

**CHALLENGES TO JOURNALISTIC INDEPENDENCE: THE CASE
OF THE AMHARA NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE MASS MEDIA
AGENCY**

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Table of Contents

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
Table of contents	
List of tables	
ABSTRACT	
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1. Background of the study.....	9
1.2. Statements of the Problem.....	13
1.3. Research questions of the Study	14
1.4. Significance of the Study.....	14
1.5. Objectives of the Study.....	14
1.6. Scope of the Study	14
1.7. Limitations of the Study	14
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	
Introduction	15
2.1. The Place or Status of Independence in Journalism.....	16
2.2. Factors Affecting Journalists' Independence.	18
2.2.1. Censorship.....	18
2.2.2. Lack of Freedom of Expression.....	19
2.2.3. Lack of Journalistic Skill	21
2.2.4. Partisanship.....	22
2.2.5. Financial Interest.....	23
2.2.6. Media Ownership.....	24
2.2.7. Friends and Relatives Interest.....	25
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
Introduction.....	27
3.1. Design of the Study	27
3.2. Sampling	29
3.3. Sampling Size	29
3.4. Data Analysis.....	29
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS	
4.1. Introduction.....	30
4.2. Factors Contributing to the Absence of Journalists' Independence.....	32
4.2.1. Freedom of Expression	32
4.2.2. Lack of Skills or Trainings.....	39
4.2.3. Friends and Relatives Interest.....	40
4.2.4. Partisanship.....	41
4.2.5. Financial Interests.....	43
4.2.6. Censorship	44

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1. Conclusion54

Bibliography

Appendixes

Lists of Tables

	Page
Table 1:-Participants categorized in service (journalists, editors, department heads and Board Members.) -----	30
Table 2:-Participants categorized in service (Public relations officers) -----	30
Table 3:- Participants categorized in income. -----	31
Table 4:- participants response about having editorial meetings and news selection-----	32
Table 5:- Journalists response about having access to chose whatever issue they Want. -----	34
Table 6:- Editors response about journalists choosing the issue that they want to Report. -----	35
Table 7:- Journalists response about entertaining varieties of opinions. -----	37
Table 8:- Journalist’s response about getting the required information from Public relations officers. -----	37
Table 9:- Public Relations officers response about journalists access to information.-----	38
Table 10:- Participants’ response about the trainings the journalists have taken -----	39
Table 11:- Journalists response about favoring certain individual, relatives, Groups or party in their working area. -----	40
Table 12:- Journalists response about being a member or supporter of any party. -----	41
Table 13:- Journalists’ response about remembering any staff member declaring What was given or obtained from other organization -----	42
Table 14:- Participants response about financial issues in journalists profession. -----	43
Table 15:- Participants response about external influences. -----	44
Table 16:- Participants response about having rules and regulations that prohibits them not to report what ever issues they want. -----	47
Table 17:- Journalists’ response about practicing self censorship while writing their	

news stories -----	48
Table 18:-Editors Response about the Orders of Higher Officials -----	49
Table 19:-public Relations officers response about censorship-----	50
Table 20:-Journalists’response about editors independence and external censorship-----	50.

ACRONYMS

Key: - The following symbols and abbreviations have their corresponding meanings that are used in this study.

?: percentage

5 : strongly agree

3: to some extent agree

2: disagree

4: agree

1: strongly disagree

Counts: tells number of respondents

Jour.: Journalists

PRs: Public Relations officers

ABSTRACT

Independence is one of the four guiding principle in which the journalists should exercise while performing their work. Therefore, ***Challenges of Journalistic Independence: the case of the Amhara Mass Media Agency*** attempts to describe how far journalists in this particular Agency are independent in doing their journalistic work and asses the factors that constrain their independence. The research uses gate keeping theory and other relevant principles as well as legal documents to show the potentials and limitations of journalists' independence. Moreover, to address the problem and identify the factors that compromise journalists' independence, the researcher uses questionnaire, interview; document analysis and observation methods. Therefore, questionnaire has been distributed to all journalists, editors and board members in that particular media as well as to certain public relations officers in the region. Interview is also done with two department heads to explore how journalists perform their work in this media. To substantiate the data various documents like: editorial policy and journalists code of ethics were consulted.

The findings of the study show that the following factors inhibit the exercise of journalistic independence of journalists of the Amhara Mass Media Agency: lack of freedom of expression, financial interest of journalists, journalists' relatives and friend's interest, self-censorship, self-interest of journalists and pressures from editors and bosses.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

As principles of journalistic ethics indicate, and most educators agree, journalistic independence is necessary for the media to play its role properly. Unless journalists act independently, it is not possible to expose the malpractices of the government. Therefore, the media as well as journalists should be free from any kind of influence so that they can entertain a variety of opinions and ideas (Kruger 2004, Retief 2001, Sibert, F. *et al.* 1956). As Journalism is supposed to be a public service, it should be guided by a code of ethics. Otherwise, journalists face a variety of conflicts of interest including their own self-interest, as well as the interest of their relatives that affect their integrity, independence and credibility (Kruger, 2004). As Forbes notes, having a code of ethics is important for journalists to protect themselves from questionable practices like “Cheque book journalism, the Brown envelope and the use of deception” (2005:55). He also adds:

While it is recognized that journalists should be independent and play a role in encouraging the free flow of information in society, they also have an obligation to work in the public interest. The value of good journalism is generally codified in the form of a professional code of ethics. (Kruger, 2004: 54)

In addition to the need for a code of ethics, some scholars also suggest that the nature of governments and the model of their media determine how far media become independent (Retief 2001, Kruger 2004, Hyden et al 2002). There are six kinds of media theories that relate to the nature of the media system to the political structure in which it operates (Fourie, 2004:271-272): the authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, soviet communist, development and the democratic-participant theories. He also notes that for developing countries, development theory is more useful than others as most developing countries use media to promote their national development, autonomy, and cultural identity. Furthermore, the countries which follow development theory give priority to the common objectives of the society, rather than individual freedom (Fourie, 2004). Some of the basic assumptions of the development theory of the media are:

1. The media should make a positive contribution to the national development.
2. The state should be able to restrict the media if economic interests and the development needs of the society are at stake.
3. The media should also give preference to information about national, cultural and language issues.
4. The state has the right to intervene by restricting and censoring the media. State subsidies and direct control is therefore justifiable, etc. (McQuail 1987:119-121, qtd Fourie 2004:274).

As we have observed from the history of Ethiopian media, there has been very limited freedom of expression because as the kinds of government in the previous regimes were authoritarian (<http://www.pressreference.com>). Moreover, they used the media to serve as their mouthpieces and instruments for their propaganda. Due to this, freedom of expression was not imagined in the practical activities of journalists. The media also did not enjoy its freedom of expression (<http://www.pressreference.com>).

Dictators have been common throughout Ethiopian history. Whatever press existed during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930-74) and the following dictatorship behaved, with a few exceptions, like willing mouthpieces for the rulers. Only during the 1990s have signs of a free and independent press emerged. During that decade a plethora of new magazines and papers appeared on Ethiopian. (<http://www.pressreference.com>).

Before the flourishing of The Ethiopia People of Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPRDF), the governments were authoritarian, and the media owned by the state depended on them. The media often served as a propaganda tool for the government. This prevented the media from exercising freedom of expression and inhibited the flow of information to the public. Due to this, the media could not air debates about social, economic and political issues based on public interest. These practice continued until the downfall of the Derg regime in 1992.

After the downfall of the Derg regime and the flourishing of EPRDF, the Press Freedom Bill was proclaimed in October 1992 by the Ethiopian Transitional Government. This bill introduced freedom of the press, censorship was prohibited, and the right of access to information was guaranteed. The media also have the right to seek, obtain and report news and information from any government source of news and information. As a result of this proclamation, a great number

of newspapers and magazines were published in the country, especially in Addis Ababa. It was a good start on the part of the government to address freedom of expression and to build an independent media. However, there have been problems that hinder the media from playing its role properly (<http://www.pressreference.com>):

Even though many newspapers are published in Ethiopia, journalism as many Western nations practice (or at least believe in practicing) it-as an independent, critical, theoretically objective enterprise-has never really developed, and only sporadically have high-profile Ethiopians objected to the country's lack of an independent 'fourth estate' (<http://www.pressreference.com>).

Then in 1995 Ethiopia endorsed a new Constitution which has embodied provisions of comprehensive rights for citizens, including the right to freedom of expression. Article 29/2 of the Constitution declares that: "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without interference. The right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his choice" (1995: 89). Moreover, for the proper functioning of the media, The House of Representatives ratified various proclamations in line with the constitution. For example, Proclamation No-34/1992 provides for the freedom of the press, and Proclamation No- 53 3/2007, is the Broadcasting Service Proclamation. These laws are supposed to help the media to run as effectively as possible.

On the other hand, the ability of journalists to exercise their rights effectively to receive and impart information is in part dependent on their access to information through interviews with officials and reading documents. Art. 29 (2) (b) of the Constitution states: "Freedom of the press shall specifically include the following elements ... access to information of public interest." Art. 8 (1) of Proc No. 34/1992 further states: "Any press and its agents shall, without prejudice to rights conformed by other laws, have the rights to seek, obtain and report news and information from any government source of news and information." Despite these provisions prohibiting interference, article 8(3) of proclamation 34/1992 limits the media's access to some information. Article 8(3) of the same proclamation prohibits the dissemination of information designated as secret by the council of representative or the council of ministers; information which is secret by virtue of others law; information relating to a case heard by a court in camera; information

relating to a case pending before any court; and information which is private to a victim of crime. These articles also contradict article 29 sub articles 1 and 2 of the constitution.

The broadcast media, especially television has always been under state ownership in Ethiopia. Article 29/5 of the Ethiopian Constitution stipulates that “any media financed by or under the control of the state shall be operated in a manner ensuring its capacity to entertain diversity in the expression of opinions” (1995:89). The Ethiopia Broadcast Authority was reestablished based on the proclamation 533/2007 of The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia the House of Representatives council. According to this proclamation, the previous name, the Ethiopia Broadcast Agency was changed to The Ethiopia Broadcast Authority, and it became accountable to the Ministry of Information. For the proper functioning of the Authority, it shall have a Board, a Director General, a Deputy General Manager and the necessary staff (Article 8). Moreover as article 12 sub-article 1 of proclamation 533/2007 says that “The Director General of the Authority shall be appointed by the government upon recommendation by the Minister.” Moreover, “The Deputy Director General shall be appointed by the government upon recommendation by the Minister” (article 13 sub-articles 10). Furthermore, the government finances the Authority as article 14 of the same proclamation says. This also creates room for the government to influence the media. On the other hand, article 29-sub articles (5) of the Ethiopia constitution (1995) states that the media should be operationally independent and entertain opinions of all kinds.

The Amhara National Regional State Mass Media Agency was also established on the basis of the proclamation 56/2001 of the Amhara National Regional State Council, and reestablished by proclamation 88/2003. This helps the media to enjoy institutional autonomy for its proper functioning. Moreover, the proclamation making the media accountable to the Council of The Amhara National Regional state (proclamation 88.3(1)/2003). For the proper functioning of the media, the Agency has a management board that directs its work. The Board has a membership of not fewer than seven or more than nine members (article 8 sub article 1 of the same proclamation). The function of this board is to control and manage the overall activities of the Agency. As article 6 sub articles 1 state, for the proper functioning of the Agency, it may also have General Manager, Deputy Manager and other necessary departments. According to article 11 sub-articles 1 states, “The manager of the Agency shall be appointed by the Head of the

government up on this recommendation by the board”. On the other hand, based on the recommendation of the General Manager of the Agency, the board shall designate the deputy manager (article 12(1)). Some of the powers and duties of the Agency pursuant to proclamation 88/2003 article 7 are:

1. Publicizing government strategic directions, policies, laws as well as create favorable medium forum for the public to exchange views discuss and comment on the strategies, politics and laws and thereby to attain national consensus.
2. Present varieties of programs by correlating with experience, which foster human and democratic rights awareness of inhabitants of the region.
3. Entertain free public opinions and suggestions as well as investigate of some by interviewing concerned bodies and announce the result back to the public thereof.
4. Follow up and report on the current economic, political and social affairs.
5. Finally, perform other legal functions necessary to achieve its objectives.

