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# Assessing Media Coverage of Amhara - Qimant Conflict: Addis Zemen, Bekur and Reporter in Focus

A Thesis Submitted To the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa  
University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Art in Journalism and Communication

By: Desalegn Aynalem Mengistie

November, 2020

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

# Addis Ababa University

Thesis on:

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By: Desalegn Aynalem Mengistie

Advisor: Arka Abota (PhD)

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**School of Graduate Studies**

The thesis conducted by Desalegn Aynalem entitled: *Assessing Media Coverage of the Amhara- Qimant Conflict: Addis Zemen, Reporter and Bekur in Focus*, and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication complies with the regulations of the University.

Signed by the Examining team:

Head of the Department \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my mom; **Tiru Molla Deneke**. She is a wonderful mother. She has scarified everything to see us successful. Without you I wouldn't have been here around. Thank you mom and I wish you long live!

### **Abstract**

*Media reportage on conflict contributes to the resolution or, to the contrary, escalation of conflict. This study rooted on examining the media coverage of the Amhara – Qimant conflict by relying on Addis Zemen, Reporter and Bekur. Based on the problem statement and the reviewed literatures, this research developed the following three research questions. How do the three newspapers portray causes of the conflict? How the three newspapers do cover the news of the conflict from the ethical perspective? What does the contribution of the three newspapers to flare or resolute the conflict looks like? The research used qualitative research approach to interpret the news stories about the conflict. The research was guided by the Framing Theory. Through the interpretations made, it was found that the three newspapers' source selection was inappropriate for its complete dependency to government officials and ignorance to victims of armed conflicts, eye witness, inhabitants, elders, religious fathers, and conflicting groups. Most of the news stories were also found event based news stories that based on events such as press conferences, government briefings, conferences and press releases. As a result, the three newspapers' interest to dig the truth and search of reality beyond from what is said from different events was found too limited. The three newspapers conveyed the root cause of the conflict as a vested interest of some armed groups with hidden agenda though noting is said who these groups might be. This research also unveils that most of the news stories of the three newspapers were contributing for peaceful resolution of the conflict. In doing so, they focused on filling the communication gap between the two people, stressing on the long lasting unity of the two brotherly and sisterly people, promoting peaceful discussion among the public and isolating the groups with hidden agenda from the public's interest Furthermore, while the news stories of the three newspapers showed limitations in seeking the truth, and giving balanced viewpoints of the conflicting parties, they were all found ethical. The newspapers were ethical in terms of prioritizing humanity, impartiality and minimizing harm.*

**Key words:** *Amhara – Qimant, Framing, Conflict reporting, Addis Zemen, Reporter, Bekur*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ADP: Amhara Democratic Party

AMMA: Amhara Mass Media Agency

ANRS: Amhara National Regional State

ATV: Amhara Television

FDRE: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

HIK: Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research

HoF: House of Federation

NAMA: National Movement of Amhara

TPLF: Tigray People Liberation Front

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic country endowed with diversified cultures, languages and religious practices. Historically, successive regimes in Ethiopia have implemented different strategies in handling diversities (Dagnachew, 2018). Ethiopia has experienced a unitary form of government under the monarchical and military regime until 1991. After the decline of the military government, the country adopted language and ethnic based federal form of government with the intention to respond to age old national questions. In this connection, the 1994 adopted constitution article 46 sub article 2 stipulates; “States shall be delimited on the basis of the settlement patterns, language, identity and consent of the peoples concerned” (FDRE Constitution, 1995).

The constitution further declared federal form of government in accordance with ethnic-based territories. The constitution declared the formation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) comprising nine regional states, though it is believed that there are more than eighty ethnic and linguistic groups in the country. Article 47 of the 1994 FDRE Constitution stipulates that:

Member States of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia are the Following:

- 1) The State of Tigray
- 2) The State of Afar
- 3) The State of Amhara
- 4) The State of Oromia
- 5) The State of Somalia
- 6) The State of Benshangul/Gumuz
- 7) The State of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples
- 8) The State of the Gambela Peoples
- 9) The State of the Harari People (FDRE Constitution, 1995).

The federal government later added two chartered city administrations, namely Addis Ababa City Administration and Dire Dawa City Administration by Proclamation No. 361/2003 and Proclamation No. 416/2004 respectively. We have also witnessed the addition of the Sidma National Regional State as the tenth regional state of FDRE recently.

In other words, there are some ethnic groups within the mainstream groups in whose names the regional states are designated. One of such organizations is clearly observed in the establishment of the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS; Belay, 2010)

This scenario paves the way to movements for the recognition of self-governance and equal representation from the minority groups. The Qimant identity movement is one amongst the other similar movements.

Although the Qimants were later recognized and guaranteed self-administration as a special woreda nationality administration, the question of appropriateness of the procedure and an interest to become a special zonal nationality administration remains an outstanding conflict between the two sisterly peoples of Amhara and Qimant. The conflict is still evident in a sporadic basis, where we have been witnessing destruction of properties and loss of innocent civilians' life now and then.

The media, as the voice to the voiceless and the source of credible information to the audience, is expected to reflect the truth on the ground to its audiences. The media is expected to implement the theoretical and practical ethical guides when reporting the inter-ethnic conflict between the two warring parties in Amhara National Regional State.

According to Howard, (2008), the media in reporting conflict should focus on in channeling communication, educating, confidence building, correcting misperceptions, making reports humanistic, out letting emotions, identifying underlying interests, encouraging a balance of power, solution building and consensus building.

However, from the two parties especially the Qimant Identity Committee have been lauding their compliant about the unfairness of the media coverage of their problem in the three media houses of the government and private ownerships.

The interview of *Kes* (Priest) Yirga Teshage, Qimant Democratic Party Central Committee Member and Deputy Director for Public Relations, to LTV on 22 February, 2019 is a show case here. He said “We feel too sad to see the ignorance of media institutions, human rights advocators and freedom fighters of the country even far beyond the group which kills us.”

In a statement published on October 2, 2019, the ruling party in the region, Amhara Democratic Party (ADP), also blamed different media institutions declaring that there are different media institutions established for the very purpose of destabilizing people living in the region.

Different researches need to be conducted scientifically on how the media have been doing in covering conflicts so as to show its strengths and weakness. The findings of such researches can be taken as primary outputs to improve their work, and hence, contribute their best to the resolution of such conflicts in a peaceful way or at least, in a way that minimizes damage.

The target newspapers of this research have been trying to cover the conflict so far. However, their coverage hasn't been well taken among the two peoples for its lack of clarity and sidedness. Their reports frequently tended to blame the so called 'some destructive forces' which is ambiguous in its content and does not contribute to maintain and restore peace.

This study aims to come with the truth of the conflict reporting that these newspapers hadn't done standing for the voiceless. The focus of this research, thus, is to assess the coverage of the conflict among these two people relaying on Bekur, Addis Zemen and the Reporter.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The conflict between Amhara and Qimant dates back to 2018. The turning point to the conflict is when the Qimant people were left out to be counted as separate ethnic groups (Qiments) by the 2007 Population and Housing Census (Belay, 2010; Zinabu, 2016). The Qimant people started expressing their opposition of identity denial since then. This period becomes the turning point to change the identity question held by few to the majority. The question at this period had two focuses: right to identity recognition and right to have self-rule/ self-administration.

The original self-administration claim of the Qimant people stretched across 100 and more kebeles in the Gonder and the surrounding *woredas* in the region. In fact, the

Qimant identity was recognized later on after a series of appeals which were lodged for the House of Federation (HoF) and the regional administration (Belay, 2010; Zinabu, 2016).

Finally, as the HoF was investigating the Qimant identity question, the regional administration reconsidered the matter and decided to guarantee the Qimant their unique identity separate from the Amhara. So, out of the originally claimed Qimant self-administration kebeles, the Amhara regional administration agreed to look into some 42 kebeles. The decision to grant the 42 kebeles administration was one that led to a conflict in the area with members of the Qimant community claiming that it was way below what the people deserve actually. They didn't get it satisfactory since their ultimate goal was securing a nationality zonal administration. This is the point that led to the conflict between the Amhara and Qimant peoples especially in kebeles where people from the two people are living together.

Conflict reporting has its own unique challenges and procedures that need to be strictly followed uniquely from other regular trend reporting. According to (Pani, 2017) in groups affected by conflict and human insecurity journalists face greater difficulties, because opposing sides seek to control the media and the information can be censored or unreliable. In addition frequently a reporter's story on a conflict can be the only information available to his audience. So how the reporter frames the conflict can bias the audience in favor of one party, or one solution over another; it can intensify the conflict, or cool it down (Pani, 2017).

The coverage of the Amhara Qimant conflict is not a different either. People from the Amhara and Qimant sides have been lauding their compliant on different media institution questioning the credibility and balance of the coverage of the conflict. As stated on the background, the interview of *Kes* (Priest) Yirga Teshage, Qimant Democratic Party Central Committee Member and Deputy Director for Public Relations, to LTV on 22 February, 2019 is a show case here. He said "We feel too sad to see the ignorance of media institutions, human rights advocators and freedom fighters of the country even far beyond the group which kills us."

