the study employed qualitative research approach. Accordingly, the data collection obtained with this approach was analyzed. The researcher employed interpretive analysis for the qualitative data acquired through semi structured interview and content analysis. The data that was collected through interviews were transcribed and quoted with great care and the analysis and presentation would be in a form of interpretation. This qualitative data was also presented and analyzed in a

way the research questions could be addressed. Finally, the literature review was triangulate to strengthen or refute synthesis of the qualitative data. The results were summarized and recommendations were drawn from the conclusion. The interview with EBC media managers and experts is analyzed in accordance with the research aim. Hence, the analysis and presentation are in a form of interpretation.

### **3.10. Ethical Considerations**

During the process of conducting this research output, the researcher gives attention to basic values in which the privacy of the participants would be protected. The research is conducted through taking basic ethical values into consideration throughout the research process. The researcher should focus on the following listed ethical values. Plagiarism, reporting data reliably, healthy communication with research advisor, fair treatment of the research subject and without altering the findings to satisfy certain interest groups are of the main points that would be discussed in this research. During the data gathering and analysis, privacy of respondents will be maintained to protect their rights.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the discussion and analysis of the data gained from the EBC media outlet and the response obtained through semi structured interview have been provided. Data analysis was made in terms of different sub categories that were drawn from the data. In view of the research questions of the study, the following sub-categories were driven and the ground on which data analysis and discussion were made. The main purpose of this study is to assess the practice of media in building democracy in Ethiopia after the coming of Abiy with particular emphasis to the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC).

### 4.1. Media and Democracy after the Reform

Media is a democratizing agent. For both media and democratization scholars, the mass media are regarded as one of the key democratic institutions vital in improving the quality of the electoral system, political parties, parliament, judiciary, and other branches of the state, even civil society, and safeguarding their democratic performance (Jebril et al, 2013:2). In democratizing contexts, the media tasks are generally included under the ‘accountability role’ which the media have been normatively ascribed as one of their main functions in a democratic society (Norris et al., 2006). The notion of labeling media as the ‘fourth estate’ connotes an act of a watchdog, revealing the wrongdoing of the public officials and other power holders within the democratic system.

Media is often referred to as the fourth branch of government because of the power they have and the oversight function they exercise. In this regard, Curran (1991) argue that the free access and exchange of information is indispensable to the notion of democracy. The very character of democracy suggests that free and open communication, through a variety of channels, is necessary to develop critical practices found in democratic societies. According to this argument, the mass media in a stable democracy are the principal institutions in which people can better understand their society.

The media can play a positive role in democracy only if there is an enabling environment that allows them to do so. In this case, the informant asserts that EBC was outright under the pressure of government for prolonged time before the reform in return its contribution to the role of democracy is insignificant. But after the reform, though there is an attempt “to the side of government to take away some barriers that limit its freedom, yet the involvement of government is very high in every aspect of its activities”. As a result, EBC is unable to play a positive role in building democracy as it is expected.<sup>1</sup>

As it is seen the current political environment in Ethiopia, it offers opportunities for expanding the democratic space relative to where it was before the large political opening which ensued since April 2018. At this time, the focus of the media is to be how freedom of speech come into true and its impact on the realization of democracy. “Attention is also placed on access to information through freeing both government and private media outlets”.<sup>2</sup> In this case, the informant also added that there is an effort on the side of EBC to make the platform for the people to exercise their rights and duties and highlight the relevant things to draw the attention of the people through the news reports. To enhance, the Ethiopian political parties discussed on the issues of nation building and freedom of expression likewise related matters as well (EBC news April 16, 2021). It is the expression of democracy that the citizen can exercise their right to self-rule in the country (EBC news July 1, 2021). It also reports the fact that is occurred on the ground with limited pressure of government in order to help citizens to have access to getting real information and to make right decision in the affairs of the country albeit it is not long last due to “unstable political conditions of the country in return EBC turn back to stand nearly on the government side”.<sup>3</sup>

In light of the above statement, after the coming of Abiy, EBC displayed some efforts to investigate the democratic institutions like “human rights commission, anti-corruption and election board in order to ensure to what extent they properly functioning their responsibility of

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Mr. Tesfaye Abate, News producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 22 May 2021.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Mr, seied Muhe, News and News Program Channel Executive Director, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 20 May 2021.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Mr. Nebyu Wendson, Chief News Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 20 May 2021.