Other media law which is practiced in the media is consistent with the constitution of the federal Government as well as the Constitution of the Region. As it is owned by the government, its practice is quite similar with other regional media.

1.2. Statement of the problem

The Amhara State Council reestablished The Amhara National Regional State Mass Media Agency by proclamation 88/2003 in accordance with the power vested in it under article 49 3(1) of the Regional constitution. This news Agency is one of those media outlets that is controlled by the Regional Government. It disseminates news dealing with social, economic and political concerns of the regional government. It also has 30-minute airtime on Ethiopia Television.

Although the journalists at this news agency perform their daily news reporting as they have done in the past, no one watches over how the journalists carry out their activities. My research therefore investigates how the agency practices journalistic independence in order to address issues of public interest, and to encourage freedom of expression. It will highlight factors which affect the decision-making and independence of the journalists who work at this news agency.

1.3. Research questions of the Study

Some of the research questions which the researcher investigates are:

1. What are the factors that constrain journalistic independence in the Amhara mass media Agency?
2. Which factors tend to stifle journalists' independence in this particular news Agency?

1.4. Significance of the Study

As this is the first study on this particular news Agency regarding journalistic independence, it will be useful work for other researchers. It is also useful for those who want to understand the importance of journalistic independence and its necessity for enhancing freedom of expression. Moreover, this research paper may provide information to journalists, the regional government and others about journalistic independence and the factors that compromise their independence, integrity and credibility.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

This thesis will investigate how journalists at the Amhara National Regional State Mass Media Agency practise journalistic independence, and the factors that impede their ability to act independently.

1.6. Scope of the Study

Due to time, financial and other constraints, this study only focuses on the question of journalistic independence of The Amhara National Regional State Mass Media Agency.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

The researcher faced financial and time constraints while conducting this research. In addition to this, some public relation officers and the board members were unwilling to fill in the questionnaire or to express their opinion for certain interview questions, and this has limited the data gathered.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In this chapter we are going to deal with the theoretical aspects of the study and review related literature that includes the concepts and theories of journalistic independence, gatekeeping theory, and factors that affect independence like censorship, freedom of expression, and other conflicts of interests.

1. The place or status of ‘independence’ in journalism

According to the American society of newspapers editors’, independence is one of the canons of journalism and is defined as, “Freedom from all obligations except that of the fidelity of the public interest” (Ahuja, 2001:4). Independence is also considered as one of the four guiding principles of journalism (see Kruger 2004, Retief 2002, Kovach 2001). This principle is significant because the credibility of journalists which is the basis of their role in a democracy, is affected by any perceived or real conflict of interest (Kruger, 2004:13). In order to protect and promote journalistic independence and their freedom of expression, journalists are encouraged to abide by a code of ethics (Retief 2002, Kruger 2004). If they do so, they have the capacity to provide the public with knowledge and understanding. But, as they practise their profession, they should be guided by various principles which enable them to serve their society in an ethically responsible manner. One of the most important guiding elements in media ethics is the independence of media that affects their credibility. As Kruger (2004:13) says: “We are unable to work if audiences discount our reporting because they see it as influenced by considerations outside of journalism, such as any personal, commercial or political motives.” These problems are considered as a conflict of interests that hinders media independence (Kruger 2004):

Independence is one of the fundamental principles of journalism ethics because it sets up a defense against conflict of interest and competing loyalties. It says publicly that our work is guided by no allegiance except that to professional standards and the audiences. (Kruger, 2004:95)

In view of this, journalists’ real social responsibility is to provide trustworthy and independent accounts of what is going on (Kruger, 2004:99). In so doing, they should remain free of associations and activities that may compromise their integrity or damage their independence as

well as their organization's credibility (Kruger, 2004:95). In this respect, the critical step in pursuing truthfulness and informing citizens is not neutrality, but independence. Thus, to maintain their independence from those they cover, the journalists should avoid any private interest that is contrary to the general welfare of the public (Kovach 2001:97). Moreover, as the public expects journalists to report the truth as fully as possible, they should portray as many sides of a story as possible, and let the public decide its own view of the matter (Retief, 2002:95).

However, journalists are faced with a variety of difficulties which challenge their professional independence. For example, Kofi Annan noted on World Press Freedom Day in 2006, the threats to life and safety faced by many journalists:

Thirty-six journalists were killed in 2003, and at least 17 have been killed in the first three months of 2004. Their deaths were the result of their efforts to bring us the facts, to deliver first-hand accounts of important events, to offer perspectives on the trends of our time -- in short, the essential work of daily journalism. Indeed, some were deliberately targeted because of what they were reporting or because of their affiliation with a news organization. ... Further 136 journalists were in jail at the end of 2003 simply because of their profession (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sgsm10436.doc.htm>).

Given this situation, he noted that unless all concerned bodies give due attention to journalists and their profession, it is doubtful whether we will have a free and independent media:

Journalism, as a profession, has been resolute in the face of such danger. But the continuing threat to their personal and professional integrity must concern all of us who rely on the media as an agent of free expression and as an often very lonely means of rousing the world's conscience. ... Let us reaffirm our commitment to the freedom and independence of the media as an essential requirement for building a better and fairer world. And let us all pledge to do our utmost to ensure that journalists -- the men and women charged with helping us understand our world and us -- are able to do their vital work in safety and without fear (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sgsm10436.doc.htm>).

But, as noted before, a lack of journalistic independence occurs for many reasons. In reviewing approaches to news production, Gaye Tuchman (2002) notes the shift from early functionalist gate-keeping studies to more recent approaches which examine the structural and organizational

factors which shape news production (see also Curran 2000). While I am mindful of these different approaches to the factors that shape the production of news, this study considers news production from the perspective of gatekeeping, as the existence of gatekeepers is seen as a major factor that affects the performance of reporters (Fourie 2004). They influence the original message of the media as they modify the content (Fourie, 2004:205). Gatekeeping is defined as follows:

Gatekeeping is the process through which certain information passes a series of check points (gates) before being finally accepted as news material. And Gatekeepers are the people or groups that have an impact on this process. They are part of the news organization and their influence can also extend beyond the daily tasks of news identification, newsgathering and publication (Fourie, 2004:197).

Based on the above definition, the gatekeeping process may be done internally in the newsroom, or externally. Those gatekeepers in the newsroom like directors, editors and department heads frequently select, check and allow particular kinds of news stories. These gatekeepers may intervene in the content of the news before it is aired. This process inhibits journalists' independence in playing their democratic role. External gatekeeping, on the other hand, is evident in the way the state restricts media coverage of issues if its economic interests and the development needs of the society are in danger (Fourie, 2004:203).

The main role of reporters is story production (Fourie, 2004). They do not have the authority to select the type of news other than making suggestions about possible news items. Thus, as editors play several gate keeping roles that hinder the performance of reporters, the journalists may be motivated to practise self-censorship (Ray and Taylor, 1988:29). Because of this, the reporters are motivated to cut some ideas and modify the content to satisfy themselves and their bosses. Sometimes the editors discourage reporters by not publishing their work (Ray and Taylor, 1988:30). However, the journalists themselves contribute the gatekeeping effect by censoring their own work in their desire for promotion and to protect their jobs. Even if the journalists want to report their findings, they are afraid to do so, lest they get into trouble with their editors or managers (Ray and Taylor, 1988 and Fourie, 2004).

The gatekeepers are also guided by a variety of rules and regulations that are found in their media. Sometimes external frameworks like the intervention of authoritative bodies influence journalists' decision-making. Moreover, these authoritative bodies play a gatekeeping role either directly or indirectly to shape the content of the news to suit their interests. In the case of broadcasting, this may be done by appointing board managers from the cabinet (Fourie 2004: 199).

2. Factors affecting journalists' independence

As Kruger (2004) and Retief (2002) note, certain conditions constrain journalists from practising as independent professionals. These conditions often amount to a conflict of interest that includes accepting gifts, family relationships, the influence of friends, self-interest, personal beliefs, financial interests, political interferences and owners interest (Retief 2002:132-139). These impact on journalists' independence and credibility. As a result, audiences cannot get accurate, fair, and balanced information. In view of this, a journalist's first obligation and duty is to maintain her or his credibility with the public, rather than serving business, or special interests. Even if the journalist's report is accurate, his or her independence and credibility is affected if people know about the existence of a conflict interest (Kruger, 2004:95).

2.1. Censorship

The degree of censorship varies greatly from country to country depending on the policies of the existing regime. For example, in some developing countries the governments may be interested in promoting news that favors their policies and strategies, and may not allow news that criticizes its own malpractices (Ray and Taylor, 1988: 33). In addition, as Hyden et al (2002:10) argue, censorship in Africa affects the media throughout the continent. The legal and administrative procedures also contribute to the widespread existence of censorship. They also add that censorship in the continent leaves the public starved of information regarding interesting debates on public issues. On the other hand, censorship in the Western world is more in evidence in authoritarian regimes than in democratic ones because democratic nations have less institutionalized censorship than authoritarian ones ([http://en, wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship)).

External censorship occurs when the authoritative bodies wish to regulate the views and suppress the ideas of reporters in order to make their own lives easier (Kieran, 1998:165). Moreover,

intimidation, or ordering journalists to broadcast or not to broadcast certain issues, is also a common form of direct and external censorship. Such kinds of influences usually come from authoritarian government bodies (Mwuara, 1994:108).

In contrast to external censorship, journalists often censor themselves in political situations in which they feel they are unable to express their own thoughts or opinions (Nyahunzvi, 1996:162, qtd. Nyamnjoh 2005:72). In Retief's words, self censorship means "Toning down the truth or even ignoring stories" (2002:10). In Africa, journalists have suffered in different ways, and have censored themselves to protect themselves from their employers. This is not only a problem in the government-owned media, but also exists in some privately-owned media (Ochieng 1992:70-74, qtd Hyden et al 2002:10). Self censorship occurs because journalists are constrained by legal and administrative procedures that hinder their capacity to write what they think (Hyden et al 2002:10). Journalists therefore revise their work in line with what they think will be acceptable in the political circumstances in which they work (Fourie, 2005:204). As Ray and Taylor note, "most commonly, self-censorship is unconsciously done without much deliberation, as when a reporter decides to omit an unverified statement from a story" (1988:29).

2.2. Lack of Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression should be guaranteed to serve the public and create active citizens who participate in the establishment of a country's democracy. If the government follows a democratic political system, it has to give priority to freedom of expression. This enables the public to express their opinion (Dahl, 1998:89).

As Secretary-General of United Nation, Kofi Annan, noted on World Press Freedom Day, "Information is, undoubtedly, a source of power. Those who have access to a free and independent media have more options, as well as the information they need to take better advantage of them" (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sgsm10436.doc.htm>).

Freedom of expression is also one of the important elements for an independent media in a country. Governments who are trying to be democratic thus give considerable attention to freedom of expression and media freedom, because it is an instrument to enable the democratic participation of citizens. This freedom provides an opportunity for media to exercise their freedom to disseminate information and to air various opinions that promote development in the

country (Dahl, 1998: 90-92). Kovach and Rosenstiel also confirm the importance of freedom of the press, noting that

The notion of freedom of the press is rooted in independence. Only a press free of government censors could tell the truth. In a modern context, that freedom was expanded to mean independence from other institutions as well –parties, advertisers, businesses, and more. The conglomeration of the news business threatens the survival of the press as independent institutions as journalism becomes a subsidiary inside large corporations more fundamentally grounded in other businesses purposes (2002:32).