In a statement published on October 2, 2019, the ruling party in the region, Amhara Democratic Party (ADP), also blamed different media institutions declaring that there are different media institutions established for the very purpose of destabilizing people living in the region.

The media need research based feedback to play its important role of seeking the truth and report it, figuring out the real scenario behind the conflict and thereby, contributing to peaceful resolution of conflicts. Researches that show how media institutions covered the conflict focusing on their selection of sources, ethicality of reports, efforts to seek the truth, efforts to cover the conflict from the grassroots, efforts to give balanced view for conflicting parties, efforts to contribute to peaceful resolution of the conflict help the media to reassess their prior work regarding covering conflicts and improve for the future.

In an effort to find out researches on conflict reporting, the researcher could find out researches that focus on both the process of the identity inquisition and the conflict itself. The focus of the research, however, is assessing how the media covered the conflict. Few researches have also been found on the area of conflict reporting in the Ethiopian context.

In this regard, Mulatu (2017) conducted a research on the title: *Ethiopian journalism from self-censoring to silence: a case of reporting on internal conflict*. The focus of his research was investigating the reaction of journalists in reporting the internal conflicts that have taken place from 2005 to 2013. The result showed that only a small number of internal conflict stories were reported in the selected newspapers and journalists were found to prefer refraining from reporting ethnic conflicts. This research is different from my research for its wider coverage of different conflicts that have taken place over the study period. Besides, the Amhara – Qimant conflict didn't take place over that period and thus, was not part of this research.

Similarly, Mulatu (2018) conducted a research on: *Community Radio in Ethiopia: A Discourse of Peace and Conflict Reporting*. This research focused on showing how community radio is a best platform in dealing with internal conflicts in particular and social issues in general in the marginalized societies that are vulnerable to various social

and political problems. This research is also basically different in its focus and the media platforms relayed on from my research.

Addisu also conducted a similar research on the title “*The Coverage of internal conflict between Oromia and Somali regional states on Ethiopian media: Comparative study of OBN and SRTV.*” This study unveiled that reveals that the internal conflict reporting in the selected media, specifically, OBN and SRTV was not only minimal in its number, but also did not use the right source of the incident. This research, however, is different from the current research in its media choice and the conflict itself.

This research has some differences compared to the previously conducted researches. On one hand, the researches carried out before didn’t focus on how the media cover the conflict, portrayal of causes, contribution of the media to either resolute or flare the conflict and ethical considerations of conflict reporting. In other words, the theme of this research is basically different from the previously conducted researches. Besides, the media platforms selected for this research are different from the previously conducted researches. This research focused on the print media comprising private, federal state owned and regional state owned newspapers. Thus, this research is supposed to add something new to fill or minimize the gaps seen on the previously conducted researches by assessing the media coverage of the Amhara – Qimant conflict by focusing on Bekur, Addis Zemen and Reporter newspapers.

### **1.3 Objectives of the research**

#### **1.3.1 General objective**

The general objective of this research is to assess the news coverage of Qimant- Amhara conflict, by focusing on Addis Zemen, Bekur and Reporter.

#### **1.3.2. Specific objectives**

This research has the following specific objectives.

1. To find out how the three newspapers portray the root causes of the conflict.
2. To asses where they have flared the conflict or contributed for peaceful resolution of the conflict

3. To examine how the three media outlets covered the news of the conflict in an ethical way

#### **1.4 Research questions**

This research raised and answered the following basic questions.

1. How do the three newspapers portray the root causes of the conflict?
2. What does the contribution of the three newspapers to flare or resolute the conflict looks like?
3. How the three newspapers do cover the news of the conflict from the ethical perspective?

#### **1.5 Significance of the research**

The researcher believes that the finding of this research will provide important information about the coverage of the Amhara - Qimant conflict. The primary beneficiaries of this study will be the media outlets under this study. The three newspapers will get an important feedback on how they do in covering the conflict. The finding will be an input for them to assess their limitations and strength, and hence improve their future works on similar issues. The comparative analysis will also help them to see how they fare in relation to the other contending media institutions.

Besides, the research will be an important input for policy makers working in the field of media and conflict resolution. The research will have contribution for such policy makers to deliver research based data that can be used for proper policy development.

Furthermore, the research is expected to play a pioneer role for other researchers who are interested to conduct researches in the area. Different researches can be carried out in the area and this research, thus, can be taken as an initiative for similar works.

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

This study focused on assessing the media coverage of the Amhara- Qimant conflict relaying on Bekur, Addis Zemen and Reporter. The study focused on finding out the root causes, how the three newspapers cover the conflict and their contribution to either resolute or flare the conflict.

Regarding to time frame, the researcher collected the news stories published from September, 2018 to December 2019 have been retrieved for analysis.

Methodically, this study employed the qualitative research approach where the researcher analyzed the reports of the three media houses on the coverage of the Amhara - Qimant conflict.

### **1.7 Limitation of the study**

This research has been challenged due to the outbreak of the Novel Corona virus, Covid-19 in different ways. The situation made things difficult to freely move and collect, search publications and contact people who have adequate information about the issue. These limitations for free movement resulted in the dalliance of this research as well.

Moreover, this research focuses on the three newspapers, namely: Bekur, Addis Zemen and Reporter. The finding would have been more inclusive if more media institutions were added.

### **1.8. Organization of the study**

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter deals with the Introduction: background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, the delimitations and limitation of the study. The second chapter presents a review of relevant literatures as well as the appropriate theoretical framework. Chapter three presents research design and methodology including the sources of data, the study population, sample size and sampling technique, procedures of data collection, data gathering tools, methodology of data analysis and ethical consideration. The fourth chapter dealt with data presentation, analysis and interpretation. The final chapter contains conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1. What is conflict?

There is no clear and all agreed definition given for conflict. As to Coser (1956), conflict is a clash between hostile and opposing elements, ideas, or forces. When we say that conflict exists, there should be at least two parts with opposing or polarized interests. Coser (1956) further explained conflict as a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources, in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure and eliminate the other (Coser 1956).

The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research HIIK (2005, p.2), on its turn defines conflict as:

the clashing of interests (positional differences) on national values of some duration and magnitude between, at least, two parties (organized groups, states, groups of states, organizations) that are determined to pursue their interests and win their cases.

On a different view, (Howard, 2004) viewed conflict as a situation where two or more individuals or groups try to pursue goals or ambitions which they believe they cannot share. With this view what makes conflict inevitable is the assumption of lack of peaceful opportunities to share goals and ambitions.

Conflict is also defined from communication perspective as “an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards and interference from other parties in achieving their goals (Hocker and Wilmot, 1985).

It is obvious that nature only supplies something, but it is at least not compatible with our interests and demands amid the unlimited nature of human interest. Cognizant of the unlimited demanding nature of humans, (Pani 2017, p.2) underscores the nature of conflict as:

Conflict occurs when two or more parties (individuals or groups) believe that their interests, goals or ambitions are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or take action that damages other parties' ability to pursue their interests. If the involved parties manage their disagreement or their conflict peacefully and constructively, conflict can be a positive process.

According to different scholars there is no clear boundary and demarcation where conflict can happen. It occurs at all levels of human interaction – in homes, institutions, and among groups (Pani, 2017; Coser, 1956). Conflict situations are inevitable in one's personal life, in organizations or even between nations (Omisore, 2014).

Conflict is also wrongly conceptualized with the presence of war and actions of violent opposition. As a rule, people see only the observable aspect of conflict – angry words, actions of opposition, etc. But this is only a small part of the conflict process. Although the most recognizable conflict situation is war, all conflicts, to varying degrees, tend to threaten group, local, national and/or international peace. To deal with conflict, we must understand its nature and character, which implies an identification of the salient issues at play and the adoption of appropriate methods (Omisore, 2014).

Howard, (2004, p.6) listed the enabling situations for conflict as:

Almost world-wide, it is predictable that conflict will arise where:

- Resources are scarce and not shared fairly, as in food, housing, jobs or land.
- There is little or no communication between the two groups.
- The groups have incorrect ideas and beliefs about each other.
- Unresolved grievances exist from the past.
- Power is unevenly distributed.

## **2.2. Ethnic conflict**

Different scholars who wrote about ethnic conflict shed different views. (Mohammadzadeh, 2016, p. 157) defined ethnic conflict as “any episode of sustained violent conflict in which national, ethnic, and religious or other communal minorities challenge governments to seek major changes in status.” For him ethnic conflict is the

means minorities raise to challenge the government for major changes in administration, equal opportunities and benefit.