building democracy”.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, to some extent, “it is free from some restraints caused by the intervention of government to report the relevant information to the public specifically at the outset of the reform”.<sup>5</sup>

## **4.2.EBC Role in Building Democracy after the Reform**

The universal role of media is to disseminate educational, informative and entertaining issues to the public (Curran, 2005: 120). It is a watchdog, vigilantly examining the exercise of power and protecting the public from wrong doing. Media also serves as a platform of open debate that facilitates the formation of public opinion; it is the voice of the people, representing the views of citizens and expressing the agreed aims of society (ibid). It is the role media to inform the people to have access to information about this real world. In this respect, to bring changes in people’s attitudes and experience the media have to set a frame for particular and important issues. Especially, there are times that media would have the role of diffusing new ideas and innovation by creating awareness. To diffuse new ideas and innovations, the news media have to set a purposeful agenda to disseminate salient information to the target audiences (Mulatu, 2007:19).

As it is stated by Fasika, the 2018 reform has brought opportunities for EBC to practice freely its responsibilities as compared to the situation before the reform. It has relative freedom that is related to reporting facts on the ground. This points out that EBC somehow embarked on serving both the people and the government rather than prone to serve only the government. To some extent “the interference of government is alleviated in the activities of EBC in return it gets relative independence to report the reality in its news”.<sup>6</sup> However, this freedom could not continue as it is expected due to the aggravated political crisis of the country. As a result, EBC almost resort to “its original place of deafening the voice of government”.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Mr. Solomon Abegaz, News Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 23 May 2021.

<sup>5</sup> ibid

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Mrs. Fasika Ayalew, Reporter, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 23 May 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Mr. Nebyu Wendson, Chief News Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 20 May 2021.

In similar view, as the respondent, EBC started to work its activities free without the pressure of government as a result this helps the media to transmit things that are important for the development of democracy in their news reports. To demonstrate, reporting things associated with discussion between political parties, reporting demonstration relating to backing and opposing government, reporting issues of abusing human rights, reporting issues of elections, expressions, and reporting the wrong deeds of the authority and exposing inequality and injustice for the greater benefits of the people.<sup>8</sup>

Media as the ‘fourth estate of government’ connotes an act of a watchdog, revealing the maladministration and wrongdoing of the public officials and other power holders within the democratic system. To enhance, “EBC has designed a program like ‘Aynachin’ in which public grievance is reported, and with this the media attempts to reveal some defects of governments”.<sup>9</sup> “The other is ‘birtu weg’ in which many times leaders are called and respond to the issues provided by media person. At this time, the journalists strive to detect the defect and expose it to the public through its news”.<sup>10</sup> ‘Investigative journalism’ is utilized to reveal such evil activities as well.

After the reform, there has been a great change in EBC by providing a forum for discussions and debates in order to promote democracy through producing various programs like ‘Yegna Guday’, ‘wektawi gudayoh’ in which political parties and other intellectuals are called to argue on policies and ideologies and other issues deemed to be pertinent for the public; “Enderase in which parliamentary issues are presented. The voice of the public also heard through this program”.<sup>11</sup> However, many scholars are reluctant when they are invited to come and share their knowledge to the public due to political instability of the country. Hence, these conditions to

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Mr, seied Muhe, News and News Program Channel Executive Director, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 20 May 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Mrs. Fasika Ayalew, Reporter, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 23 May 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Mr. Tesfaye Chane, Reporter, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 22 May 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Mrs. Betelihem Tilahun, Program Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 21 May 2021.

some extent become “a challenge for the activities of building democracy and is also grave to find out professionals who are willing to deal with in such matters”.<sup>12</sup>

With respect to representing different views fairly, “many journalists tend to side towards their ethnicity in return they remain not to be the voice of diversity. Such approach affects the development of democratic activities of this media in representing different views”.<sup>13</sup> In this view, EBC has designed various programs “to broaden the democratic space” like ‘Yelibona wukir’, ‘Wektawi Zigjit’ and ‘Kasma’.<sup>14</sup> These programs are formed to shape thinking and level the ground for discussions and debates on extreme thoughts and diversified ideas.