In addition to this, freedom of expression enables the development of a democratic state in various ways: it enhances the public's understanding of possible government policies; and it enables the public to participate effectively, to acquire civic competence, to express themselves freely, to learn from one another, and to engage in discussion and deliberation without any influence. When people lack these freedoms, they lose their capacity to participate effectively in their country's political, social, and economical activities. Furthermore, to inform, motivate and make the people effective participants in their country's political situation, the media have to be independent, so that journalists can exercise their freedom to express and disseminate information to the public (Dahl, 1998:97-98). Moreover, in order to inform the public and create awareness about the government's agenda, citizens require alternative sources that do not only reflect one party's activities. If any interested group influences journalists, they inhibit the journalists' ability to disseminate varied information and opinions (Dahl, 1998:97). Unless freedom of expression is given considerable attention, it may impact on journalists' credibility and independence (Hyden et al 2002:45). But Ahuja (1991:69) also argues that in democratic countries, government departments are interested in providing information to journalists (Ahuja, 1991:69).

However, some journalists experience problems in getting information they need because of the uncooperative attitude of many in higher office. Even if the government declares freedom of expression and access to information, cabinet ministers and other officials are often not willing to provide information about particular issues (Nyamnjoh, 2005:66). Although there is a declaration of press freedom in most of African countries, that is, constitutionally stated and guaranteed, there is also the act of coercion to curb the right of freedom of expression. Tettey

(2001:16) notes that, “several governments continue to employ the coercive apparatus of the state to combat differing opinions or criticisms from the media.” He also adds that some officials target particular journalists so that they will not disseminate information that exposes their wrongful behavior. This intimidation also affects journalistic independence (Tettey, 2001:17).

2.3. Lack of Journalistic skills

Journalists should have the necessary skills to play their watchdog role and become free of any kind of influence. In the modern world, journalists should be aware of the ethical issues involved in preparing fair, free, and balanced reports to the public (Ahuja, 2001, Retief, 2001, Kruger, 2004). Nevertheless, both governmental and non-governmental journalists in Africa have been accused of professional impropriety by ordinary citizens as well as by professionals (Nyamnjoh, 2005:60). Ahuja explains what kinds of principles are required by the journalists:

Journalists are therefore supposed to possess a good deal of intelligence, knowledge, experience as well as natural and trained powers of observation and reasoning. A journalist has the same obligation as a teacher or interpreter as an educationist has. (2001:2)

However, based on research undertaken in Botswana, Nyamnjoh (2005:63) points to the lack of journalism training in many African countries:

What all critics of the media in Botswana seem to agree on is the low level of professionalism and ethical standards among journalists, many of whom have few credentials other than a school leaving certificate, or a university degree in anything but journalism.

Despite this view, other critics have testified the existence of qualified journalists. For example, as Rying (1994) and Hyden and Okigbo (2000) (cited in Nyamnjoh 2005:65) argue that in many countries journalists are aware that they have to practise journalism according to the rulebook, publishing only verified facts, shunning rumors and respecting ethical prescription. In addition, Adam Mike confirms that there are journalists who are devoted to their profession and work for the interest of the public

(<http://www.newstarget.com/015020.html>).

2.4. Partisanship

Within a multiparty political system, journalists should be aware of how to handle issues without taking sides. If they take the side of one party, they immediately lose their credibility. As Retief warns,

Two things are likely to happen to a journalist if he or she is involved with a political party. Firstly, the journalist becomes friendly with politicians-and certain politicians (from a specific party) at that. That journalist will then rightly been seen by others political parties as partisan. Goodbye to credibility. (Retief, 2002:137).

Journalists should therefore strive not to be partisan as it will affect their independence and credibility as well as that of their publication (Retief, J. 2002:42). In contrast, Kruger (2004:98) argues that journalists have a right to vote, belong to political parties and stand for election. But he suggests they should try not to be more politically involved than in voting, because if they are seen as politically partisan, they may damage their independence and reputation. Ahuja also adds that if journalists take sides they will compromise the fundamental principles of the profession (200:4). Without considering the impacts of partisanship, journalists sometimes serve as the mouthpiece of particular interest groups or politicians. Therefore, unless journalists exercise their independence, they may not produce fair and balanced news (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2002:96-97).

Moreover, while commenting on reports and news, the reporter as well as the editor should give considerable attention to ethical issues to avoid conflict of interests, otherwise, it harms the independence of the journalists (Kruger, 2004, Ahuja, 2001, Retief, 2001). Moreover, Ahuja (2001:2) adds that: “partisanship in editorial comments which is knowingly based on a lie, does violence to the best spirit of journalism”. However, for Khan (1998:56) there may be situations in which journalists are forced to distort the story or to lie. As he also suggests that the reasons why journalists departing from the truth has to do with the conflicts of interest that they face. For example, war is one such situation. Other examples include bias in reporting manifested by using negative language against one party or group; unbalance timing, frequency, and air time given for the factions and their spokespersons; using skewed representations and news selections to serve the interest of the government (Khan 1998:596). Unless the journalists avoid these practices, they will compromise their integrity as well as their credibility. Therefore, they should

uphold their social responsibility by providing trustworthy and independent accounts of what is going on for the public interest (Retief, 2002:99).

2.5. Financial interest

As journalism is not the best paid profession in many places, some journalists look for ways to supplement their pay to lead a better life and to have personal security (Kruger, 2004:100). Others believe that there is less chance of being persecuted and that they will gain more recognition outside their profession. In view of this, some journalists leave their jobs and work outside their profession (Kruger 2004, Forbes 2005). Nyamnjoh 2005:74) explains the consequences of this:

...many of the experienced journalists have left the profession for more financially lucrative jobs either overseas or in other employment in the country. ... In general, poor salaries throughout the continent have made 'the profession less attractive to highly- qualified people', and 'media workers susceptible to compromise, bribery and corruption'.

The financial difficulties affect newsroom practices by limiting it to a skeleton staff. This, according to Nyamnjoh (2004:75), often results in one person having to work as publisher, editor and reporter. On the other hand, if journalists actively participate in sharing what they write about and compromise their integrity to get money, they will lose their independence and credibility. Kruger (2004:97) writes:

A journalist could make a lot of money on the side by buying shares and then reporting in a way that pushes their value up and some have done so. Alternatively, reporters sometimes get information which is not yet in the public domain and which could help them make a minute in a form of insider trading. Clearly, that kind of profiteering is completely unacceptable.

Some government officials leak secret information to journalists for a fee (Hyden *et al* 2002:12). Sometimes journalists pay subjects to gather information that is difficult to obtain (Keble, 2001:39). But, as Hyden *et al* write, most of the time if the editorial experience and responsibility in newspapers is weak, the journalists may gather information by paying their sources. This is potentially harmful to building democracy (2002:12). The problem is that these

practices compromise the integrity of journalists and make them less independent as producers of news—which ultimately affects the credibility of the media (Hyden *et al* 2002:12-13).

Nowadays, some broadcast and print journalists, pursue financial gain rather than respecting their professional ethics. This behavior is condemned by media educators such as Retief: “Journalist shall not accept any gift, favors, free travel, special treatment privileges which might compromise their integrity. Any such offer shall be disclosed” (2002:42).” He also adds that “Staff shouldn’t accept any money (or gift in kind) from any one besides the official benefits, especially not from any person or organization that might benefit from enriching them.” (Retief 2002: 42).

If the journalists and their organizations pursue only business interests, instead of respecting their ethical issues, journalistic independence and credibility will be compromised (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2005:58). For example, if the editors and owners of the organization focus on economic interest, they may allow their newspaper to be used by individuals or interest groups to blackmail other institutions, individuals or interest groups. According to Nyamnjoh, (2005:77), focusing on economic issues motivates the press “to kill stories for bribes, to sell entire print runs to corrupt people anxious to cover their tracks, use intimidation to extort money from prominent politicians and businessmen, or allow their pages to be used by traders and politicians to teach their rivals a lesson.” Adam (<http://www.newstarget.com/015020.html>) also explains that if journalists focus on money, they will not remain free and independent of the owners influence.

2.6. Media Ownership

A structural factor which might impact on the independence of journalists is media ownership. Before the 1990s, much of the African media was owned by the state and served as instrument for propaganda (Hyden *et al* 2002:18). These media have not played a significant role in the democratization process. However, the private media played a great role by probing government politics and behavior (Hyden, Leslie, and Ogundimu, 2002:12).

But, as Kruger (2004:104) argues, all forms of media ownership, both government and private, have an impact on media independence. There are various forms of influence that affect journalists’ integrity, independence and credibility based on the type of ownership. For

example, when the owners appoint the editors that safe-guard their policy, the editors consider themselves as king of the content that the reporter prepares. On the other hand, unless the editors perform their job based on the interest of the owners, they may be fired (Kruger 2004:104).

If the journalists are asked about their loyalty—or for whom they are working—they have to declare that they are loyal to the audience that listen their news (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2005:52).

2.7. Friends and Relatives Interest

Friendship in the profession of journalism may have its own impact on the gathering and dissemination of news, and thus has to be handled wisely (Retief 2001, Kruger 2004, and Ahuja 2001). In certain circumstances it may have a negative impact on the credibility of the media, as well as on journalists. Ahuja (2001:69) explains that it is better for the journalists to have the right type of friendship with sources because it has the capacity to affect the journalists' independence. In short, journalists should keep their distance from their sources (Ahuja 2001: 69).

Making a demarcation is an important way in which journalists can guard against losing their friends and their credibility. The reason is that “It becomes very difficult to publish negative things about friends or about people whom you know very well. And the journalist must also face these people after wards” (Retief, 2002:138). Retief also argues that if you publish without the consent of your friend, you must know that you may lose your friend. Therefore, keep an appropriate distance (Retief 2002). If friends and relatives intervene between the publisher and those who have sold information, they also contribute to compromising the journalist's ability to play a watchdog role (Nyamnjoh, 2005:60).

On the other hand, as part of the society, it is difficult for journalists to be expected to have different needs from that of their fellow citizens. The only thing that should be given consideration is that they should keep some personal distance in order to see things clearly and make independent judgments. As a result, they can keep their credibility as well as their integrity (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2002, Kruger, 2004 and Retief, 2001).

To sum up, so far we have seen the theoretical aspects of journalistic independence and the factors that affect journalists' independence and credibility. Some of the factors include censorship, lack of freedom of expression, lack of skills, media ownership and financial interest of the journalists.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Introduction

So far, we have reviewed various ideas about journalistic independence which is one of the fundamental principles of journalism. In this chapter we will discuss the method used to conduct the research.

As the sources are highly important to assess the existing problem and suggest certain implications, the researcher uses both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include journalists and editors working in The Amhara Regional State Mass Media Agency, the public relation officers of various Bureaus and board members of the Agency. The secondary sources are those documents that include editorial policies and journalists' code of ethics in the Agency.

1. Design of the study and data gathering instruments

This study focuses on whether the ethical principle of independence is given attention in the news reporting process of the Amhara Mass Media Agency, and assesses the factors that hinder journalistic independence in this particular agency. The researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative research methods. I have used the survey as a method of data gathering associated with quantitative research as it is useful for generating quantifiable data about a large number of people that represents a wider population (Bryman, 1988:120). This method will help to describe the characteristics of participants in relation to the main topic of inquiry (Hansen, *et al.* 1998). As Newbold (1998:225) notes, "the survey can be used to collect data about current attitudes and opinions as well". In addition to this, it is also useful for gathering individual opinions, beliefs, behavior, feelings and attitudes about selected elements of the research topic (Newbold 1998:225).