Bekalu (n.d), on his turn underlines that ethnic conflict is a dispute between two or more ethnic/tribal groups caused by the politicization of tribal identity by self-seeking politicians (Bekalu, n.d). Similarly, (Dagnachew, 2018, pp. 71-72) defined ethnic conflict as: “a conflict where the goals of at least one conflict party are defined in (exclusively) ethnic terms, and in which the primary fault line of confrontation is one of ethnic distinction”. He further elaborates that: It can be violent or non-violent, covert or overt. Nonetheless, the conflict is an ethnic when: At least one of the conflict parties will explain its dissatisfaction in ethnic terms – that is, one party to the conflict will claim that its distinct ethnic identity is the reason why its members cannot realize their interest, why they do not have the same rights, or why their claims are not satisfied. Thus ethnic conflicts are a form of group conflict in which at least one of the parties interprets the conflict, its causes and potential remedies along an actually existing or perceived discriminating ethnic divide.

Ethnic conflict, however, is the result of feelings and sentiments in which members of a particular group develop as they interact and compare their positions with other ethnic groups (Dagnachew 2018:72).

Ethnicity results from interethnic relations, whenever two different groups or societies come into contact and establish various modes of spatial, political-economic, cultural and social relations. Throughout history, ethnic conflicts have long been a component of international politics (Esman, 2004).

Different scholars forwarded different suggestions about the root causes of ethnic conflict. Blagojevic (2013) as cited in (Abebaw, 2009) underscores that:

Ethnic conflict occurs when a particular set of factors and conditions converge: a major structural crisis; presence of historical memories of inter-ethnic grievances; institutional factors that promote ethnic intolerance; manipulation of historical memories by political entrepreneurs to evoke emotions such as fear,

resentment and hate toward the “other”; and an inter-ethnic competition over resources and rights.

To the contrary, many politicians explain the causes of the conflicts through “ancient hatreds,” feelings of hostility of one group towards another one based on past historical experience. The past can influence the perception of the present, especially when political situation of the present posit on past hostility. The argument is that people’s beliefs depend on whom they trust, and so most often they adopt the ideas of their own ethnic group using analogies to a current situation. Political elites can use analogies to attract supporters to their side (Tepfenhart, 2013).

Apart from that, as to Rydgren, as cited in (Tepfenhart, 2013), memories are simplified, and missing data are filled in with details that attempt to make sense of the present events. Memories will reflect common ideas in the group. There is also a tendency to glorify one’s own past, and omit the events that would not fit a positive image. This process creates distortions that alter reality.

Tepfenhart (2013) by citing Michael Brown, the author of “*Causes of Internal Conflict: An Overview*” identifies four major causes of ethnic conflict: weak states, political issues, economic issues and cultural issues.

Weak governments can create conditions favorable to the emergence of ethnic conflicts. Governments might become weak because of corruption, lack of aid, incompetence, criminal organizations such as drug cartels, epidemics, and a flood of immigrants and refugees (Tepfenhart, 2013).

The second major cause of ethnic conflict is related to the nature of the government. In countries with democratic governments, people have equal representation in politics. There is no place for discrimination and exclusionary ideologies. To the contrary, in countries with authoritarian regimes, not all ethnic groups are treated similarly. When oppression and discrimination are used by the government against one group, there is little doubt that it will lead to internal conflict.

Stating about the effect of economic crisis for ethnic conflict, Tepfenhart (2013 p, 91) stated “Economic issues have the potential to increase tension between groups. High unemployment, inflation, competition for resources, influx of immigrants, and discriminatory policies towards one particular group provide conditions for violent conflicts.”

The economic crisis creates instability, but also provides an opportunity for politicians to use ethnic hatred under the pretext that they are working for the benefit of the group they represent.

The sources referenced put it clear that the cause of ethnic conflict is not diversity. Stating his conclusion about the causes of ethnic conflict, (Tepfenhart, 2013, p 96) underscored it as:

In conclusion, ethnic conflict is not the result of diversity. Poverty and fear for the future provides a fertile ground for ethnic conflict. Politicians (from the far left and the far right) use scare tactics to achieve their personal goals. They are the true instigators. They will try through all means, including propaganda in the media, to rally people to their cause and to polarize the nation. As their message succeeds, tension increases between groups, communication between the groups fails, and fear dominates the minds of the people.

### **2.3. The concept of conflict reporting**

The media are autonomous institutions in preserving democratic culture in a country, where by, the culture of resolving conflicts in mutual and inclusive way become eminent. Pani (2017, p.7) stated that:

Free and independent media plays an important role in preserving democratic culture in a country. It contributes to forming public opinion and thus fulfills the most crucial purpose of the society. Journalists are given special privileges and opportunities for their research in order to then be able to properly accomplish this purpose. Nevertheless, these advantages come with a great responsibility against their future audience and in general, against the whole society. This

responsibility implies not only utter cautiousness when it comes to the matters of an extreme delicacy such as conflicts or information about capital markets and financial products but also the necessity of continuous advancement as a professional.

Different authors suggested different ideas about conflict and the role the media should play in covering it. However, the focuses of these works all share one similar point: Professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict. They seek to present accurate and impartial news. But it is often through good reporting that conflict is reduced.

In doing so, at the very beginning, journalists should make sure that conflicting groups, regardless of inequalities, have to believe they will be given attention if they meet the other side in negotiations. Good journalism encourages negotiation because the reporting is impartial and balanced. It gives attention to all sides. It encourages a balance of power for the purpose of hearing grievances and seeking solutions (Howard, 2008).

If journalists want to make a difference in reporting on conflict, then it's important for them to think about it more broadly. So while it is true that conflict all too often leads to violence, it should be clear that confrontations are not necessarily a given (Pani, 2017, p. 13). Stories of conflict are framed within binary categories of good vs. evil, or one ethnic race against another, thus leading to an over simplification of issues (Harris (2004).

#### **2.4. Journalism's contribution to resolute conflict**

Professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict. They seek to present accurate and impartial news. But it is often through good reporting that conflict is reduced.

Howard (2008, p 8-9) listed the following elements of conflict resolution that good journalism can deliver, automatically, as part of its daily work:

**Channeling communication:** The news media is often the most important and trusted channel of communication that exists between sides in a conflict. Sometimes the media is used by one side to broadcast intimidating messages. But other times, the parties speak to each other through the media or through specific journalists (Howard, 2008).

**Educating:** Each side needs to know about the other side's difficulty in moving towards reconciliation. Journalism which explores each side's particular difficulties, such as its politics or powerful interests can help educate the other side to avoid demands for simplistic and immediate solutions (Howard, 2008).

**Confidence-building:** Lack of trust is a major factor contributing to conflict. The media can reduce suspicion by digging into hot issues and revealing them so there are no secrets to worry about. Good journalism can also present news that shows resolution is possible by tipping examples from other places and by explaining local efforts at reconciliation.

**Correcting misperceptions:** By examining and reporting on the two sides' misunderstanding of each other, the media encourages disputing sides to revise their views and move closer to reducing conflict (Howard, 2008).

**Making them human:** Getting to know the other side, giving them names and faces, is an essential step. This is why negotiators put the two sides in the same room.

Good journalism also does this by putting real people from the scenario in the story and describing how the issue affects them (Howard, 2008).

**Identifying underlying interests:** In a conflict both sides need to understand the bottom-line interests of the other. Good reporting does this by asking tough questions and seeking out the real meaning of what leaders say. Good reporting also looks beyond the leaders' interests and seeks the larger groups' interest.

**Emotional outlet:** In conflict resolution, there must be outlets for each side to express their grievances or anger or they will explode in frustration and make things worse. The media can provide important outlets by allowing both sides to speak. Many disputes can be fought out in the media, instead of in the streets, and the conflict can be addressed before it turns violent (Howard, 2008).

**Framing the conflict:** In a conflict, describing the problem in a different way may reduce tension and launch negotiations. In good journalism, editors and reporters are always looking for a different angle, an alternative view, a new insight of the situation

which will still attract an audience to the same story. Good journalism can help reframe conflicts for the two sides (Howard, 2008).

**Face-saving, consensus-building:** When two parties try to resolve a conflict they must calm the fears of their supporters. By reporting what they say, the media allows leaders in a conflict to conduct face-saving and consensus-building, even reaching to refugees and exiles in far-away places (Howard, 2008).

**Solution-building:** In a conflict, both sides must eventually present specific proposals to respond to grievances. On a daily basis, good reporting does this by asking the disputing parties for their solutions instead of just repeating their rhetoric of grievances. Good journalism is a constant process of seeking solutions (Howard, 2008, p 8-9)

## **2.5. Ethical consideration of conflict reporting**

Ethics is one of the most important professional values in every profession. According to Baker and Perkins (2003), ethics is fundamental values that are a precondition for societies to function. Like any other professions, media and journalism has got its own ethical considerations.

Media ethics is concerned with the obligations of professional communicators for social and individual responsibility. It considers the impact on individuals and on societies of mediated messages (media content), corporate media business practices, and the actions of individual media practitioners (Baker and Perkins, 2003).

The realm of international media ethics is not easily defined, due in part to practical and philosophical relationships between law and ethics; differences in cultural expectations about ethical behavior, etiquette, morals, taste, and aesthetics; and each country or region's vein, about the appropriate role of the press.