Concerning election, EBC offered training for the editors and journalists so as to enable them to report balance the news item disseminated to the public. Further, “political parties are called to relate and debate their ideas, policies and ideologies without government pressure, and briefing also offered by the selected person to identify and reject mundane report about election”.<sup>15</sup> In the same manner, to have access to information about election, EBC delivers a platform for all parties to bring their ideas and discuss. Further, the peace and security task force revealed the activities of the groups who work in underground against the 6th national election (EBC news May 25, 2021). The Ethiopian political parties should work in collaboration with the government to protect those who work and demand to abort the election process (EBC news June 27, 2021). “EBC transmits whatever decisions of the Electoral Board of Ethiopia and it reports as it is in its news reports. It also aired the idea of opposition parties aimed to balance its report”.<sup>16</sup>

It is doing its work by giving much attention for election and election process from the inception to the last voice the electorate. As it is known, election is the major indicator of the existence of democracy so it gives an emphasis for participation in pre-election, during election and post-election. It is worked to make the people ready to election. “It also doing by preparing agenda for

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Mr. Nebyu Wendson, Chief News Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 20 May 2021.

<sup>13</sup> ibid

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Mrs. Fasika Ayalew, Reporter, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 23 May 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Mr. Solomon Abegaz, News Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 23 May 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Mrs. Weynitu Abate, Program Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 21 May 2021.

election. This media reports any grievance of opposition parties related to election in its news”.<sup>17</sup> It is important to debate on ideology and policy without ingratiate against one another. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed encouraged all people to elect their parties without pressure (EBC news May 14, 2021). “EBC formed ‘Election Desk’ that follow only election and election process when political parties’ debate and discussed. It also offers real information for the public so as to help the citizens to engaged in election”.<sup>18</sup>

### **4.3.Coverage of democracy building under EBC**

These days, the media are highly criticized for the remarkably increasing ‘commodification of their content’ because of which political issues are driven out of the focuses of media practice and instead entertainment is taking a superseding coverage (McNair, 2000: 5). The news media have a power to assist the idea of democracy through coverage of diverse issues that are indispensable to the society (Gans, 2003).

After the reform, the new regime thought the media as a democratic actor. Media such as Ethiopian Satellite Radio and Television (ESAT) and Oromo Media Network (OMN)), which were considered as fighter for freedom and labeled as anti-government by the previous regime, have been called by the current leadership to freely operate in the country albeit OMN was soon blocked due to its extreme activities against the government. Many of the websites have been unblocked (Mulatu, 2019). In addition, the Abiy government has put measures to unlock the media space that limit the role of the executive on state media. This indicates that the accountability of the regulator of the Ethiopian state media like Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) and others shift from executive (the prime minister) to the legislator (the parliament). Also, the new leadership, has set up technical committee to revise some of the laws that have been draconian and repressive to the Ethiopian media. To illustrate, “the Anti-Terrorism law which were used to jail many journalists and political activists in the past decade, is now revised” (Mulatu, 2019: 5). But now ‘TPLF’ and ‘shene’ are labeled as terrorist enterprises by the members of the parliament.

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Mr. Tesfaye Abate, News producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 22 May 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Mr, seied Muhe, News and News Program Channel Executive Director, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 20 May 2021.

Based on the aforementioned positive measures of the Abiy government to reinforce the Ethiopian media system, as the informant, EBC is focusing on those democratic institutions how they operate after the reform and it looks what opinion the people have about democracy. For instance, how the prisoners are treated, it follows the court cases, and it also reports the demonstrations better with that of the previous regime. In this reform, EBC allows the people to come and share their ideas, the voice opposition political parties are now properly heard; it is highly criticized the condition of the court cases and given coverage for it. For instance, “in the program of ‘Aynachin’ authorities at different level are invited so as to expose their activities of bad governance and maladministration through the media”.<sup>19</sup>

Things related to human rights are reported through this media. In this relation, ‘Mycadra’ in Amhara region and ‘Galacoma’ in Afar region can be the best example for human rights violation and this is also reported through in its news. The conflicts that have been raised in various parts of the country like Amaro, Segen, Oromia, Guji and so on also reported through this media. In addition, it reports through the news about the briefings of the House of Peoples Representative (HPR). At this time, “things related to election are given more coverage through this media”.<sup>20</sup> To enhance, some political analyst remarked as the 6th national election is democratic in Ethiopia in contrast to the previous regime of EPRDF (EBC news June 22, 2021). In light of this, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) in its election and observation findings preliminary report informed that the 6th national election is took pace in democratic order and laid the foundation for the building of democracy (EBC news July 2, 2021). The scholars also expounded as this election is paved the way for democracy in Ethiopia and it is milestone in the history of Ethiopia (EBC news June 2, 2021).