In particular, I will use the questionnaire as my main survey method, as in "this way, identical or very similar questions can be asked of a large number of people" (Newbold 1998:225). Moreover, both closed and open ended questions helps to gather factual information from the respondents (Deacon, *et al.* 1999). As Cozby says, using both closed and open-ended questions

helps the respondents to express their feeling or opinion in detail. Moreover, “open-ended questions can yield valuable insights into what people are thinking” (Cozby, 2001:115).

In addition to this, the researcher also used interviews, document analysis, and observation as a qualitative approach to data gathering. As the qualitative data assists in further interpreting the quantitative data, the researcher uses both methods to address the research questions. In this respect, individual interviews were used to collect information that was not addressed in the questionnaire. The researcher thus interviewed the head of the radio department (Mr. A. Moges) and the head of the press department (Mr. F Zegeye).

Another method of qualitative data gathering used in this research was the use of document analysis. The researcher uses this method to substantiate data gathered either through the questionnaire or interviews. The main documents used were the editorial policy and the code of ethics of the Agency. The general editorial policy has 15 parts that are used as a reference for all other departments like the Radio, the Television and the press editorial policies. All departments use the same code of ethics. However, all the editorial policies and the code of ethics are only a draft policy, and are used by the media as a guideline. They have not been ratified by the regional council.

The researcher also uses the observation method to gather data found in the natural settings of the respondents. The researcher conducted two field trips in which he observes how journalists select the news title, and gather the information they need. From this experience, he had the opportunity to observe how the journalists respond to orders from their department heads; how they interview their informants; how they gather information; how they edit their work, and finally submit their news report.

In sum, the researcher uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess journalists' attitudes, opinion and beliefs about their journalistic independence, and to examine the factors that hinder their independence. These two methods are not antagonistic but are useful when they use in combination (Newbold 1998: 228).

2. Sampling

Identifying the sampling technique is an essential element in conducting research (Deacon, 1999). Deacon identifies two kinds of sampling techniques: random sampling and non-random sampling (1999). The researcher uses purposive sampling, one of the elements of non-random sampling, to select participants for the study. This method is selected because the researcher uses all journalists in The Amhara National Regional State Mass Media Agency. In addition to this, the public relations officer of every Bureau was purposefully selected based on the role of each Bureau.

3. Sampling size

As Cozby (2001:118) notes, the sample size is one of the ways of ensuring that the data collected accurately reflects the population from which the data is gathered. The larger the sample size, the more accurate the data is likely to be. On this basis, the researcher tried to incorporate all staff, that is sixty-six journalists as well as six reporters, 2 department heads of the Agency, and most of the public relation officers of the Bureaux in the Region. The researcher included public relations officers because they are the main stakeholders in every Bureau who are responsible for releasing information to the journalists or other stakeholders. No-one can give information to anybody without the knowledge of the public relation officers (see Allen and Patric (2003), Cottle (2003: 42) and Hendrix (2004: 2-3) on the importance of public relations officers in the media environment).

3. Data Analysis

After the data was gathered, it was analyzed according to the nature of the method in which the data is gathered. Data gathered by questionnaire was statistically analyzed and put in percentage form. The open-ended questions and the interview was analyzed by interpreting the responses of the participants in relation to theories about factors which shape the independence of journalists.

CHAPTER FOUR

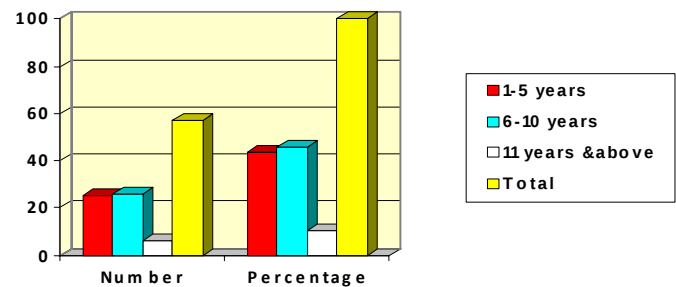
DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods such as the questionnaire, interviews, document analysis and observation. The researcher interviewed two department heads—of the Radio department and press department. Moreover, 53 journalists (which constituted 89.8%) completed the questionnaire. Of these journalists, six (10.2%) of them are editors, and 47 were reporters. In addition to this, the questionnaire was completed by 17 public relations officers of various Bureaus in the Region and two board members of the Agency too.

Table 1:-Participants categorized in terms of service (journalists, editors, department heads and board members.)

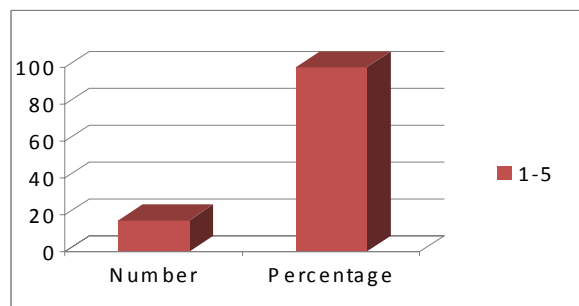
service	Number	percentage
1 -5 years	25	43.9
6 -10 Years	26	45.6
11 years & above	6	10.5
Total	57	100



As far as their service is concerned, 45.6 percent of the participants has 6-10 years service, 43.9 percent has 1-5 years service and the remaining 10.5 percent has 11 years and above. This data shows that most of the participants have served in the Agency for more than 5 years, giving them quite substantial experience of the Agency.

Table 2:-Participants categorized in terms of service (Public relation officers)

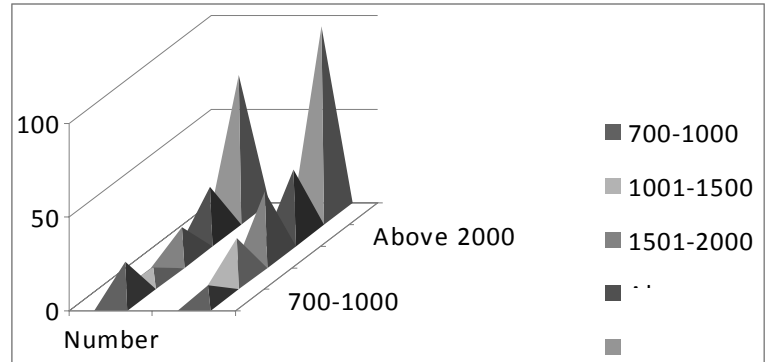
service	Number	percentage
1 -5 years	17	100
6 -10 Years	0	0
11 years & above	0	0
Total	17	100



As far as the public relations experts are concerned, all of them have served in the range of 1-5 years, enabling them to have had a significant relationship with the journalists.

Table 3:- Participants categorized in terms of income.

Income	Number	percentage
700 -1000	6	8.1
1001 - 1500	16	21.6
1501 - 2000	26	35.1
Above 2000	26	35.1
Total	74	99.9



As the above table clearly shows, most of the participants are paid a monthly salary of more than 1000 (one thousands) birr. However, 8.1 % of reporters earn less than this. Because of this, these journalists may be engaged in other jobs in order to supplement their income. This might expose these journalists to the lure of financial interests at the expense of their commitment to journalistic ethics.

For purposes of analysis the researcher used a 4 point scale, with “strongly agree”, “agree”, “strongly disagree”, and “disagree”.

4.2. Factors Contributing to the absence of journalists' independence

4.2.1. Access to freedom of expression

Table 4:- participants response about having access to information and news selection.

Items	Jour.	Editor	Board m.
Do you have editorial meetings?			
A/ Yes counts %	30 63.8	2 33.3	2 100
B/ No counts %	17 36.2	4 66.6	0 00
If your answer for question No:-7 is "yes", do all Journalists participate in editorial meetings?			
A/ Yes counts %	16 34	2 33.3	1 50
B/ No counts %	28 59.6	0 0	0 00
C/ I don't know counts %	3 6.4	0 0	1 50
Who makes decisions in the meetings?			
A/ The editorial board counts %	19 40.4	4 66.6	--- ---
B/ the manager counts %	6 23.4	1 16.6	--- ---
C/ the journalists counts %	11 12.8	0 00.0	--- ---
D/ I do not know counts %	11 23.4	1 16.6	--- ---
Who decides what you/ the journalists report?			
A/. The editor counts %	28 59.57	0 00.0	0 00
B/. Myself counts %	2 4.26	0 00.0	0 00
C/. The manager counts %	10 21.28	2 33.3	0 00
D/. All counts %	7 14.9	4 66.6	2 100

As we have seen above, 63.83 percent of the journalists, 33.3 percent of the editors and both the board members say that there is an editorial meeting. On the other hand, 36.17 percent of the journalists and 66.6 percents of the editors say that there is no any editorial meeting. For those who believe in the existence of editorial meeting, 59.6 percent of journalists and 66.6percents of the editors say all journalists don't participate in the meeting, but 34 percent of the journalists and 33.3 percent of the editors say they participate; 6.4 percents of journalists say 'I don't know'. Those who say journalists do not participate in the editorial meetings argue that there is much work for the journalists so they can't attend the meeting. Furthermore the organizational arrangements don't facilitate the participation of journalists in the editorial meeting.

As far as the decision in the meeting is concerned, 40.4 percent of the journalists and 66.6 percent of the editors say the editorial board makes the decision in the meeting; 23.4 percent of journalists, 16.6 percent of the editors say the manager does; and 12.8 percent say the journalists themselves make decisions. However, 16.6 percent of the editors and 23.4 percent of journalists don't know who makes the decisions because they do not participate in the meeting. Moreover, 59.57 percents of the journalists say that the editors decide what they report; 21.28 percent of journalists and 33 percent of editors say the manager decides what they report; and 4.26 percent say the journalists themselves make the decision. But 14.9 percent of journalists, 66.6 percent of editors and both the board members say the editors, journalists and managers make decisions.

From the overall response it is possible to understand that the Agency has an editorial meeting. However, the journalists are not concerned about participating in that meeting. As revealed in the the interviewees' responses, the editorial meeting only comprises the manager, deputy manager, and the heads of three departments. This body has a mandate to identify, select and decide the types of news that is produced by the journalists. The journalists' task is to provide information, bring new ideas or prepare news and submit it to this board. Even if the journalists have a right to prepare whatever issue they want, they can't decide to air it. Although 66.6 percent of the editors say that the type of news is decided by the journalist, the journalists do not have a mandate to decide the types of news that is transmitted or. In addition, as the researcher observed, the department heads give directions to the journalists about where and when they are going to gather information. As gatekeeping theory clearly states, there are a variety of authoritative bodies that decide where the information comes from, which sources to use, and which

background information should be used by the reporter. This directly affects journalists' freedom to ask whatever person that they want, and in so doing to have a direct relationship with the issues.

Table 5:- Journalists response about having access to chose whatever issue they want.

Items	Jour.	Editor	Board M.
What kinds of issues do you prefer to report on?			
A/. Political	7	--	--
counts	14.89	--	--
%			
B/. Social and cultural	3	--	--
counts	6.38	--	--
%			
C/. Economic	37	--	--
counts	78.72	--	--
%			
If your answer for question number 12 is not choice "A" (political) What is your reason?			
A/. You have no adequate knowledge on political issues.	4	--	--
counts	8.51	--	--
%			
B/. You think reporting politics may have bad consequences.	4	--	--
counts	8.51	--	--
%			
C/. The organization does not encourage political reports.	--	--	--
counts	--	--	--
%			
None response	8	--	--
counts	17.02	--	--
%			
What criteria are often used in the Amhara Mass Media to select news? (Two answers are possible)			
A/The professional news value judgment	21	2	1
counts	44.68	33.3	50
%			
B/The propaganda value for the government or the ruling party.	26	4	1
counts	55.32	66.6	50
%			

As the above table shows, 14.89 percent of the journalists say that they want to report social and cultural issues, 6.38 percent say economic, and 78.72 percent say all issues. From those who don't choose political issues, 8.51 percent suggest that they don't have sufficient knowledge of

political issues, 8.51 percent say they are afraid of reporting on political issues, and 17.02 percent give other reasons. This shows that most of the respondents (37%) are interested in reporting on a range of issues: social, economic and political.