Another essential point in talking about media ethics is the relationship between media ethics and media law. Media law and media ethics are two different concepts. While law, often is based in accepted moral rules or conduct, the focus of media ethics is different from that of media law. Law establishes rules for behavior that must be adhered to on the threat of government or civil sanction or opprobrium. Ethics constrains or inspires

behavior establishing principles and standards that ought to be adhered to because they are the right thing to do.

Different books put different ethical standards for the media, however, the most commonly used are the lists put by Society of Professional Journalists. According to Society of Professional Journalists (1996), seeking the truth and reporting it, minimizing harm, acting independently and becoming accountable are the cornerstones of ethical considerations of journalism.

As to the guideline, in seeking the truth and reporting it, the journalist should test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible. Besides, they need to diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrong doing. Identifying sources, questioning sources motive before promising anonymity, avoiding distortion of images and photos, examining their own cultural values, avoiding any type of stereotype, giving voice to the voiceless, supporting open exchange of views, distinguishing news from advertising, and distinguishing between advocacy and news reporting are among the important ethical consideration that underlay on seeking the truth and report it (Society of Professional Journalists, 1996).

The second important journalistic ethical consideration in conflict reporting is minimizing harm. Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect. Journalists should show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage, use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects, be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief, recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort, pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance. Besides, journalists need to recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy. They need to show good taste, avoid pandering to lurid curiosity, be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes, be judicious about

naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges, and balance a criminal suspects fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

Thirdly, acting independently is another important journalistic ethic in conflict reporting. Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know. Thus, journalists should avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived, remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility, refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity, disclose unavoidable conflicts, be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable, deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage, be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

Becoming accountable is another journalistic ethics, according to the Society for Professional Journalists. Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other. Journalists should clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct, encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media, admit mistakes and correct them promptly (Society of Professional Journalists, 1996).

## **2.6. Conflicts in Ethiopia**

History has it all that Ethiopia has passed through countless moments of intrastate and interstate conflicts. These conflicts, and the wars caused by them have made the people suffer from the consequences of the destruction and havoc. The nation is still suffering from sporadic intrastate conflicts which are mostly caused by ethnic, religious, border and resource rivalries in structurally divided regions and districts (Mulatu, 2017).

Ethiopia's pre 1991 inter-ethnic conflict problems were rooted in the unjust social, political, economic, cultural as well as religious inter-ethnic relations which resulted from ethnic domination in the name of homogenous state formation. However, the post 1991 Ethiopian inter-ethnic relations are based on the policy of rectifying the unjust historical relations that existed among the different ethnic groups (Teferi, 2012).

The outbreak of internal conflicts and political violence in various parts of the country has become frequent, especially after the coming to power of the new government in 1991 (Mulatu, 2017). Although the causes, nature, magnitude, and complexities of the conflicts vary from region to region, all regional states in Ethiopia have been experiencing some sort of violent ethnic conflicts (iDMC, 2009).

Due to all these incidents, for instance, Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIC) listed Ethiopia among the first top five African countries where many conflicts and serious tensions were registered, and most of which remained on a highly violent level (HIIC, 2010).

The intra conflict hasn't showed any form of improvement even after the reformist Prime Minister Abiy come to power. The Institute for Security Studies /ISS/ (2019) noted that even if Ethiopia's political liberalization since April 2018 gave hope to many that the country was moving towards a better future than its autocratic past, ethnic conflicts have rocked in different parts of Ethiopia. As to ISS (2019), over a thousand people have died, with close to three million displaced. Ethiopia had the highest number of internally displaced people in the world in 2018 (ISS, 2019). ISS argues that the recent upswing in ethnic violence is mainly due to a sharp rise in contending ethno-nationalisms in the context of perceived party and state fragility, i.e., incoherence and brittleness (ISS, 2019).

## **2.7. The conflict between Amhara and Qimant**

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic state endowed with diversified culture, language, faith, religion and long history of statehood. There were a number of cases of sporadic ethnic tension and ethnic conflicts happening in the country. Among these conflicts is the conflict between Amhara and Qimant in West Gondar of Amhara region.

The Qimant identity quest is believed to start after the declaration of the result of the 2007 Population and Housing Census, which stated as there is no Qimant Community and labeled them as 'others'. "Unfortunately, and to the disadvantage of the Qimant, by the 2007 Population and Housing Census, they were not counted as a separate ethnic group while it did count eighty five ethnic groups (Belay, 2010: 10).

Belay (2010) states that the declaration of the result of the 2007 Population and Housing Census accelerated the pace of the movement of the people. In May 2009, the movement established 'Provisional Committee of Qimant Identity and Self-Governance Claims Council.

Zinabu (2016, p.42) by his turn stated that:

Qimant peoples movement for the right to recognition and self-administration is started since the 2007 population and housing census. This is due to the fact that the 2007 population and housing census has explicitly omitted/erase the name of Qimant from the list of nations, nationalities and peoples of the country, and the code which was given for Qimant peoples in former censuses and name of "Qimant" is substituted by "others".

The committee raised the question of Qimant identity to the House of Federation. With regard to the request of the Qimant community; the House of Federation started to study the case through organized task force but; while the House was deliberating the result of the research conducted by the task force; the Amhara regional state government officials showed willingness to see the claim again and the House allowed them (Zinabu, 2016).

The regional state made its decision to address the question which was later opposed by the committee for its failure to participate them. And this point marked for the conflict between Amhara and Qimant people. The Qimant quest for autonomy has met with hurdles from the regional government since 2007, and the contentions sometimes resulted in violence (ISS, 2019)

When we come to the conflict that happen during the delimitation of this study, from November 2018 onwards, different armed conflicts have taken place and claimed the lives of civilians. According to Protection Cluster Ethiopia, the conflict re-emerged starting in November 2018, between the Amhara and the Qimant communities which led to displacements in the western and central parts of the Amhara region.

Protection Cluster Ethiopia (2009, p. 2) reported the scenario as:

Conflict followed by displacement started in Western and Central parts of Gondar around end of 2018 and the situation escalated in 2019. The root cause of the conflict in 2018 was reported to be the Qimant community's claim to include three kebeles in Metema Woreda of West Gondar under the existing 69 Qimant kebeles. According to the various local authorities, claims of self-determination began a few years back which eventually led to placing 69 kebeles under Qimant administration. The Qimant community again appealed to the local government to be entitled to additional three kebeles namely Meqa, Lynecha and Gubayetro. The three claimed kebeles are however allegedly inhabited by both Amharas and Qimant community. The government has not yet ruled in favor of this request which led to conflict that caused the current displacement.

The COI also states that tensions between ethnic Qimant and Amhara in North Gondar zone have been growing “since mid-2018 related to claims for self-administration by ethnic Qimants”. Violence and displacement occurred particularly since November 2018.

As to the COI report, between 5th and 8th December 2018 there were clashes between ethnic Amhara and ethnic Qimant communities in Central Gondar zone of Amhara regional state. The clashes “resulted in the burning of 480 houses and displacement of scores of people”. Deadly clashes between Amhara ethnic group and Qimant activists occurred in recent months in different parts of Amhara regional state, where several people were killed (Xinhua, 20 December 2018).

Institute for Social Security /ISS/ (2019) also noted that a series of clashes between Qimant activists and regional security forces led to the killing and jailing of hundreds of people and destruction of property, including the burning of houses. Thousands were displaced.

## **2.8. Overview of Studies Related to Conflict Reporting in Ethiopian media**

Conflict studies are a burgeoning new field of academic research, reflecting the persistence of communal disputes and violent confrontations in the postmodern world. In the past decade or so, students of the Horn of Africa and of Ethiopia in

particular, could not escape this new trend of conflict studies (Abbinik, 2016). In an effort to assess some of the local researches on conflict reporting, the researcher has found a handful of researches.

Mulatu (2017) conducted a research on the title: *Ethiopian journalism from self-censoring to silence: a case of reporting on internal conflict*. The focus of his research was investigating the reaction of journalists in reporting the internal conflicts that have taken place from 2005 to 2013. The result showed that only a small number of internal conflict stories were reported in the selected newspapers and journalists were found to prefer refraining from reporting ethnic conflicts.

Addisu (2019) also conducted a similar research on the title “*The Coverage of internal conflict between Oromia and Somali regional states on Ethiopian media: Comparative study of OBN and SRTV*” as an MA thesis. This study unveiled that the internal conflict reporting in the selected media, specifically, OBN and SRTV was not only minimal in its number, but also did not use the right source of the incident. This research, however, is different from the current research in its media choice and the conflict itself.

Similarly, Mulatu (2018) conducted a research on: *Community Radio in Ethiopia: A Discourse of Peace and Conflict Reporting*. This research focused on showing how community radio is a best platform in dealing with internal conflicts in particular and social issues in general in the marginalized societies that are vulnerable to various social and political problems.