Many times, EBC deeds comply with the direction of editorial policy in its news reports in which political affairs gets more coverage than others like democracy and developmental issues.<sup>21</sup> EBC

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Mr. Solomon Abegaz, News Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 23 May 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Mr. Tesfaye Chane, Reporter, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 22 May 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Mrs. Fasika Ayalew, Reporter, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 23 May 2021.

was given focus for election which is major part of democracy. “This portrays EBCs endeavor to construct democracy in the country”.<sup>22</sup>

#### **4.4.Challenges of EBC in Building Democracy**

EBC has faced challenges in the process of building democracy in its news reports even if there is relative freedom after the reform. The presence of highly polarized political situation exacerbated EBC’s independence to report facts. Pursuant to this unstable political situation, “some of the government institutions are reluctant to offer relevant information to the journalist; for instance, Ministry of Peace (MP) and the parliament”.<sup>23</sup> The influence of government is significant in various activities of this media outlet. “Some of the challenges of EBC also associated with institutional management and this is expressed through ethnic line which indicates the structure of the regime before the reform as it is”.<sup>24</sup> However, as the study, little access to report facts, fake news and self-censorship are of the major challenges for EBC in building democracy after the reform.

##### **4.4.1. Limited access to Information**

In Ethiopia the main stream media is considered to have failed to serve the public interest as intended to set agendas, initiate goals, organize and guide the people. But this is not actually to mean that these media have not contributed anything to the current reform. This indicates that the state media contribute insignificantly to the country’s overall development. Because these media are preoccupied by legitimizing the policies and actions of the government. Whatever the state media says or play any role it is not its own but it belongs to the government, it is servant of the government than the people (Natinael, 2019).

During transition, except few authorities, many are not willing to offer an information that is useful for the public. The Ethiopian media content largely inaccessible to outsiders, thereby

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Mrs. Weynitu Abate, Program Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 21 May 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Mr. Solomon Abegaz, News Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 23 May 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Mrs. Weynitu Abate, Program Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 21 May 2021.

possibly preventing criticism from the international community (Skjerdal, 2009). As regards the content in the state media outlets, much of the material is presented as protocol news; in other words, it has the form of official information emanating from the public administration. Investigative journalism has not been much featured in Ethiopian state media channels (ibid). In contrast, before the reform, ‘Government Communication Affairs Office’ (GCAO) promptly informed the phenomena that had been occurred in the country. But now, it is cumbersome to find out just like such institution of providing information. In fact, “during the reform the ‘Press Secretariat’ is instituted in order to carry out communication activities but not this much effective as it is expected in disseminating information that is relevant to the public”.<sup>25</sup>

Media without information astray the people and lead into crisis. Currently, there is a problem to report issues for journalists because of insecurity that associated with the conflicts raised from the different parts of the country. “Now EBC employs Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) as a source information. In fact, the Press Secretariat is also served as a source information but it offers information only if there is needed”.<sup>26</sup>

It is grave for the journalists to report facts on the ground due to indiscipline of journalists like self-censorship and the pressure of government in return their report easily exposed to partiality and imbalance.<sup>27</sup> According to the respondent, the challenge of EBC can be also explained as political instability of the country and inept to access information exacerbated the reluctant of authorities to provide information relevant to the public. But “the newly established press secretariat gives information that comes out of the Prime Minister Office (PMO) and it is also serves as narrator of the Prime Minister”.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Mrs. Fasika Ayalew, Reporter, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 23 May 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Mr. Tesfaye Abate, News producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 22 May 2021.

<sup>27</sup> ibid

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Mr, seied Muhe, News and News Program Channel Executive Director, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 20 May 2021.

#### **4.4.2. Fake News**

According to Bennet & Livingston, “Fake news is the cause of disinformation which are referring to the intentional spread of false information, masked as traditional news, to advance political goals or generate revenues” (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). The main features of the fake news genre are that the original producers of the information are harder to trace given that they purposively hide their true identity when presenting the information as originating from a legitimate news outlet. While the phenomena of political actors actively spreading misleading information are well-known and discussed, the role of traditional news media, who are supposed to be the bearers of truth and factual accuracy, is less well understood. In this case, traditional news media are in fact a part of the problem, and play a somewhat paradoxical role with respect to fake news and its dissemination (Glasser, 2016). In addition, fake news refers to the false or misleading information that appears as real news. It aims to deceive or mislead people. It is news comes in many forms, such as clickbait (misleading headlines), disinformation (with malicious intention to mislead the public), misinformation (false information regardless of the motive behind), hoax, parody, satire, rumor, deceptive news and other forms (Skjerdal, 2009).