As far as the criteria to select news are concerned, 44.68 percent of the journalists, 33.3 percent of the editors and 50 percent of the board members say they often use the professional news value judgments; 55.32 percent of journalists, 66.6 percent of the editors and 50 percent of the board members say they use the propaganda value for the government or the ruling party as criteria to select news.

From the entire response it is possible to understand that most (78.72%) journalists are interested in reporting many on issues including politics, economics, and social issues. However, few (6.35%) journalists want to report only social issues. The reasons why they choose only social issues are that they do not have sufficient knowledge about political issues and they are afraid of reporting on political issues. On the other hand, most of the respondents clearly tell us, the Amhara Mass Media Agency often uses the propaganda value as criteria to select news stories. Interviewees also said that the journalists can gather whatever kinds of news they liked—based on news values—but they don’t have the authority to transmit it. The decision is made by the media “gatekeepers”: the editorial committee or information committee. Furthermore, after the journalists have written their copy, two copy editors check the report. The researcher observed that the journalists do not have the right to select and produce any kinds of stories.

Table 6:- Editors response about journalists choosing the issue that they want to report.

Items	5	4	3	2	1
Journalists choose whatever issues they want to report.					
counts	2	--	----	2	2
%	33.3	----	---	33.3	33.3

As the
clearly

above table
shows,

33.3 percent of the respondents strongly agree about journalists choosing whatever issues they want to

report, 33.3 percents disagree, and the remaining 33.3 percent strongly disagree with the same issue.

The editors' responses clearly signify that journalists in the Amhara Mass Media Agency cannot choose whatever issue they want to cover. But some interviewees believe the journalists have a right to choose and prepare their news stories, even if they don't have the authority to transmit it. Before the journalists go out to gather the required information, the editorial board identifies and selects the types of titles (categories) in which they are going to gather the required information. After preparing the news, the journalists submit their news stories to the editorial committee that comprises of five members: the Manager, Deputy Manager, and department heads of the radio, TV and newspaper. This committee checks the news, based on traditional news values such as timeliness, and nearness to the audiences' life. Items that meet these criteria are selected to be aired. This response also contradicts the journalists as well as the editors' response above. The researcher also observed and confirmed this process while gathering his data. As the heads are appointed by the heads of the government, they may favor the government and choose the title that satisfies him. This is reflected from the criteria they use to choose the title. Due to this, it is not possible to say the media use news value as general criteria to select the types of news that is aired. Based on the above arguments, it is clearly understood that the journalists are more dependent upon what their bosses say and do not have their own right either to select or to decide the kinds of news that is going to be aired. This may affect their credibility as well as their independence.

The journalists' only job is to prepare news stories based on the direction of the editorial board. This contradicts the Federal and Regional constitution. For example, as Article 29 sub-articles 2 and 3 of the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without any interference..." the right of expression "... shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds regardless of frontiers..."

Table 7:- Journalists response about entertaining varieties of opinions

Items			Jour.
How often do you entertain varieties of opinions in your Profession?			
A/ always	counts	32	
	%	68.1	
B/ sometimes	counts	6	
	%	12.8	
C/ not at all	counts	9	
	%	19.1	

As far as entertaining varieties of opinion are concerned, 68.1 percent of respondents say they always entertain a variety of opinions, 12.8 percent say do so sometimes, and 19.1 percent say they don't entertain a variety at all. Those who say sometimes and not at all justify their decisions in the following way: there is shortage of time; they give priority to governmental activities or issues; they are ordered to identify the news based on their political standpoint; and sometimes the issue which is raised has no relevance for the benefit of the public. Moreover, if the program had been done before, or if it contradicts the policy of the government, the journalists do not use it at all.

Table 8:- Journalists' responses to getting information from the public relation officers.

Items			Jour.
Do the public relation officers provide you the information that you need?			
A/ Yes	counts	32	
	%	68.1	
B/ No	counts	15	
	%	31.9	

From the above table we understand that, 68.1percent of the respondents says the public relation officers provide them with information that they need and 31.9 percent say they don't give information. Those who say 'no' suggest that the public relations officers don't prepare and organize the required information in time; the public relation officers invite the journalists only if

they want to; unless the Bureau head has allowed it, they don't give any information to the journalists; they do not have self confidence to challenge the public relations officers; and the journalists don't know the reason why the public relations officers are not willing to give information. In addition, some journalists also say that the public relations officers are politically affiliated, and don't know the journalists' professional need for all information. As the researcher confirmed in his observation, all public relations officers are appointed by the head of the government. Therefore, they may release information based on the direction of government policies only.

Table 9:- Public Relation officers response about journalists access to information

Items	5	4	3	2	1
The journalists get the required information easily from the Bureaus. counts %	2 11.8	4 23.5	3 17.7	5 29.4	3 17.7
Journalists choose whatever title they want to report it. counts %	1 5.9	3 17.7	4 25.5	8 47.1	1 5.9
The journalists give equal opportunities to all issues. counts %	--- ---	--- ---	4 23.5	10 58.8	3 17.7
The public relation officers Cooperate to provide information to the journalists. counts %	10 68.8	2 11.8	4 23.5	1 5.9	--- ---

As we have seen above, 11.8 percent of the respondents strongly agree about journalists getting the required information easily from the Bureaus, 23.5 percent agreed, 17.7 agreed to some extent, 29.4 percent disagreed and 17.7 strongly disagreed about the same issue. Moreover, 5.9 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that the journalists are choosing whatever title they want to report it, 17.7 percent agreed, 25.5 percent to some extent agreed, 47.1 percent disagreed and 5.9 percent strongly disagreed about the same issue. On the other hand, 23.5 percent of the respondents agreed to some extent about journalists giving equal opportunities to all issues, 58.8 percents disagreed and 17.7 percent strongly disagreed. Moreover, 68.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed about the public relation officers cooperating by providing

information to the journalists, 11.8 percent agreed, 23.5 percent to some extent agreed and 5.9 percent disagreed about the same issue. This signifies that the public relations officers create favorable conditions for the journalists to have what they need.

As the entire response shows that, most journalists (68.1%) and public relations officers (68.8%) say that the public relations officers provide information that the journalists want. The researcher also observed and confirmed that the public relations officers provide information to the journalists. This shows that the journalists have good access to information from most Bureaux. However, as the respondents testified, there are certain public relations officers that do not cooperate with the journalists because they do not prepare and organize the required information in time. This may slow down the flow of information in this particular media.

4.2.2. Lack of skills or trainings

Table 10:- Participants' response about the trainings the journalists have taken

Items		Jour.	Editors
Have you had any training that has helped you to up-grade Your profession?			
A/ Yes	counts %	35 74.46	5 83.3
B/ No	counts %	12 25.54	1 16.6

As far as the training that has been given to journalists concerned, 74.46 percent of the journalists and 83.3 percent of the editors say that they have undertaken training that has helped them to upgrade their profession; 25.54 percent of journalists and 16.6 percent of the editors say they haven't taken any such courses yet. According to those respondents who have had training, the types of training include 'how to prepare news report' (five days), media and gender (3 days), developmental journalism (8 days), investigative journalism, 'how to report corruption cases', 'how to report malaria epidemic', editing styles and feature and news writing techniques (15days).

From the over all responses, we understand that the journalists are given a variety of training that helps them to enhance their capacity in the Agency. However, there are journalists (23.5%) who haven't undertaken any training so far.

4.2.3. Friends and relatives interests

Table 11:- Journalists response about favoring certain individual, relatives, groups or party in their working area.

Items		Jour.	Editors	Board M.
How often journalists favor certain individual, relatives, groups or party in your working area?				
A/ always	counts	8	1	0
	%	17	16.6	0
B/ sometimes	counts	16	3	2
	%	34	50.0	100
C/ not at all	counts	13	2	0
	%	48.9	33.3	0

According to the above table, 17 percent of the journalists and 16.6 percent of the editors say the journalists always favor certain individuals, relatives groups or party in their profession; 34 percent of journalists, 50 percent of editors and 100 percent of the board members say this happens 'sometimes'; and the other 48.9 percent of the journalists and 33.3 percent of the editors say that the journalists don't favor anyone at all.

As the overall responses shows that most journalists (51%), editors (66.6%) and all the board members accept that journalists to some degree favor certain individuals, relatives, groups or parties. But as Kruger (2004) and Retief (2001) note, unless the journalists keep their distance from their relatives and friends that they cover, they may lose their integrity, credibility and independence.

4.2.4. Partisanship

Table 12:- Journalists response about being a member or supporter of any party.

Items		Jour.	Editors
Have you been a member or supporter of any party? A/ Yes	counts	11	4
	%	23.4	66.6
B/ No	counts	36	2
	%	76.6	33.3

From the above table we can understand that, 23.4 percent of the journalists and 66.6 percent of the editors say that they have been a member or supporter of a party; and 76.6 percent of the journalists and 33.3 percent of the editors say they have not been so far. Those who answer “No” give the following reasons: they don’t have the capacity to support political parties; journalism as a profession means serving the public, being a mediator; the media give them the opportunity to work freely and the profession doesn’t allow being the member of any party. Moreover, some say that to report news fairly and in a balanced way, journalists should be free from any political influences. Others say they were not members of any party, but they do support most of the policies of the ruling party and if you become supporter of a party, you will be influenced by it. This impedes ones ability to produce fair and balanced news.

From the above responses we infer that most of the journalists (76.6%) have not been members or supporters of any party so far. Some of their reasons are that journalism as a profession serves the public by being a mediator; the media give journalists the opportunity to work freely, and the profession doesn’t allow them to be members of a party, because to report news fairly and in a balanced way, the journalists should be free from political influences, etc. On the other hand, most of the editors (66.6%) believe that they have been a member or supporter of a party. Editors have the power to check, correct and select the news which is appropriate and based on the media policy. This shows that even if the journalists prepare their news based on the news value, its content is checked, revised and modified based on the interest of the editors or their bosses. If the editors intervene in the works of journalists, they may affect journalists’ independence to work based on their ethical decision.

4.2.5. Financial interests

Table 13:- Journalists' response about remembering any staff member declaring what was given or obtained from other organization.

Items	Jour.
Do you remember any staff member declaring what was given or obtained from other organization?	
A/ Yes	14
counts	29.8
%	
B/ No	33
counts	70.2
%	

As of the above table, 29.78 percent of the respondents say they remembered any staff member declaring what was given or obtained from other organization and 70.2 percent on the contrary says they don't remember anyone.

From the above information, even if most of the respondents (70.2%) do not remember any staff member declaring what was given or obtained from other organizations, some (29.7%) journalists remember the existence of journalists who declared what was given or obtained. This signifies that some journalists do accept gifts from other organizations. This, according to Keeble (2001), is not appropriate if they wish to maintain their independence.

Table 14:- Participants response about financial issues in journalists profession.