Another MA thesis is conducted on the title: *Analysis on media framing of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia (from April 2- October 2, 2018): The Ethiopian herald and the Reporter newspapers in focus* by Getnet (2019). Annihilation, the attribution of responsibility, incapability of government officials and law and order, crime and justice has been found as conflict frames in this study. Besides, government offices were highly used as sources by The Ethiopian Herald while The Reporter mostly uses victims, government officials and academics so as to cross-check the credibility of the source. In general, the researches conducted in the area of conflict reporting shows that, a lot is needed from the media to

either minimize conditions that lead to conflict or contribute for the peaceful resolution of intra conflicts.

Another research which is close to this research was conducted by Melkamu (2020) on the title: *The Framing of Interethnic Conflict: the case of the Amhara- Qimant Conflict in Amhara and Tigray Regional Television Companies*. In relation to attribution, the research unveiled that On ATV, half of the stories used government officials as a source, while common people were the second most attributed source. Opinion leaders, opposition parties, victims, and experts were rarely attributed. TTV, on its side, used common people even more, with government officials ranked second, making up one-fourth of the sources.

## **2.8. Framing Theory**

Entman (1993; 2004), one of the founders and father of framing, defined the term as, the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation.

In his view, framing is a process which implies, first and foremost, selection and salience. The verb ‘to frame’ is thus defined as: to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicative text. Media framing accordingly points to the way in which issues are selected and accentuated in and by the media. Entman (2004) further elaborated the term as: Fully developed frames typically perform four functions: problem definition, causal analysis, moral judgment, and remedy promotion (Entman, 1993, 2004). Framing works to shape and alter audience members’ interpretations and preferences through priming. That is, frames introduce or raise the salience or apparent importance of certain ideas, activating schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way (Entman, 2007).

The framing and priming literatures suggest that all external influence over ‘what people think’ derives from telling them ‘what to think about’. When the media shape what people think about, they must logically influence what people think – i.e. their attitudes as just defined. The influence of elites is crucial because elites monitor public attitudes because they want people to behave in ways that favor or passively acquiesce in elite

choices. Inducing people to think (and behave) as desired requires elites to select some things to tell them about and others not to tell them, and embedding cues on how this little narrative coheres with their prior attitudes and values. Since power is the ability to get others to act as one wants and assuming coercion isn't an option, exerting power to affect behavior in a democracy requires framing – ‘telling people what to think about’ – in order to influence the attitudes that shape their behavior (Entman, 2010)

The two most pertinent but often conflated senses of the term are content bias and decision-making bias. Content bias refers to consistently slanted framing of mediated communication that promotes the success of a specific interest, party or ideology in competitions to control government power. To establish the existence of content biases, we would have to demonstrate patterns of slant that regularly promote support for some interests or actors who seek power – and disapproval of their opponents. To accord with conventional (if under-theorized) usage of the term, scholars should employ the term media bias only when research demonstrates that slant holds over time, and pervades the most influential media outlets. Under this definition, biased content assists such entities as political parties or interest groups in consistently persuading people to accept interpretations helpful to the favored actor for some significant period.

The second common use of the term bias concerns decision-making: the influence of journalists' belief systems on the texts they produce. Critics suggest that reporters and editors at the major media allow their personal ideologies to guide their news decisions. Journalists themselves tend to deny such bias. For them, there is such thing in their work as the only rely to the journalistic ethics. Yet every individual who thinks, every organization that processes information, must employ short-cut decision rules. Call them heuristics rather than biases, but in any case they help to ‘tame the information tide’. The media's decision making biases guide information processing by individual journalists and, manifested as tacit norms and routines, by news organizations (Entman, 2010).

According to de Vreese (2005) Framing consists of distinct stages: frame-building, frame-setting and individual and societal level consequences of framing de Vreese, (2005) Frame-building is all about the factors that influence the structural qualities of

news frames. Factors internal to journalism determine how journalists and news organizations frame issues. Equally important, however, are factors external to journalism. The frame-building process takes place in a continuous interaction between journalists and elites and social movements. The outcomes of the frame building process are the frames manifest in the text.

Frame-setting refers to the interaction between media frames and individuals' prior knowledge and predispositions. Frames in the news may affect learning, interpretation, and evaluation of issues and events. This part of the framing process has been investigated most elaborately, often with the goal to explore the extent to which and under what circumstances audiences reflect and mirror frames made available to them in, for example, the news.

The consequences of framing can be conceived on the individual and the societal level. An individual level consequence may be altered attitudes about an issue based on exposure to certain frames. On the societal level, frames may contribute to shaping social level processes such as political socialization, decision-making, and collective actions.

Cappella and Jamieson as cited by de Vreese (2005) state that considering any production feature of verbal or visual texts as a candidate for news frames is a too broad view. They suggest four criteria that a frame must meet. First, a news frame must have identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics. Second, it should be commonly observed in journalistic practice. Third, it must be possible to distinguish the frame reliably from other frames. Fourth, a frame must have representational validity (i.e. be recognized by others) and not be merely a judgment of a researcher's imagination

The most comprehensive empirical approach is offered by Tankard as cited by de Vreese, (2005) who suggests a list of 11 framing mechanism or focal points for identifying and measuring news frames:

1. Headlines
2. Subheads
3. Photos

4. Photo captions
5. Leads
6. Source selection
7. Quotes selection
8. Pull quotes
9. Logos
10. Statistics and charts, and
11. Concluding statements and paragraphs

De Vreese (2005) identified two types of frames: Issue-specific news frames and generic frames. Certain frames are pertinent only to specific topics or events. Such frames may be labeled issue-specific frames. Issue specific frame provide details about the issue at hand. In issue specific frame, the researcher can organize concept by highlighting different frame terms and then identifying the larger frames through a process they called “frame mapping” (Miller, Andsager, and Riechert, 1998). Issue-specific frames mean every issue can have different issue-specific frames (Matthes, 2009). Other frames transcend thematic limitations and can be identified in relation to different topics, some even over time and in different cultural contexts. These frames can be labeled generic frames (de Vreese, 2005). Using generic framing themes, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) measured five frames that have been prevalent in literature: conflict, attribution of responsibility, economic, human interest, and morality. While issue-specific frames allow for “great specificity and detail,” generic frames offer a systematic platform for comparison across issues, frames, and topics (Kozman, 2017).

Coverage of the Amhara – Qimant conflicts is, as stated earlier, the focus of this research. The thematic delimitation of this research is also assessing how the three newspapers covered the conflict. Besides, the conflict frame was used in this research. Thus, this research used the issue specific frame.

De Vreese 2005, citing Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), identified five news frames: ‘conflict’, ‘human interest’, ‘attribution of responsibility’, ‘morality’ and ‘economic consequences’. The conflict frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups,

institutions or countries. The human interest frame brings a human face, an individual's story, or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue or problem. The responsibility frame presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for causing or solving to either the government or to an individual or group. The morality frame interprets an event or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions. The economic consequences frame, finally, presents an event, problem or issue in terms of the economic consequences it will have on an individual, group, institution, region or country. This study focus on the media coverage of the Amhara - Qimant conflict and thus, the conflict frame will be used thoroughly. The issue is already a specified one, that is conflict coverage and the focus of the research is to find out the three newspapers coverage of the Amhara Qimant conflict was in line with the principles of conflict reporting using different frames.

Entman (2010) emphasize that systematic coding of words and phrases should be part of any comprehensive analysis of media frames. To them, the testing of inter coder reliability is an essential feature of systematic framing research. The present study, however, will rely to a greater degree on a qualitative approach, not least because a detailed analysis of words and expressions is only moderately likely to identify the most salient frames in the news stories of the three media houses.

## **2.8. Framing theory and conflict reporting**

Mass media have long been considered to provide the primary framework through which individuals experience and make sense of the society (Entman, 2004). In the world of journalism the theory of framing finds strong roots in the principles of the theory of mediation. This theory states that “media” have the role of a mediator between man and society, between the outside world and the audience. Framing makes the mediation process operational since it provides the properties, peculiarities and own ways to turn an event into a news. Therefore, framing responds to the question on how this mediation is accomplished between the fact and the audience, and how the making of information content is made (Gavilan, 2016).

Framing is evident in conflict reporting. Framing theory can help to understand the influence of media on shaping public opinion and on social construction of reality (Myant, 2019). As the public relies on media to learn about a conflict, media can influence public opinion and nature of the debate related to the conflict resulting in influencing peace building process.

It is important to clarify that the role of mediators between reality and individuals is not reduced to a simple transmission of messages, but it is important to consider that media messages are created when making news. Media is not just a simple link, because in the communicative process, it actually, has an influence on the logics and format of the media over the contents. This means that when creating a new, the fact itself goes through a process of filtration in order to become a new. As Walter Lippmann (1950) said media transform the dimensions of events in informative products that pass through a series of filters until they reach the audience”.