It is essential to raise professionalism in journalism with respect to fake news in order to understand the source of the problem where it springs and protecting its spread to public. It is viewed as a difficult job by virtue of the different journalism cultures practiced worldwide and occupational ethics attached to it (Waisbord, 2013). Nevertheless, Zelizer puts professionalism as “a conceptual category that reveals how journalism intersects with economic, political, social, and cultural forces that shape media systems” (Zelizer, 2005: 4).

He also argues that there is no a significant difference in defining newsworthiness and setting standards of acceptable quality of news practices in newsrooms around the world (Zelizer, 2005). In light of this, there are two things that limited the application of professional journalism in the country; first, the presence of volatile and divided society where one cannot make a demarcation between the educated and the layman; second, the presence of a polarized political environment

makes the media prone to serve its interest. “It is frustrating to the professionals who would like to stick the principles of professional journalism”.<sup>29</sup>

However, in accordance with public sphere theory, the function of media is to report truth, accuracy, objective and balanced report through pursuing the agreed codes of ethics and professional standards (Schultz,1998: 21). The media has an obligation or responsibility to the public. In the same manner, this theory entails that the media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to society and that are mainly met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity, balance and avoid whatever might lead to violence or civil disorder or give offence to ethnic or religious minorities (McQuail, 1983: 91-92). In addition, the social responsibility theory asserts that media can be free but also have a moral duty to humanity to deliver satisfactory information for people to make informed decisions” (ibid). Media is responsible to curtail abuses in form of fake news, disinformation, hate speech, misinformation, propaganda etc. Elebute (2015).

In contrast, the respondent argues that there is hardly exist professional journalism in this country. The profession per se seems the politics of the country. “The journalists tend to provide the information what the audience want to see and read rather than reporting the reality on the ground. This is the idea contradict with professionalism in journalism”.<sup>30</sup>. Further, Fasika asserts “that fake news a challenge for EBC and that impedes it to contribute for development of democracy as it is expected. The main stream media has limited access to information in return the public gets information from social media in advance than the main stream media”.<sup>31</sup> This phenomenon is reduced the influence of EBC to address its audience by real information.

These professional commitments and perceptions lay a belief that a functioning democratic society depends on quality information. Therefore, journalists perceive that an essential part of their professional duty is to correct manipulation and disinformation. “Correction of deception

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Mr, seied Muhe, News and News Program Channel Executive Director, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 20 May 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Mr. Tesfaye Abate, News producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 22 May 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Mrs. Fasika Ayalew, Reporter, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 23 May 2021.

and not publishing rumors is a central element of journalists' profession and which is also perceived by journalists as an essential value".<sup>32</sup> Some foreign activists are involved in disseminating fake news in their twitter page account about the ongoing war between the government of Ethiopia and TPLF by affirming that the humanitarian aids are applied to purchase weapons and ammunition in Ethiopia (EBC news July 1, 2021). "The fake news opens market for the activists".<sup>33</sup> As a result, it is difficult for the main stream media like EBC to get information prior to social media.

#### **4.4.3. Self- Censorship**

Media in all countries serves as a watchdog, as a source of information, a civic forum and an agenda setter. Likewise, journalists can play significant role to the public sphere by maintaining and managing a space for public debate, circulating ideas and opinions, extending freedom and diversity for the public, use as a connector between citizens and government, and prompting mobilization toward civic engagement. Media works as a means for providing citizens with the most important information in view of their political activities and guiding the public to discussion and these functions are taken for granted (MaQuail, 2009). In light of this, social responsibility theory argues the media, in order to contribute to the democratic processes of a given political system and to meet the needs of the society, should not be influenced by an ever-increasing commodification of news and other media content and the negative freedom that came owing to an unregulated media McQuail (1983). Instead, the media outlets in democratic societies have made philosophical shift required to ensure the free media remains free (Hocking, 1983: 147).