Items		5	4	3	2	1
The journalists are well paid in the Region.						
Editors	counts	---	---	---	---	---
	%	---	---	---	---	---
PR. Officers	counts	1	1	8	6	1
	%	5.9	5.9	47.1	35.3	5.9
The journalists are paying money to get the Information they need.						
Editors	counts	3	--	2	1	--
	%	50	--	33.3	16.7	---
PR. Officers	counts	---	3	3	7	4
	%	---	17.7	17.7	41.2	23.5
The journalists are accepting money to disseminate the news.						
Editors	counts	1	--	3	---	2
	%	16.7	--	50	----	33.3
PR. Officers	counts	2	--	5	9	1
	%	11.8		29.4	52.9	5.9
The Bureaus /other organizations offer varieties of gifts to the journalists.						
Editors	counts	1	--	3	2	--
	%	16.7	-	50	33.3	--
PR. Officers	counts	--	---	---	11	6
	%	--	---	---	64.7	35.3

As we observed from the above table, 5.9 percent of the public relation officers strongly agreed that the journalists are well paid in the region, 5.9 percent agreed, 47.06 percent agreed to some extent, 35.29 percent disagree and 5.9 percent strongly disagree about the same issues. As far as paying money to gather information is concerned, 50 percent of the editors strongly agreed, 17.7 percent of the PR officers agreed, 33.3 percent of the journalists and 17.7 percent of the PR

officers agreed to some extent, 41.2 percent of PR officers and 16.7 percent of the journalists disagreed and 23.5 percent of PR officers strongly disagreed.

On the other hand, 11.8 percent of the PR officers and 16.7 percent of the editors strongly agreed about journalists accepting money to disseminate information, 29.4 percents of PR officers and 50 percent of the editors agreed to some extent, 52.9 percent of PR officers disagreed and the remaining 33.3 percent of editors and 5.9 percent of PR officers strongly disagreed about the same issue. Moreover, 16.7 percent of the editors strongly agreed that Bureaus or other organizations offering varieties of gifts to the journalists, 50 percent agreed to some extent 64.7 percent of the PR officers and 33.3 percent of editors disagreed and 35.3 percent of PR. also strongly disagreed about the same issue.

As far as the financial issues are concerned, it is possible to understand that journalists are not well paid in the region so that they sometimes accept money and gifts from other organizations to disseminate the news. The researcher also observed that some journalists work part-time to supplement their income. Even if they have financial problems, they should not compromise their independence and credibility due to their financial interests (Kruger, 2004:131).

4.2.6. Censorship

Table 15:- Participants response about external influences.

Items		Jour.	Editors
Are journalists punished for broadcasting stories even though the decision is professionally right?			
A/Yes	counts	13	---
	%	27.7	----
B/. No	counts	14	4
	%	29.8	66.6
C/. I do not know	counts	20	2
	%	42.5	33.3

If your answer for question NO: - “27” is “Yes”, what are the forms of punishment? (More than one answer is possible)				
A/. Dismissal from their job	-----		0	--
B/. Denying promotion	counts		2	--
	%		4.3	--
C/.Warning	counts		5	--
	%		10.6	--
D/. Fining salary	counts		2	--
	%		4.3	--
E/. Others-----	counts		3	--
	%		6.4	--
Are there conditions under which journalists in the Amhara Region mass media are forced to broadcast news stories regardless of their professional decisions?				
A/. Yes	counts		8	---
	%		17	---
B/. No	counts		25	6
	%		53.2	100
C/. I do not know	counts		14	---
	%		29.8	---

As it is clearly stated in the above table, 27.7 percent of the journalists say journalists are punished for broadcasting stories even though the decision is professionally right; 29.8 percent journalists and 66.6 percent of the editors say they are not punished; 42.5 percent of journalists and 33.3 percent of the editors say they don't know. From those who say the journalists are punished, 4.3 percent explain the forms of punishments as denying promotion; 10.6 percent say a warning is given; 4.3 percent say the salary is fined; and 6.4 percent give other examples. This signifies that most journalists are not punished for broadcasting stories that are prepared based on their ethical decisions. But, some journalists say that certain reporters are punished for their reports. Moreover, 17 percent of the journalists say there are conditions under which journalists in the Amhara Region mass media are forced to broadcast news stories regardless of their professional decisions; 53.2 percent of journalists and 100 percents of the editors deny this; 29.8 percent of the journalists say they don't know either whether there are conditions that forced the journalist to broadcast or not. Those who say there are conditions suggest the following reasons

for this: around election the higher officials or authorities force journalists to transmit a lie without considering their professional decisions.

As far as punishment is concerned, from the entire response we understand that journalists are not punished for broadcasting stories even though the decision is professionally right. However, as the interviewees confirm, the journalist is punished for his news if he/she repeatedly shows his/ her personal opinions, religious outlook and political opinion. Otherwise, to practise freedom of expression in his profession, no one is punished as the radio department head said. He also added that “we are trying to exercise the free press law. If you punish the journalist, how can he/she be free? With his/her problem, we teach him/her to learn from his/her mistake. We support them to strengthen their capacity.” In addition to this, the press department head says that:

We support the journalists not to commit a mistake as much as possible. First of all, we create awareness how the journalists gather information and prepare their news report before they start their job. Therefore, they don't prepare news beyond the editorial policy. Otherwise, no one ordered the journalists to do this and that.

As both heads say that after developing their experience, some journalists leave their job to seek a better salary because they are attracted by good salaries outside the Agency. However, there is no one who is fired committing a mistake. As the radio department head said, in some conditions some journalists may be given a warning or their salary may be docked for their wrong-doing. If the journalist uses his/her political, religious or other opinions to influence the media, they will be given two or three warnings to stop. Finally, if they don't change their attitude, they will be punished, either in a written warnings or fining their salary. Moreover, the radio head says: “we use varieties of administrative methods. Sometimes it is important to use the carrot and stick approach. Most of the time the journalists look only at the carrot; but sometimes it is important to show a stick if it is necessary”. As we have seen above, the journalists do not have the right to seek, hold, or impart all the kinds of information that the constitution allows them. This affects journalists' independence severely.

Table 16:- Participants response about having rules and regulations that prohibits them not to report what ever issues they want.

Items	Jour.	Editors
Are there conditions under which certain news stories are prevented from being broadcast?		
A/. Yes	counts 32 68.1	5 83.3
B/. No	counts 6 12.8	1 16.6
C/. I do not know	counts 9 19.1	--- ---
Are there any rules or regulations that prohibit you from reporting whatever you like?		
A/. Yes	counts 18 38.3	6 100
B/. No	counts 29 61.7	--- ---

According to the above table, 68.1 percent of the journalists and 83.3 percent of the editors say there are conditions under which certain news stories are prevented from being broadcast, but 12.8 percent of journalists and 16.6 percent of the editors say such conditions don't exist, while 19.1 percent of journalists are unsure about this. Those who believe that stories are sometimes prevented from being broadcast offer the following reasons for the prevention of the broadcast: if the news is likely to create conflict between the government and the people or among the people; if it has no any significance for the public, and contradicts the government policies, press law, and the editorial policy of the media. Furthermore, if its potential social, political and economic benefit is doubted, and its potential negative impact is deemed to be significant, the news is banned. On the other hand, 38.3 percent of the journalists and 100 percent of the editors say there are rules and regulations that prohibit their reporting of some issues; 61.7 percent of journalists deny this. Those respondents who say there are rules and regulations cite the following ones: editorial policy of the Agency, the press law, the Constitution and the Agency's code of ethics.

Furthermore, most respondents (68.1% journalists and 83% editors) believed that there are conditions in which certain news items are prohibited from being transmitted because they might create conflict among the nation's different ethnic groups and the government. If the news

contradicts the Regional and National Constitution, or if it has lower value and does not have any benefit for the public, it is not allowed to be aired. In addition, all the editors and most journalists say that there are certain rules and regulations that prohibit journalist from reporting whatever they want. Some of the rules and regulations are: The Constitution, the press law, the editorial policy, and the Agency's code of ethics. From this response we understand journalists are not free to write whatever they want, due to the existence of these rules and regulations.

Table 17:- Journalists' responses to their practising self censorship while writing their news stories

Items		Jour.	Editors	Board m.
Do you practice self censorship while writing your news stories?				
A/. Yes	counts	33	4	1
	%	70.2	66.6	50
B/No	counts	14	2	--
	%	29.8	33.3	--
c/ I don't know	counts	---	---	1
	%	---	---	50

As far as self-censorship is concerned, 70.2 percent of the journalists, 66.6 percent of the editors and 50 percent of the board members say the journalists practise self censorship while writing their news stories; but 29.8 percent of the journalists and 33.3 percent of the editors disagree, and the remaining 50 percent of the board members simply don't know whether journalists practise self censorship or not. The followings are the reasons why journalists practise self censorship: to have full information to their report, to avoid contentious words, repetition and other problems. Moreover, to improve the quality of the news and minimize the load of editors, they check and correct their reports. In addition to this, some reporters read their work again and again to check and correct it to make sure that the news balanced and incorporates the ideas of all concerned bodies.

From the respondents, it is clear that journalists do practise self-censorship in the Amhara Mass Media Agency. Even if they say that they practise self-censorship to correct and make their reports more readable, to incorporate words that were forgotten, to avoid unnecessary words or ideas—these are not their only reasons for self censorship. As is clear from the editorial policy, they do have to obey the rules and regulation of the media. The editorial policy also forces the journalists to check and correct their news stories before submitting them to the department.

Even if this happens routinely to produce accurate and well written journalism, there is pressure on the journalists to produce a report based on the direction of the concerned bodies. Article 7 sub-articles 9 of the editorial policy notes: “Before the journalist submits his final work, he should check and confirm the accuracy of his work.” Moreover, the journalists are given direction about how to gather information, where to get it, and how to prepare news stories. Therefore, she or he has to work in line with the given direction. Furthermore, as article 4 sub-articles 1 of the Agency editorial policy says: “Before the journalist goes out to gather information, he must be given orientation by the editor, head of the department or other authoritative bodies. If there is difficulty about giving orientation, the journalist should gather the required information based on his way”.

Due to this, the journalists are not free to select any issues they want to cover. This also motivates them not to seek, hold, or impart any kinds of information that may be legitimate according to the law of land. This also compromises the journalists’ independence in their work. Unless the journalists use their right which is stated in the constitution, they cannot play their watchdog role properly.

Table 18:- Editors response about the orders of higher officials.

Items	5	4	3	2	1
Higher officials ordered journalists to disseminate what they needs.					
counts	2	2	--	2	--
%	33.3	33.3	--	33.3	--

According to the above table, 33.3 percent of the respondents strongly agree that the higher officials order journalists to disseminate what they need, while 33.3 percent agree and the remaining 33.3 percent disagree with the same issue. This suggests that the journalists are ordered by those higher officials to disseminate what they need. For example, according to the editorial policy of the Agency article 5 sub-articles 8, “If there is a new order by the Manager or the Information Committee, the above procedure is not effective.” That means, without giving

any orientation to the journalist how, when, and where to get the information, the manager or the Information committee can order him to go and produce his/her news story. This also inhibits the freedom of journalists to prepare their news report as freely as possible. This therefore affects journalists' independence to perform their work properly.

Table 19:- Public Relation officers' response to censorship.

Items	5	4	3	2	1
All information is checked by the editor.					
counts	3	6	5	2	1
%	17.6	35.3	29.4	11.8	5.9
The editor is independent in doing his tasks.					
counts	2	4	3	7	1
%	11.8	25.5	17.6	41.2	5.9

From the above table we understand that 17.6 percent of the respondents strongly agreed about checking all information by the editor, 35.3 percent agreed, 29.4 percent agreed to some extent, 11.8 percent disagreed and 5.9 strongly disagreed. As far as the freedom of editors is concerned, 11.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that the editors are independent in doing their tasks, 25.5 percent agreed, 17.6 percent to some extent agreed, 41.2 percent disagreed and 5.9 percent strongly disagreed about the same issues. The response clearly signifies that the editors have a mandate to check the information of the reporters' news report. This is done in most media, but the problem is that editors are not independent in their work. This may force them to create unbalanced, unfair, and incorrect news stories. Due to this, the journalists lose their independence as well as their credibility.

Table 20:- Journalists' responses to editors independence and external censorship.