The way issues are framed in the news can have important implications for public understanding and evaluation of issues, institutions and political actors. Wolfsfeld (2001) also argues that media can play a destructive or constructive role in peace processes according to which news frame that they adopt in conflict reporting.

Framing has been defined differently in different contexts. However, the following definition by Entman (1993, pp. 52-53) best states the relationship between Framing and conflict reporting.

“Frames have at least four locations in the communication process: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. Communicators make conscious or unconscious framing judgments in deciding what to say, guided by frames (often called schemata) that organize their belief systems. The text contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments. The frames that guide the receiver's thinking and conclusion may or may not reflect the frames in the text and the framing intention of the communicator. The culture is the stock of commonly invoked frames; in fact, culture might be defined as the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the

discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping. Framing in all four locations includes similar functions: selection and highlighting, and use of the highlighted elements to construct an argument about problems and their causation, evaluation, and/or solution.

The meaning of the events is given by the journalist through the news, because taken in itself an event has no significance; it is the imposition of a frame of other ordered events that allows recognition of facts and the attribution of significance (Tuchman 1978). Through framing events are constructed, discourses are structured and meanings are developed.

Conflict reporting uses a frame since it analyses a conflict and it includes: definition of a problem, diagnosis of causes, moral judgment and the suggestion for its resolution (Gavilan, 2011). Frame analysis is a way to investigate the coverage of conflict (D'Angelo, 2002; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001).

Framing theory offers the basis for understanding how conflict is reported in newspapers (Carpenter, 2007) because according to de Vreese (2005), a frame is an emphasis in salience of various aspects of an issue such as conflict. Similarly, Entman (1993) proposes that where framing is processed, the narration tends to focus on how the problem is reported, how the causes are identified, what moral judgment is given, and which solutions and remedies are suggested. These important concepts are the basic question of this research. Thus, the interpretation made to answer the basic questions focuses on finding out how framing has been used in portraying the root causes of the conflict, the contribution of the media to either resolute the conflict or flare it and the ethical conditions in reporting the conflict.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

### **3.1 Research methodology and design**

#### **3.1.1. Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies**

There are two approaches to gathering research information for analysis that is, the Positivist, which collects numbers for its data analysis and the Naturalist that uses words to describe or analyze a particular group or situation carefully observe for a span of time. Since the Positivist often measures how many, how often, to what percentage or proportion, it is said to be using a Quantitative way of assembling its data whereas the Naturalistic goes by its work by using the Qualitative, really appreciate meanings, because, not all data can be represented in figures, for example, people's culture, experiences, relationships, cannot be easily calculated, unless sometimes they are specially coded.

Research using qualitative content analysis focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text. Interpretation of text for implicit and explicit meaning is the primary goal. Hsiu & Sarah (2005)

Zhang and Wildemuth (n.d) citing Mayring further defined qualitative content analysis as “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification” (Zhang & Wildemuth, n.d: 25). This research, thus, used qualitative content analysis method. The news stories of the three newspapers about the conflict have qualitatively been analyzed. The sources of news stories, themes, portrayal of causes of the conflict, contribution of the news stories to resolute or flare the conflict and ethicality of their reporting has been emphasized in qualitative content analysis.

#### **3.1.2. Research Design**

According to Vaus (1999), Research design refers to the overall strategy chosen to integrate the different components of a study in a coherent and logical way, thereby ensuring that the work effectively addresses the research problem.

This study employs qualitative content analysis design where the news stories of the three newspapers on the conflict are qualitatively analyzed. The researcher analyzed the reports of the three media houses on the coverage of the Amhara - Qimant conflict using qualitative content analysis method, which is specifically called conventional content analysis method.

## **3.2. Data sources and collection mechanisms**

### **3.2.1. Sources of data**

A scientific research requires information that need to be collected and analyzed, which is called datum. The data is collected from secondary sources or primary sources, which have their own importance to conduct a valid and reliable research according to the nature of the study.

#### **3.2.1.1 Secondary sources**

Secondary sources of data are sources that give the researcher second hand information, which is not directly gathered from informants. The information can be gathered from an already readymade information sources such as books, periodicals, scientific papers presented at workshops, symposiums, orders, policies, strategies and plans. This research assessed and used the literary works that have already been disseminated about the issue as a secondary data. The assessment made is used to give supportive datum to answer the basic research questions raised. Research questions related to the contribution of the media to resolute or flare conflict, and ethicality of the media in reporting the conflict have been answered based both on the assessed literary works and the news stories collected and analyzed. What has been advised and set as guideline by scholars about these issues was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the news stories in implementing the advices and the guidelines.

#### **3.2.1.2. Primary sources**

Primary source of data are sources where firsthand information is gathered directly from the informants. The data which are gathered from primary sources is important because it gives reliable information from the horse's mouth. Information gathered through key

informant interview, focus group discussion, news stories and questioner is a primary data. As to this research, the news stories of the three newspapers on the conflict were used as primary sources of data.

### **3.2.2. Data collection mechanisms**

#### **3.2.2.1. Content retrieval**

Content retrieval is used as data collection mechanism for this research. Since the focus of the research is assessing the media coverage of the Amhara – Qimant conflict by relying on Addis Zemen, Reporter and Bekur newspapers, the news stories of the three newspapers is found to be an essential data for the research.

As stated earlier, the news stories reported about the Amhara – Qimant conflict by the three newspapers from September, 2018 to December 2019 have been retrieved for analysis. This time is selected because; it is under this time frame when an armed conflict which claims the lives of innocent civilians and massive destruction of property took place.

Luckily, all the three newspapers have official archives where they upload all their products. Thus, the news stories that have been produced focusing on the Amhara - Qimant conflict have been downloaded. A total of 41 stories (14 from Addis Zemen, 15 from Reporter and 12 from Bekur) have been retrieved. Since the study applies a qualitative approach and the news stories about the issue have all been taken, the number of stories picked from each medium is not necessarily equal. After retrieval, the media products have been systematically analyzed using conventional content analysis method.

Besides, the researches and other literary works which are related to the Amhara – Qimant conflict have been used as an important datum for the research. Thus, these literary works have been used thoroughly in this research.

### **3.3. Samples and Sampling Techniques**

Ethiopia has a number of media outlets that operate nationwide or in a specified area. Taking the works of all these media outlets for research consumption is difficult due to

the massive production each medium disseminate and unmanageable number of the media outlets. Thus, it is important to select target media outlets as samples.

Purposive sampling (also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling) is a sampling technique in which researcher relies on his or her own judgment and decision when choosing members of population to participate in the study.

Purposive sampling is one of the non-probability sampling methods and it occurs when elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. In purposive sampling personal judgment needs to be used to choose cases that help answer research questions or achieve research objectives. The samples are chosen in a way to answer research questions or prove proposed hypothesis.

Therefore, the three newspapers were purposively selected. Addis Zemen was selected because it is a state owned newspaper with relatively wider coverage of distribution and national representation. Bekur is the voice of the Amhara National Regional State where the Amhara-Qimant conflict has happened.

Reporter is one of the private newspapers with relatively longer period of service and wider coverage. These three media institutions are chosen in a sense that they can give a complete image of the scenario.

It is important to note that the media produces massive volumes of text, sounds and images. However for conceptual and more specifically for practical reasons therefore content analysis must start with selection and narrowing down to the type of coverage to be analyzed. Hence, the media products which focus on the Amhara- Qimant conflict were selectively retrieved and analyzed. As to the time frame, the period from September, 2018 to December 2019 is purposively selected. This time is selected because, it is under this time frame when an armed conflict which claims the lives of innocent civilians and massive destruction of property took place.

### **3.4 Data analysis Tools and Techniques**

Qualitative content analysis involves a process designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretation. However, the

interference as well as the interpretation should be neutral and scientific. Zhang and Wildemuth (2016)

Qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings (Weber, 1990 cited by Zhang and Wildemuth). These categories can represent either explicit communication or inferred communication. The goal of content analysis is “to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, cited by Satu Elo & Helvi Kynga’s p. 314). In this article, qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.

Hsieh & Shannon (2005) identified three different kinds of qualitative content analysis methods. The first is conventional qualitative content analysis, in which coding categories are derived directly from the raw data. Conventional content analysis is generally used with a study design whose aim is to describe a phenomenon, in this case the coverage of the Amhara – Qimant conflict of the three newspapers. This type of design is usually appropriate when research literature on a phenomenon is limited. Researchers avoid using preconceived categories Kondracki & Wellman, (2002), instead allowing the categories and names for categories to flow from the data. The second approach is directed content analysis, in which initial coding starts with a theory or relevant research findings. The researcher allows themes to come out from the data while analyzing and interpreting. The purpose of this approach usually is to validate or extend a conceptual framework or theory. The third approach is summative content analysis, which starts with the counting of words or manifest content, then extends the analysis to include latent meanings and themes. This approach seems quantitative in the early stages, but its goal is to explore the usage of the words/indicators in an inductive manner.