In contrast, majority of the journalists still work for the state media institutions where they feel obliged to report in line with the political programme of the government of the day. Parallely, as the respondent, EBC faces a challenge in the process of building democracy albeit there is relative freedom specifically at the outset of the reform. EBC could not be free because its

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<sup>32</sup>Interview with Mr. Tesfaye Abate, News producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 22 May 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Mr, seied Muhe, News and News Program Channel Executive Director, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 20 May 2021.

leaders are politicians, who are appointed officials, implement the will of government. This makes difficult “to play its role of serving as a watchdog over maladministration or wrong deeds of the government and other powerful institutions through their documentaries and news even if the involvement of government mitigated after the coming of Abiy Abiy”.<sup>34</sup>

In connection with limited media freedom, self-censorship is at stake to represent the views of others. This media practice is not necessarily a straightforward issue. It stretches from a wide understanding, seeing self-censorship as the usual practice for any journalist anywhere in the world, caused by the inevitable selection and de-selection processes while reporting and editing; entailing only those practices which are performed for the sake of excluding information from publicity due to felt threats by public authorities (Skjerdal, 2008). As to Lee,

Self-censorship is a set of editorial actions ranging from omission, dilution, distortion, and change of emphasis to choose of verbal devices by journalists, their organizations, and even the entire media community in anticipation of currying reward and avoiding punishment from the power structure (Lee, 1998: 57).

It is the withholding of journalistic material due to felt external pressure which leads the journalists to alter media content in order to avoid personal reprimands and stay clear of accusations of inciting social or political tensions. It is particularly prevalent in sensitive political stories, especially during elections.<sup>35</sup> Importantly, this involves not only limitations caused by government interference, but also those provoked by other actors and conditions.

self-censorship is particularly associated with the state media and official institutions (Skjerdal, 2009) This is perhaps only to be expected given that official outlets are customarily framed as mouthpieces for the authorities rather than public service media channels proper. Even if there has been a general drive towards more independent journalism in the African media (ibid) most publicly owned media institutions on the continent continue to nurture relationships with the authorities; sometimes in their organizational structures, but always in the minds of their

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<sup>34</sup>Interview with Mr. Nebyu Wendson, Chief News Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 20 May 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Mr. Tesfaye Chane, Reporter, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 22 May 2021.

audience. The state media carry on in a symbiotic relationship with the authorities whereby journalists are given easier access to services and information in return for friendly coverage of the government. Ethiopia is one example, where until recently only the state media had access to government press conferences.

In the Ethiopian state media, self-censorship is not provoked by an extraordinary situation but is part of a daily routine. The individual journalist is thus left with the dilemma of reconciling self-censorship and acceptable journalistic standards without being overwhelmed by professional contradictions and possibly conflict over their personal integrity (Skjerdal 2009). The Journalists support the idea that the media – especially the state-owned media – should play a pro-active role in nation-building. To this end, self-censorship is sometimes justified as a necessary strategy for performing socially responsible journalism. It is argued that journalists should see themselves as social change actors on par with other agents in national development. This view of journalism fits in with the official editorial line of Ethiopia’s state media, which foregrounds a development journalism philosophy (ibid).

On the other hand, most, however, “have only vague knowledge of the actual contents of the editorial policy. It is pro-government. It assumes you only work in favor of the government. You can’t present any negative news about the government”.<sup>36</sup> Pertains to this, Journalists typically explain self-censorship as fear of retribution if they allow stories critical about the government. The retribution they fear ranges from losing their job to getting a salary deduction. These retribution and penalties among the journalists probably contribute to cementing an editorial culture which stimulates journalists to be on the safe side rather than challenging the status quo.<sup>37</sup>

“Self-censorship is associated with journalistic unprofessionalism and poor training” (Rønning, 2005). In light of this, “the journalists themselves employs self- censorship so this situation also a challenge for EBC in addressing the people with credible information about building democratic issues after the reform”.<sup>38</sup>. The issue of freedom is very crucial for media. So, the

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mr, seied Muhe, News and News Program Channel Executive Director, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 20 May 2021.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Mr. Solomon Abegaz, News Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 23 May 2021.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Mrs. Fasika Ayalew, Reporter, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 23 May 2021.

capacity to practice journalism free from undue interference, to peacefully criticize government representatives, and to express critical views are crucial to the exercise of many other rights and freedoms.<sup>39</sup> “But journalism in this country is in its infancy or at a poor level. There is no an organized, knowledge based and well-developed journalism. This should have been improved and developed into professionalism”.<sup>40</sup>

Overall, though the primary aim of this chapter is to analyze and justify the reason why this study is conducted through employing primary and secondary data, a multiple of issues are raised in association with the Ethiopian media in building democracy after the coming of Abiy in particular emphasis to EBC. Further, to come up with the findings, the research questions are thoroughly explored in this chapter and the ground on which analysis and discussions are made.