Items		No. R
How often you correct news based on the interest of the editor/media?		
A/ Always	counts	0
	%	0
B/ Sometimes	counts	30
	%	63.8
D/ Not at all	counts	17
	%	36.2
Does the editors free from any kinds of influences in their job?		
A/ Yes	counts	23
	%	48.9
B/ No	counts	10
	%	21.3
C/ I don't know	counts	14
	%	29.8

From the above table we understand that 63.8 percent of the respondents say they always correct news stories based on the interests of the editors, and 36.2 percent says they don't do this at all. On the other hand, 48.9 percent of the respondents say the editors are free of all kinds of influences, but 21.3 per cent disagree, and 29.8 percent say they don't know. The respondents who say editors are not free suggest the following reasons: sometimes it is expected to prepare news based on the interest of the government; and as the editors are appointed by the manager, they are politically affiliated and always serve as a gatekeeper.

According to most journalists, the editors are free of all kinds of influence. But most public relation officers believed that the editors are not free from any kinds of influences. Moreover, 66.6 percent of the editors also confirm that they have been a member or supporter of a party. In view of this, they are directly or indirectly influenced by the ideology of that party they favor. If they become partisan, they may not able to disseminate the information that enhances the development of the nation. This also hinders their independence as well as their credibility in the face of the public.

Finally, the journalists list the following problems that affect them while working in the Agency: the journalists in the Agency are not well trained, and they don't speak the same language. This means they don't have a common understanding of various issues in the media and they are considered as common talkative persons by the people. This means they lack trust in the public because the audiences do not believe the news, as it is based on the directions of the government. Moreover, the journalists do not have sufficient knowledge to produce the news as expected, as the media editorial board and their news does not concentrate on issues that interest the audiences. In view of this, they only focus on meetings, and they don't prepare in-depth reports like investigating journalism to expose the malpractices of the authoritative bodies. Some journalists say that due to the time-consuming nature of the work, they don't lead the social life they would like. Others say it is a difficult job, and the salary is not commensurate with the difficulties of the job. Furthermore, some professional journalists do not obey their code of ethics and accept gifts from a variety of organizations. These are some of the problems the journalists have experienced.

As far as their Agency is concerned, the following are some of the respondents' problems: there is no standard to prepare their news. Most of the time, the propaganda way of selecting news is used as criteria, rather than using standard news values. In addition to this, the managers are not professionals, so their leadership is not valued. This means they are not professionals in the field, but are appointed by the head of the government. Due to this they also do not like people with self confidence; instead they like people who bow down to their ideas. The other problems are lack of information and an insufficient ability to do their jobs. Furthermore, some people are not willing to give information to the journalists because they consider journalists as the agents of the government. This hampers journalists' ability to gather information. Moreover, respondents also list the following problems that affect journalistic independence: the approval of bosses is required if journalists are allowed to produce stories that they regard as good; there is a lack of integrity and accountability of the journalists and a lack of skilled manpower in the field.

The deputy manager also says that the editorial policy of the Agency is not ratified by the concerned bodies like the editorial board and the board members of the Agency. This creates difficulty for the Agency to perform its work properly. To solve this problem, they decide to work using the draft editorial policy. He also explained the main problems that affect journalistic independence:

The media main duty is to disseminate information to aware the public about the failures and success of the government. However, some Bureaus are not willing to give the required information about their failure. Even if you plan to gather information, no one provides you any information.

To avoid the above problems and to make the journalists more independent and so improve the performances of the media, the deputy manager suggested that: "The journalists should be given appropriate training, they should be given orientation about the problems that journalists face while preparing their news stories. Moreover, to satisfy the interest of the public the journalists should sacrifices their time and life. The journalists should aware his responsibility".

As far as the higher officials or authorities are concerned, it is better to see the work instead of the person who does the report. Sometimes the bosses oversee the person's attitude or opinions, rather than looking what he or she is doing. Other suggestions for improvement were that the authoritative bodies should avoid their rigidity; the media should give journalists more training to improve their capacity; the higher bodies in the Agency should be occupied by professional

leaders; and more well-trained journalists should be hired. Furthermore, problems of good governance should be solved, and sufficient budget should be allocated to help solve the existing problems—such as increasing the salary of journalists. This would help the journalists to carry out their work more efficiently. Other ideas noted were that training should be continuous; that the use of freelance journalists should be encouraged; that the media should bring skilled journalists from the market.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1. Conclusion

The study has been conducted to assess how far journalistic independence is practised in The Amhara Mass Media Agency, and to identify the factors that constrain their independence. In the process, the main legal documents relevant to the regional broadcasting services have been analysed and journalists, editors, board members and Public relations officers of the organization have been contacted. The researcher uses Gatekeeping Theory and other press theories as a theoretical framework. This chapter also tries to conclude the overall findings and puts forward some recommendations based on the findings.

Freedom of expression is the cornerstone of journalistic professionalism. Article 29 sub-articles 1-3 of the Ethiopia Constitution (1995) notes that everybody has a right to seek, receive, and impart information without any impediments to their process. The media also enjoy this freedom. However, from the responses we infer that the editorial meeting only comprises the manager, deputy manager, and the heads of three departments. This body has a mandate to identify, select, and decide the types of news that is produced by the journalists. The journalists' task is only to provide new information and ideas, or preparing news items for submission to this board. In addition to this, most of the editors (66.6%) believed that journalists in the Amhara mass media Agency do not have the authority to choose whatever issue they want to, to write about. But some interviewees note that the journalists do have a right to choose and prepare their news stories, even if they cannot decide to transmit them because the decision to select and transmit the kinds of news stories is made by the "Information committee" or the editorial board. Unless it is transmitted, what the journalists have spent their working on is wasted. Therefore, the journalists lose interest in doing their job properly. This also contradicts the Federal and Regional Constitutions. Moreover, as most respondents clearly show, the Amhara Mass Media Agency often uses propaganda values (for the government or the ruling party), rather than news values as criteria to select news stores. This also hinders the journalists' independence and right of freedom of expression guaranteed by the national and regional constitutions.

As far as having skilled manpower is concerned, the Agency provided certain training that helps them to upgrade their skills. This also helps the journalists to enhance their capacity to perform their task more effectively to satisfy the interest of their audience. However, there are certain journalists (25%) who haven't undertaken any training yet. Unless the journalists have the required skill to search, gather, prepare and disseminate information, they do not prepare news that has value for the development of the country. Ahuja clearly explains, the kinds of principles that are required by the journalists: "Journalists are therefore supposed to possess a good deal of intelligence, knowledge, experience as well as natural and trained powers of observation and reasoning. A journalist has the same obligation as a teacher or interpreter, or as an educationist has" (2001:2).

As far as the impacts of friends and relatives are concerned, the findings of the research indicate that journalists often work in favor of certain individuals, relatives, groups or parties. This also directly affects those who do not keep their distance from their friends and relatives. Kruger (2004) and Retief (2001) concur that journalists should keep their distance from their friends, relatives, individuals and others. Otherwise, their credibility as well as their independence will be compromised.

Partisanship is also another factor that hinders journalists' independence. As the overall finding shows, most of the journalists—except majority of the editors— have not been members or supporters of any party. Their reasons are that journalism as a profession serves the public as a mediator; the media give journalists the opportunity to work freely; the profession doesn't allow journalists to be members of any party as it may impede their ability to report news fairly and in a balanced way. As editors serve as "gatekeepers" in checking the journalists' reports, they influence journalists' copy for their own, and their bosses interests (Fourie, 2004). As most educators like Kruger (2004) and Retief (2001) and others believe, journalists should not be partisan. If they become a supporter or member of any party, they are influenced by the ideology of the party they favor. To be fair and balanced in their work, the journalists should be free from taking sides with any party or individual that may affect their independence and credibility. Not only the journalists, but also their organizations, should be free from any kind of political affiliations. According to Retief (2002:42), "The corporation shall be free from obligation to any interest group and shall be committed to the public right to know the truth."

As far as the financial issues are concerned, it is possible to understand from the respondents that journalists are not well paid in the region, so that they seek other jobs to supplement their salaries. Moreover, some journalists accept money and gifts from organizations in return for disseminating their news. This shows that they are affected by financial interest. This also influences their daily journalistic works. So, in order not to compromise their independence and integrity, journalists should not accept gifts (Retief, 2002:131-141; Kruger, 2004:101). Furthermore, according to Forbes (2005), journalism is a poorly paid profession so that to subsidize their salaries, journalists search for other jobs. For example, from the interviewee response we understand that many reporters leave the Agency in order to live Addis Ababa where they can earn a better salary. This financial constraint has an impact on journalistic independence in the Amhara Mass Media Agency.

Censorship is also another factor that contributes to the absence of journalistic independence. As is clear from response of all participants, journalists practise self-censorship in the Amhara Mass Media Agency. Even if the journalists say that they practise self-censorship to correct and make their news more readable, to incorporate words that are forgotten before, or to avoid unnecessary words or ideas, this is not their only reason. The journalists are directed on how to gather information, where to get information, and how to prepare news stories. They have to work in line with the given direction. Moreover, the interviewee says that there are two copy editors who check and correct the journalists' news stories. After it is checked by editors and approved by their department heads or other authoritative bodies, the news will be aired or disseminated. This also affects journalists' self-confidence and their ability to exercise their freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas to the public. Due to this, journalists in the Agency exercise self-censorship so as not to commit any mistakes or not to write news stories that affects their bosses' interest. This also hinders the journalists' power to play their role effectively. As Fourie (2004) notes, the interference of various editors and sub-editors affects journalists' performance. Moreover, the existence of various checkpoints in the media also affects journalists' freedom to select and write whatever issues they want. On the other hand, the editors usually serve in a system to catch mistakes and improve the contents of newspaper (Ray and Taylor, 1988).

To sum up, the above findings, show that journalistic independence in the Amhara Mass Media Agency is compromised by various conflicts of interests: lack of freedom of expression; financial interests; self-interest; self-censorship; and relatives interest. Moreover, as the respondents noted, the following are the main problems that affect journalistic' independence in this particular Agency: lack of information; insufficient instruments for journalists to do their work freely; the authoritative bodies are not willing to give responses to those who are not satisfied with their service; and the salary is not commensurate with the difficulties of job.

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APPENDIX-A

Workers/Journalists Ethical Guide Lines

- According to part 2 articles 1 sub-article 7, say: “The journalists shouldn’t be engaged in accepting incentives, bribe and others that degrades their professional honor and ethics.”
- Articles 2 sub-article 8 says: “when the journalists doing their work outside their professional ethics, they are accused of breaking the code of conduct.”
- Articles 5 sub–articles 1 says: “The workers in the Agency are expected to work. Moreover, those that are forbidden by the guideline like: gifts, accepting invitations must not be done.”
- Article 6 sub-articles 2 say: “Every worker in the Agency has to accept and obey the policy of the region as well as the constitution.”
- Article 7 Sub-articles 1 say: “The work which is done by every worker must be done for the benefit of the people. It is forbidden to give priority or forwarding decision based on the benefit of self interest, family, relatives, friends’ interest and others. The journalists must not use his professional for worthless activities.”
- Article 7 Sub-articles 2 say: The worker must declare and avoid any benefits that contradict with his job. Moreover, he has to declare and make known the finance of his families and relatives.”
- Article 7 Sub-articles 3 say: “without the permission of the Agency, no one can enjoy par time works.”
- Article 8 Sub-articles 1 say: “Every worker must respect and perform his duties based on the given responsibility.”
- Article 8 Sub-articles 2 say: “The workers of the Agency haven’t enforced the people to sell things, to reduce the price, to borrow money, etc. using their profession.”