Taking the nature of the research, the reviewed literatures and collected data, this research uses conventional content analysis method. The coding of the categories are derived based on the contents of the raw data. The news stories are categorized and coded based on the content they carried after collected. Conventional content analysis is an

ideal analysis method to analyze a given phenomenon, and that is why it is found to be important to be used to explore how the three newspapers reported the Amhara – Qimant conflict.

This study is qualitative in nature. However, with an interest in showing the scope of the stories and their nature, the study includes brief quantitative information. The quantitative data include how many stories were reviewed, the sources of the news stores, events of news stories and categorical coding of stories.

In this research, thus, the news stories from the three newspapers are explored and analyzed. The conventional content analysis method is used to analyze the news stories of the newspapers. As to Sarah & Shannon (2005), conventional qualitative content analysis is an analysis method in which coding categories are derived directly from the raw data.

Conventional content analysis is generally used with a study design whose aim is to explore a phenomenon, in this case the coverage of the Amhara - Qimant conflict among the three newspapers.

### **3.5. Codes**

To Saldana (1988), in qualitative inquiry, coding is using a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence- capturing and or evocative attribute for a portion language-based or visual data (Saldana 1988: 3). This study came up with a researcher generated construct that symbolizes or translates data and attributes meaning to individual datum for purpose of pattern detection, categorization, among other analytical processes.

Since this research used the conventional content analysis, one of the qualitative content analysis methods which allows coding of categories based on the contents of the raw data, the codes have been done based on the contents of the news stories by the researcher. As clearly stated by Sarah & Shannon (2005) data analysis starts with reading all data repeatedly to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the whole as one would read a novel. Then, data are read word by word to derive codes by first highlighting the exact words from the text that appear to capture key thoughts or concepts. Next, the

researcher approaches the text by making notes of his or her first impressions, thoughts, and initial analysis. As this process continues, labels for codes emerge that are reflective of more than one key thought. These often come directly from the text and are then become the initial coding scheme. Codes then are sorted into categories based on how different codes are related and linked.

Regarding this research, the researcher has passed through multiple stages of content categorizations to ensure effective coding. The news stories have been read and read to categorize them based on sub themes. Finally, the coding units to be used for this research have been determined. The coding units to be used are theme, events of news stories and sources of news stories. As to the theme, the researcher systematically categorized the news stories under the following basic themes and sub themes.

**A. Portrayal of root causes of the conflict**

1. Vested interest of Anti-peace forces: news stories under this category blame ‘anti-peace forces for the conflict between Amhara and Qimant.
2. Representatives of the Qimant Committee: news stories under this category portray the Qimant Identity Committee for the conflict between the people as a cause of the conflict.
3. TPLF: news stories under this category portray TPLF as the root cause of the conflict
4. Conflict between the two ethnics: news stories under this category portray the Amhara and Qimant ethnics as the root cause of the conflict

**B. Role of media to resolute/ flare the conflict**

1. Focus on unity vs. focus on differences: news stories under this category focus on either promoting the oneness of the two people, or to the contrary, their differences.
2. Promoting peaceful discussion vs. aggravating armed struggles: news stories under this category stress either on the essence to peaceful discussion or, to the contrary the need to fight and win in armed struggle.

3. Avoiding blames Vs. Blaming the parties: news stories under this category focus on either blaming one party while backing the counterfeit or, to the contrary, framing the conflict as something which is not needed by the two parties.
4. Prioritizing humanity vs. ignorance of humanity: News stories which are categorized here prioritize the need to ceasefire and protect the residents, or to the contrary, focus on the essence of getting response for questions with even sacrifice.

### **C. Ethicality of the media**

1. Balance: News stories under this category entertain balanced viewpoints of the conflicting groups.
2. Seeking the truth: news stories under this category assess the reality from the grassroots by looking beyond the words of officials.
3. Minimizing harm: News stories categorized here focus on minimizing the tension.
4. Objectivity: News stories under this category didn't incline to the subjective interest of the media institutions or journalists.

### **3.6 Validity and reliability**

To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher used primary and secondary data to explore the media coverage of the Amhara – Qimant conflict. As to the primary sources (news stories of the three newspapers about the conflict) the researcher passed through multiple of filtration stages to collect all the news stories that focus on the Amhara – Qimant conflict. Besides, the researcher assessed different literary works to ensure the reliability of the findings.

### **3.6 Ethical consideration**

The data used for this research is collected through content retrieval of the news stories of the three newspapers about the conflict and assessment of literary works related to the topic. Here, the news stories which have been reported on the issue over the delimited period have all been retrieved and used for the interpretation. No news story has been added or reduced intentionally.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents and discusses the data collected from primary and secondary sources. As a research that focus on assessing how the media covered a conflict, qualitative content analysis (the conventional content analysis method particularly) has been used as a research method. Thus, this chapter will try to present the news stories retrieved from the archives of the three media institutions and discuss these findings qualitatively.

### **4.2. Scope of stories and their nature**

As stated earlier, though this research is qualitative in nature, some quantitative data is given with an interest in showing the scope of the stories and their nature, the study includes brief quantitative information. This part, thus, aimed at giving general information about the news stories gathered from the three newspapers. The quantitative data include how many stories were reviewed, the sources of the news stores and events of news stories.

#### **4.2.1. Number of news stories about the conflict**

##### *Almost equal number of news stories was reported by the three newspapers*

The three newspapers reported a total of 41 news stories about the conflict during this research time frame. The number of news stories reported was found almost equal, with Reporter reporting 15 news stories (36.5%), and Bekur reporting 12 news stories (29.26%) while Addis Zemen reported 14 news stories (34.14%). This almost equal reportage of news stories is found to be related to the fact that the three newspapers' dependency to events to report on the conflict. As could be seen on the next part of the discussion, the news stories of the three newspapers were found completely relaying on events.

As a regional state's voice, Bekur was expected to give due emphasis for the issue. However, it reported the least news stories compared to the other two newspapers. This

researcher argues that its refrainment is related to its ownership. Bekur is owned by ANRS, the region where this conflict takes place. As a result, its coverage was restricted to the conferences, official state stances, press conferences and press releases on the conflict by the regional state. Thus, the newspaper restricted itself to such events, even though its proximity gives the chance to cover the issue better than the others.

State owned media institutions loyalty to the state has been confirmed by different scholars' research works. SHEMELES (2000) for example, found that: *"journalists in the state-owned print medium were then let loose to pursue their traditional function, which they did with great vigor and dedication: praising and glorifying the government, at times beyond reasonable proportions, and condemning and castigating actions of previous governments as well as those of current political opponents of the regime in power"* (SHEMELES, 2000, p.21).

Similarly, Skejerdal (2012) attributes polarization of the private media and state owned media where the former tend to support oppositions while the later shows steady support to the government (Skejerdal, 2012). Thus, we can conclude that Bekur's proximity to cover more news stories on the conflict is curbed due to its firm loyalty to the state (and their official briefings) about the conflict.

#### **4.2.2. Project news Vs. event based news**

##### ***Most of the news stories were event based.***

In media institutions we have two kinds of news stories; project news (planned news) and event based news stories. Project news are planned news stories which are planned by the reporter or the journalist and prepared in a detailed way. These kinds of stories require exclusive interviews, gathering prior information and giving detail information on the issue. Such news stories are more valuable than the event based ones since they can only be available on that particular media institution.

Event based news stories are stories that came to the media institution through media adversaries and which are also open to other interested media institutions. Press conference, press release, conferences, government stances and exhibitions are event

based stories. The media institutions are not expected to plan for the story instead they simply go or receive the information and prepare the news story.

In this regard most of the news stories of the three newspapers were found to be event based news stories, which have been prepared based on press releases, press conferences, conferences and governmental briefings.

Eight of Addis Zemen's news stories were reports taken from meetings, and press conferences held by government officials about the conflict. The six exclusive interviews were also interviews held with government officials following press conferences and meetings about the conflict.

Similarly, thirteen news stories of Reporter were event based stories though three of them tried to entertain the voices of residents about the conference or meeting. However, although the reports tried to entertain the voices of residents' anonymous sources such as 'eye witnesses', 'sources close to the scenario' and 'residents close to the scenario' have been used. In journalism, it is obvious that use of anonymous sources weakens the credibility of the information. Overall, comparatively, reporter was found better in trying to entertain the voice of residents in their news stories.

Bekur's eight stories on the conflict were event based stories that were taken from press conferences and meetings. As a regional newspaper proximate to the conflicting bodies, it was expected to produce massive project news exploiting what has been happening and what has to be done from the grassroots.

It is obvious that conflicts attract news. As the novel expression says 'where it bleeds, it leads', the media could have taken the opportunity to produce massive news stories beyond officials' information on the issue. However, the three newspapers didn't go further to seek what has been happening on the ground.

Here one could argue that events are the major sources of news stories and media should not be criticized for using events. However, the media is expected to cross check the trustworthiness of the information by interviewing residents, parties involved and eye

witnesses. Besides, as a conflict which has been claiming lives and cause massive destruction, the media were expected to get deep through planned news stories.