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Mr. Tesfaye Abate, News producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 22 May 2021.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Mr. Nebyu Wendson, Chief News Producer, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate, 20 May 2021.

#### **4.5. Major Findings of the Study**

- There is an effort that EBC designed different programs to build democracy. Such as ‘Aynachin’ and ‘birtu weg’, to reveal the maladministration and wrongdoing of the public officials and other power holders. ‘Yelibona wukir’, ‘Wektawi Zigjit’ and ‘Kasma’ are designed to represent different views and thoughts through leveling the ground for discussions and debates. The programs of ‘Yegna Guday’, ‘wektawi gudayoh’ and ‘Enderase’ are designed to promote democracy through a forum in which political parties and other intellectuals are discussed on the matters of policies and ideologies. Also, voice of the public heard through these programs.
- EBC offered little coverage for democratic affairs with that of political affairs in its news reports due to several internal and external political pressure and challenges in various parts of the country. Such democratic issues are associated with widening the political space, coverage for discussions and debates between political parties, issues of reporting demonstration, corruption, abusing human rights, and freedom of speech, elections, court cases, parliamentary activities, and reporting the wrong deeds of the authorities.
- After the reform, specifically at the outset, the interference of government is mitigated in the activities of EBC in return it gets relative independence to report facts in its news reports. However, this freedom could not continue as it is expected due to the aggravated political crisis of the country. As a result, EBC almost resort to its original place of deafening the voice of government.
- Pertains to access to information, except few authorities, many are not willing to offer an information that is useful for the public to the journalists; for instance, Ministry of peace and the Parliament. In fact, the Press Secretariat and Federal Government Communication Service are also served as a source information for EBC but not sufficient.
- As you know the quality of information is imperative for the development of democracy. But EBC faced challenges with fake news which is intentional spread of false or misleading information that appears as real news. It aims to deceive or mislead people. The journalists tend to provide the information what the audience want to see and read

rather than reporting the reality on the ground. This is the idea contradict with professionalism in journalism.

- Self-censorship is associated with journalistic unprofessionalism and poor training. In light of this, the journalists themselves employs self- censorship. So, this situation also a challenge for EBC in addressing the people with credible information about building democratic issues.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### 5.1. Conclusion

The absence of democracy and repressive nature the then government raised mass political discontent and anti-government protests in and outside the government. The law and order are in jeopardy in various parts of the country and its subsequent impact led the country to adjust the policy and leadership. As a result of these turbulent political circumstances, the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power in April 2018. Instantly, the incumbent government took decisions to reform many areas specifically related to the opening of the political space. Also, the focus of the media is mainly placed on access to information and how freedom of speech has altered to impact the realization of democracy. However, there is suspicion towards the current political reform to safeguard sustainable peace and order due to several internal and external pressure and challenges in various parts of the country. So, to assess the study, EBC is selected the fact that this media outlet is the main sources of news and information in the absence of strong independent media outlet in the country at this time. In line of this, the study is mainly conducted to investigate the practice of media in building democracy in Ethiopia after Abiy Ahmed came to power in focusing EBC. To conduct this research the researcher employed the research questions that encompasses- To what extent EBC is playing its role in promoting democracy after Abiy Ahmed came to power? To what extent EBC is offering coverage for building democracy after Abiy Ahmed came to power? What are the challenges that EBC is facing in the process of building democracy after Abiy Ahmed came to power? This study is essentially focused on public space theory, social responsibility theory of media and framing theory in order to support the arguments theoretically. In doing so, primary and secondary sources of information are employed to conduct the study. Likewise, semi structured interview is applied as instrument of collecting data. Qualitative approach is also employed to interpret and analyze the study.

In the reform, the focus of the media is largely placed on access to information and how freedom of speech has altered to impact the realization of democracy. In this case, there an effort towards

EBC to build democracy through its news and programs. But the current political reform failed to safeguard sustainable peace and order due to several internal and external political pressure and challenges in various parts of the country. Such political crisis caused EBC to offer more coverage about political affairs than democratic affairs. The presence of polarized political environment and volatile and divided society are frustrating to the professionals who would like to stick the principles of professional journalism. This unprofessionalism is mainly expressed through fake news and self-censorship. Also, insufficient access to information and the interference of government are other challenges that hamper the realization of the democracy. Overall, after the reform, when it is seen the political crisis along with a multiple of factors, the practice of EBC in contributing to building democracy is not taken as simple but it remained much to be done.