- Article 8 Sub-articles 3 say: “Every workers of the Agency has not use his responsibility to get permit advantage.”
- Article 8 Sub-articles 4 say: “Every workers of the Agency has to make balance and legal opinions, decisions and reports based on the rule and regulations of the media.”
- Article 9 Sub-articles 3 say: “in order to satisfy one person or any team, the journalists must not prepare any report. Moreover, if the journalists prepare news or make any opinions based on the interest of a person, or any group, he or she is accused of breaking the code of ethics.”
- Article 10 Sub-articles 1 say: “Every worker of the Agency has to respect the law of land (the country constitution) as well as the Regional constitution, policies, rules, regulations and obey the authoritative bodies’ instructions.” etc.

Some of the articles that are taken from the editorial policy are:

- Sub-articles 1 say: “after preparing the news or programs, it is checked by two editors without the presence of the reporter.”
- Sub-articles 2 say: “the news is first checked by the main producer and finally checked by the team leader.”
- Article 7 sub-articles 9 also say: “Before the journalist submits his final work, he should check and confirm the accuracy of his work.”
- Article 7 sub-articles 10 say: “If there are sensitive issues like: political parties, conflict among the people or between Nationalities, issues that have direct attachments with loss of life in epidemic, starvation, etc. the news and program should be checked by the manager or Information Committee before aired.”
- Article 7 sub-articles 11 say: editing is done based on the rules and regulations of the media as well as the media press law. On the other hand, further censorship activities are not allowed.
- Article 7 article 7Sub-articles 12 say: “The editor should discuss with the reporter about the problems that he detects.”
- Article 7 sub-articles 14 say: “unless the team leader, department head or representatives put his signature, the news is not aired.”

Appendix-B

Questionnaire to be filled out by Journalists

Introduction

The researcher at the school of Journalism and Communication is doing a study of how independent the journalists in The Amhara National Regional State Mass Media are. Your response is invaluable for the research. You are kindly requested to give us your response as frankly and freely as possible. Do not hesitate to say whatever believes to be correct. Thank you for your participation.

Note: - *Do not write your name.*

I. makes a ☒ mark for the following questions.

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1. Age | ☐ 18-30 | ☐ 30-40 | ☐ above 40 |
| 2. Gender | ☐ Male | ☐ Female | |
| 3. Educational background | ☐ 12 complete | ☐ 12+1 | ☐ 12+2 |
| | ☐ 12+4 | ☐ 12+4 and above | |
| 4. Your position | ☐ Editor | ☐ Reporter | ☐ Editor in chief |
| | ☐ Assistant editor | ☐ senior editor | others----- |
| 5. Experience | ☐ 1 -5 years | ☐ 6 -10 Years | ☐ 11 years & above |
| 6. Your income / salary | ☐ 700 -1000 | ☐ 1501 - 2000 | |
| | ☐ 1001 - 1500 | ☐ Above 2000 | |

II. Choose the correct answer and circle it. For the open-ended questions, please list down frankly what you feel.

7. Do you have editorial meetings?

A/ Yes

B/ No

8. If your answer for question No:-7 is "yes", do all journalists participate in editorial meetings?

A/ Yes

B/ No

C/ I don't know

9. If your answer is “No” what is your reason for this? -----

10. Who makes decisions in the meetings?
A/ The editorial board B/ the manager C/ the journalists D/ I do not know
11. Who decides what you report?
A/. The editor B/. Myself C/. The manager D/. All
12. What kinds of issues do you prefer to report on?
A/. Political B/. Social and cultural C/. Economic
13. If your answer for question number 12 is not choice “A” (political) what is your reason?
A/. You have no adequate knowledge on political issues.
B/. You think reporting politics may have bad consequences.
C/. The organization does not encourage political reports.
D/. Other-----
14. What criteria are often used in the Amhara Mass Media to select news? (Two answers are possible)
A/ The professional news value judgment C/ Others -----
B/The propaganda value for the government or the ruling party
15. Have you had any training that has helped you to up-grade your profession?
A/ Yes B/ No
16. If your answer for question NO: - 15 are “Yes” what kinds of training and for how long was it given? -----
17. How often do you entertain varieties of opinions in your profession?
A/ always B/ sometimes c/ not at all
18. If your answer for question No: - 17 is “Not at all” write your reason? -----

19. How often journalists favor certain individual, relatives, groups or party in your working area?
A/ always B/ sometimes C/ not at all
20. Have you been a member or supporter of any party?
A/ Yes B/ No
21. If your answer for question NO: - 20 are “No,” please tell us your reason. -----

22. Do you remember any staff member declaring what was given or obtained from other organization?
A/ Yes B/No
23. Are there conditions under which certain news stories are prevented from being broadcast?
A/. Yes B/. No C/. I do not know
24. If your answer for question NO: - 23 are “Yes”, explain the reasons why news was prevented from being broadcast? -----
25. Are there any rules or regulations that prohibit you from reporting whatever you like?
A/. Yes B/. No
26. If your answer for question NO: - 25 are “Yes” please listing some of the rules and regulations. ----

27. Are journalists punished for broadcasting stories even though the decision is professionally right?
A. Yes B/. No C/. I do not know
28. If your answer for question NO: - “27” is “Yes”, what are the forms of punishment? (More than one answer is possible)
A/. Dismissal from their job C/.Warning E/. Others-----
B/. Denying promotion D/. Fining salary

29. Are there conditions under which journalists in the Amhara Region mass media are forced to broadcast news stories regardless of their professional decisions?

A/. Yes

B/. No

C/. I do not know

30. If your answer for question NQ: - 29 are 'yes', please write your reasons-----

31. Do you practice self censorship while writing your news stories?

A/. Yes

B/No

32. If your answer for question NQ: - 31 is "Yes" please state your reasons. -----

---- 33. How often you correct your news based on the interest of the editor or the organization?

A/ Always

B/ sometimes

C/ Not at all

34. Do the public relation officers provide you the information that you need?

A/. Yes

B/. No

35. If your answer for question NQ: - 21 is "No" explains the reasons -----

36. Does the editor free from any influences?

A/ Yes

B/ No

C/ I don't know

37. If your answer for question NQ: - 36 is "No" explains the reasons -----

38. In practice what problems have you faced while working as a journalist? -----

39. What methods do you use to overcome these problems? -----

-----40. What are the main problems that affect journalistic independence in your media? List every problem that you think.-----

41. What do you think to solve the problem that you suggest so far, to improve the function of the media? -----

Appendix-C

Questionnaire to be filled out by Editors

Introduction

The researcher at the school of Journalism and Communication is doing a study of how independent the journalists in The Amhara National Regional State Mass Media are. Your response is invaluable for the research. Therefore, you are kindly requested to give us your response as frankly and freely as possible. Do not hesitate to say whatever believes to be correct. Thank you for your participation.

Note: - Do not write your name.

I. makes a ☒ mark for the following questions.

1. Age ☐ 18-30 ☐ 30-40 ☐ 40+
2. Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female
3. Educational background
☐ 12 complete ☐ 2+1 ☐ 2
☐ 12+4 ☐ +4 and above
4. Your position
☐ Editor in chief ☐ Assistant Editor
☐ Senior editor ☐ editor others-----
5. Experience
☐ 1 -5 years ☐ 5 -10 Years ☐ 10 years & above

II. Choose the correct answer and circle it. For the open-ended questions, please list down frankly what you feel.

6. Do you have editorial meetings?
A/ Yes B/ No
7. If your answer for question No:-6 is "yes", do all journalists participate in editorial meetings?
A/Yes B/ No
8. If your answer is "No" what do you think the reason? -----

8. Who make decision in the meeting?

- A/ The editorial board B/ the manager C/ the journalists D/ I do not know
10. Who decides what the journalists report is?
A/. The editor B/. Myself C/. The manager D/. All
11. What criteria are often used in the Amhara Mass Media to select news? (Two answers are possible)
A/ The professional news value judgment C/ Others -----
B/The propaganda value for the government or the ruling party
12. Have you had any training so far that helps you to up grade your professional skill?
A/ Yes B/ No
13. If your answer for question NO: - 13 is “Yes” what kind of training and for how long was it given? -

14. How often journalists favor certain individual, relatives, groups or party in their working area?
A/ always B/ sometimes C/ not at all
15. Have you been the member or supporter of any party so far?
A/ Yes B/ No
16. If your answer for question NO: - 18 are “No,” please tell us your reason. -----

17. Are there conditions under which certain news stories are prevented from being broadcasted?
A/. Yes B/. No C/. I do not know
18. If your answer for question NO: - 17 are “Yes” explaining the reason why news could be prevented

	Questions	5	4	3	2	1
19.1	Journalists choose whatever issues they want to report.					
.2	The journalists sometimes accept some gifts from other organizations.					
.3	Higher officials ordered journalists to disseminate what they need.					
.4	The journalists are paying money to get the information they need.					
.5	The journalists are accepting money to disseminate the news.					

from being broadcasted? -----

19. Choose one of the following answers and make a ☒ mark that expresses your feeling for the listed question in the table.

5. Strongly agreed 4. Agreed 3.To some extent 2. Disagreed
1. Strongly disagreed

20. Are there any rules or regulations that prohibit the journalists not to report whatever report that they like?

A/. Yes B/. No

21. If your answer for question NO: - 20 is “Yes” please list down some of the rules and regulations. ---

22. Are the journalists punished for broadcasting stories even though the decision is professionally right?

A. Yes B/. No C/. I do not know

23. If your answer for question NQ: - 25 are “Yes” what are the forms of punishment? (More than one answer is possible)

A/. Dismissing from their job

C/.Warning

E/. Others-----

B/. Denying promotion

D/. Fining salary

24. Are there conditions under which journalist in the Amhara Region mass media are forced to broadcast news stories regardless of their professional decisions?

A/. Yes

B/. No

C/. I do not know

25. If your answer for question NQ: - 24 are ‘yes” please write your reasons-----

26. Do the journalists practice self- censorship while writing their news stories?

A/. Yes

B/No

27. If your answer for question NQ: - 26 is “Yes” please state their reasons. -----

28. In practice what problems have you faced while working as an editor, manager or vice manager? ----

29. What methods are using to overcome those problems? -----

30. What are the main problems that affect journalistic independence in your media? List every problem that you think.-----

31. What do you think to solve the problem that you suggest so far, to improve the function of the media? -----

Appendix-D

Questionnaire to be filled out by Public Relation Officers

Introduction

The researcher at the school of Journalism and Communication is doing a study of how independent the journalists in The Amhara National Regional State Mass Media are. Your response is invaluable for the research. Therefore, you are kindly requested to give us your response as frankly and freely as possible.

No	Questions	5	4	3	2	1
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Do not hesitate to say whatever believes to be correct. Thank you for your participation.

Note: - *Do not write your name.*

Choose one of the following answers and make a

☐ mark that expresses your feeling for the listed

5. Strongly agreed
1. Strongly disagreed

4. Agreed

3. To some extent

2. Disagreed

1	The Journalist entertains all information or issues equally.					
2	The Journalists are well paid in the region.					
3	The Journalists sometimes accept some gifts from other organizations.					
4	Higher officials ordered journalists to disseminate what they need.					
5	Journalists choose whatever title they want to report it.					
6	Every information is checked by the editor.					
7	The editor is independent in doing his tasks.					
8	The Journalists are paying money to get the information they need.					
9	The Journalists are accepting money to disseminate the news.					
10	The journalists are accepting some gifts from other organization					

Appendix-E

Interview questions for editors

1. How do the journalists gather information?
2. How to measure and select the news that is aired or transmitted?
3. As the journalists said, there is no editorial meeting in the Agency; therefore, how do you solve the journalists' problem that they face while preparing their news?
4. What problems the journalists have faced so far that hinders their independence?
5. What steps are taken to alleviate these problems?

6. Are there journalists how are punished for his work and leave their job?
7. In your opinion, what are the factors that affect journalists' independence?
8. In your opinion, to improve the performance of the Agency and to make the journalists free and more independent, what shall we be done?