## **5.2.Recommendation**

Media independence should be guaranteed through making media organizations are financially viable, free from intervention of media owners and the state, and operate in a competitive environment in order to access information that is relevant to the large segment of the society. The strive to support the media should also be directed toward the protection of press rights, enhancing media accountability, building media capacity and democratizing media access.

There should be mechanisms to ensure the media is held accountable to the public and it is supported by ethical and professional standards. The media should convey facts on the ground with the intent of helping citizens to have access to relevant information through employing research based-approach and creating enabling conducive legal environment and technical assistance. The media also has to provide training and the works of capacity building for the journalists in order to equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge of media ethics and discipline. The journalists should perceive an essential part of their professional duty to correct manipulation and disinformation.

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## **PERSONAL INTERVIEWS**

Tesfaye, C. (2022, May 21, 10:00- 10:30AM). Reporter, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate.

Solomon, A. (2023, May 21, 10:00- 10:30AM). News Producer, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate.

Fasika, A. (2023, May 21, 10:00- 10:30AM). Reporter, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate.

Weynitu, A. (2021, May 21, 10:00- 10:30AM). Program Producer, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate.

Tesfaye, A. (2022, May 21, 10:00- 10:30AM). News Producer, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate.

Nebyu, W. (2021, May 21, 10:00- 10:30AM). Chief News Producer, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate.

Betelihem, T. (2021, May 21, 10:00- 10:30AM). Program Producer, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate.

Seied, M. (2021, May 21, 10:00- 10:30AM). News and News Program Channel Executive Director, Addis Ababa Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate.

# **Semi structured Interview Questions Prepared for the Key Informants of the Ethiopian Broadcasting corporation (EBC)**

## **Research Questions/Checklist**

### **Annex I**

1. What do you think about the role of media?
2. How you understand the concept of democracy building in relation with media?
3. How do you explain the role of your media in building democracy after the coming of Abiy?
4. Do you think that the issues of democracy building getting more coverage than others in your media after the reform?
5. How do you get news ideas?
6. Do you give a special attention in your news for the development of democratic culture? what are the criteria to select this news?
7. How do you frame the issues of democracy building in your news report after the reform?
8. What do you think about the challenges that your media faces in the process of building democracy during this transition period? Or what are the challenges of covering issues of building democracy?
9. Does your media serve as a watchdog over maladministration or wrong deeds of the government and other powerful institutions?
10. How do you evaluate your media in providing a forum for discussion and debates specifically on the issues of promoting democracy?
11. What do you think about the contribution of your media to broaden the democratic space after the reform? Is your media is fairly representing different views?
12. What do you say about your media in providing citizens with the required information that they need to have on issues of elections?
13. How do you evaluate the progress of your media with the aspect of building democracy after the reform? What will be the prospect?

## Annex II

### List of Informants

Names	Position	Work Place/Institution/	Date	Time
Mr. Seied Muhe	News and News Program Channel Executive Director	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate	20 May 2021	3:00AM-4:00AM
Mr. Nebyu Wendson	Chief News Producer	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate	20 May 2021	4:30AM-5:30AM
Mrs. Betelihem	Program Producer	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate	21 May 2021	3:30PM-5:00PM
Mrs. Weynitu Abate	Program Producer	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate	21 May 2021	2:00PM-3:15PM
Mr. Tesfaye Abate	News Producer	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate	22 May 2021	9:00AM-10:00AM
Mr. Tesfaye Chane	Reporter	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate	22 May 2021	4:00AM-5:00AM
Mr. Solomon Abegaz	News Producer	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate	23 May 2021	2:00PM-3:15 PM-
Mrs. Fasika Ayalew	Reporter	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate	23 May 2021	5:00AM-6:00AM

## **Annex III**

### **Online Retrieved News**

EBC News April 16, 2021

EBC News May 14, 2021

EBC News May 25, 2021

EBC News June 2, 2021

EBC News June 22, 2021

EBC News June 27, 2021

EBC News July 1, 2021

EBC News July 2, 2021