The three newspapers failure to prepare planned and detailed news stories is related to frustration of journalists and media institutions to report on internal conflicts on themselves. Media institutions or journalist do not want to offend concerned government officials by giving detailed and planned coverage which may unveil something different from the frames of these officials. Mulatu (2017) also reached a corroborative finding in his research entitled: *Ethiopian journalism from self-censoring to silence: a case of reporting on internal conflict*. In his research, marginalizing internal conflict has been profoundly identified in reporting local conflict by the local newspapers (Mulatu, 2017).

#### **4.2.3. Sources of news stories**

***Government officials have been frequently attributed.***

Sources are the informants that media institutions cite in reporting on different issues. Media institutions use concerned governmental authorities, experts, eye witness, official documents, observation and residents as their sources of information. The source of information highly affects the credibility, reliability, balance and trustworthiness of the news story. Experts mostly advise media institutions to select reliable sources from the different parties so as to achieve the aforementioned qualities of news. Besides, equal representation of sources has of vital importance for credibility and fairness.

In this regard, the three newspapers showed massive professional limitations. The sources attributed in all news stories were found to be government officials of the federal and regional states. Though the conflict was taking place in North and Central Gondar, the sources attributed were officials from either Bahir Dar, capital of the regional state, or Addis Ababa, capital of the federal government.

The ANRS Peace and Security Office, ANRS GCAO, Federal Disaster Prevention and Readiness Office, Ministry of Defense, House of Federation and North Gondar Zonal Administration officers have been attributed as sources of the news stories.

Addis Zemen used government officials alone as sources. Apart from taking officials to cite for their news, they didn't try to crosscheck the fact from residents of conflicting groups. Their sources range from the Amhara National Regional State's Peace and Security Bureau to the House of Federation. However, none of their news stories cited any resident from the conflicting parties. Most of the news stories took the Regional State's Peace and Security Bureau as a lonely source.

Reporter also used government officials as primary sources of their news stories. However, few news stories tried to add the voices of residents though they are stated in a unanimous source form. The Regional state's Disaster Prevention and Readiness office has been frequently sourced. The news story which was published on Reporter on 2 October, 2019, attributed unanimous source as: "ምንጮች እንደሚሉት በአካባቢው ... When literally translated it means: "according to sources, ..... (Reporter, 2 Oct, 2019) (Translation by the researcher)

Bekur also cited government officials in most of their news stories. However, they also reported two news stories by interviewing residents and observing the destructions happened because of armed involvement of the conflicting bodies.

Overall, the regional state's peace and security office has been the primary source of the three newspapers serving as lonely source for 11 news stories while GCAO, Disaster Prevention and Readiness Office of the regional state and Defense were cited in four news stories each.

Here we should be curious about the sources used by these news stories. Government officials of the federal and regional state could be taken as reliable sources; but taking the information from a single governmental officer without crosschecking the trustworthiness of the information from other sources from the ground and reporting it as it is, makes the story weak and biased. Because officials are political assignees with their own political mission, and their interview or press conference may be shaped in line with their mission. It is the media's or journalists mission to take and crosscheck the information from multiple sources. Apart from that, audiences want to hear it from the first hand owners of the parties under conflict. Unless the media passes through this step of verification and

secure independence from this faction, its responsibility of offering voice to the voiceless and other cornerstone principles of journalism come into question.

Apart from lacking depth due to limited citations (most of the news stories have one or two direct quotes from a single source), the news stories failed to show balanced insight of the conflict by referring inhabitants, victims of the conflict, kebele and woreda administrative, elders, religious leaders, members of the Qimant Identity Committee and experts. Thus, readers' of these newspapers could not find the reality about the conflict.

Assessing the finding of other researches, in their research entitled: *The ethnification of the Ethiopian media*, Mulatu and Tereje (2020) also found that the majority of the stories were reported from a single source in reporting conflicts in Ethiopia. They found that 145 sources were quoted to report 133 stories. Diverse ideas did not have much place (Mulatu & Tereje, 2020).

This researcher argues that one of the reasons for the newspapers (and other media institutions too) dependency to events in conflict reporting is due to their frustration to carryout interviews and observation which may result them a different side of the truth. This different side of the truth may annoy concerned officials since it takes a different or opposite frame from their justifications. The finding of Mulatu (2017) also corroborates with this finding. In his research Mulatu (2017) concluded that a small number of internal conflict stories were reported in the selected newspapers; and journalists were found to prefer refraining from reporting ethnic conflicts. He concluded that this refraining from reporting ethnic conflicts is attributable to the fact that journalists live in the circle of fear and self-censorship resulting in the exclusion of ethnic related conflict stories in the media (Mulatu, 2017).

As a result, the complete dependence of the media institutions on government officials as their sources limited the rights of both inhabitants and readers. From the inhabitants' perspective, they were prohibited from their right of getting voice and equal representation. Similarly, readers could not find the complete image of the conflict, which would have been assured through balanced entertainment of the voices of the conflicting groups.

### **4.3. Portrayal of the root causes of the conflict**

In conflict reporting, one of the important things that should be taken carefully is reporting the root cause of the conflict. As Pani (2017) stated “if journalists want to play a role in helping parties to find solutions to conflicts, then they need to understand how the conflict may have started.” He further underlines that it’s important to acknowledge that a conflict may have more than one cause and journalists need to remain alert to the fact that they may well be missing something. As a journalistic work, the root cause the media stated should cite credible sources as well. Besides, the media is expected to crosscheck the trustworthiness of the causes it received from the informant. Balancing the information from the two conflicting parties is mandatory too.

Media institutions are expected to carryout in depth assessments and quarries from different groups, representatives of the community, indigenous inhabitants, documentations and others to find out the real cause of the conflict.

And that is why the media need to pass through different stages of verifications and crosschecking to find out the exact root causes of conflicts. Among this stages of verifications are crosschecking the trustworthiness of causes stated, balancing the information of the conflicting parties and entertaining the voices of local residents from the conflicting parties. These steps require carrying out planned and in depth investigative works than counting on what are said from the government officials’ part.

As it could be seen from the sources used, the three newspapers didn’t pay attention to entertain the voices of the conflicting parties and produce a balanced story. The newspapers simply produce news stories based on the words of government officials, who frequently blamed ‘the hidden hands of some groups with vested interests’.

#### **4.3.1. vested interest of anti-peace groups**

*Most of the news stories portrayed ‘Vested interest of anti-peace forces’ as root cause of the conflict.*

Though the owners of the scenario haven't been interviewed, the three newspapers stated different reasons and causes for the conflict. The cause of the conflict has been portrayed as 'few anti peace forces who have vested interest of disturbing the region's peace and security'. What is fascinating here is that, none of these news stories said who these armed forces are. If they asked the concerned bodies and didn't get the right answer, they could have expressed that too.

Of the total fifteen news stories which reported about the cause of the conflict in the three newspapers, twelve portrayed 'vested interest of third party anti- peace forces' as the root cause of the conflict. Unsurprisingly, no news story tried to get an elaboration about 'who these forces are or why they want to do that'. This happened because of the media institutions' failure to carry out in depth and researched news stories. As it could be recalled, most of the news stories were event based stories. No news story tried to ask residents, elders, religious fathers, victims or members of the Qimant Identity Quest opinion on why the conflict was happening and aggravating from time to time.

In an armed conflict which has taken place from 7-9 February 2019 and claims the lives of 30 inhabitants and burning of over 300 local houses, Addis Zemen, reported the root cause of the conflict by citing Brigadier General Asaminew Tsige, the late head of ANRS Peace and Security Bureau. The report which was published on 11 February 2019, states **“ይህ በሚገባ የተደራጀ የተቀናጀና ይህችን ሀገር ያው በታሪክ አጋጣሚ በዚህ ሙንገድ እንድትገኝ ለማድረግ የሚሞክሩ ኃይሎች የሚሠሩት ሥራ ነው።”** When literally translated, it means: *This is a well-organized evil action of few groups who aim to put the nation in such a turmoil (Addis Zemen: 11 Feb. 2019).* (Translated by the researcher)

As it could be clearly understood, the General claims that root cause of the conflict at the moment were 'few groups who plan to lead the nation to instability' and the news story portrays as it is. The reporter could have taken this reason and ask the conflicting groups or residents from the place if that was the real cause of the attack. Or, at least, he could have asked who these groups are and why they choose that area. It should be underlined that the general has done his work because politically, it might be the right thing to say about it. It was the journalists duty to seek further clarification about why that happen,

who did that, the view of the inhabitants and other concerned bodies from the area about what the general said and so forth.

Similarly, in another report on 19 Feb 2019, the newspaper quoted Commissioner Zelalem Lijalem, the late ANRS Police Commission Commissioner said: **“በህዝቦች መስዋእትነት የመጣውን ለውጥ ለመቀልበስና አካባቢውን የትርምስ ቀጠና ለማድረግ የታጠቁ ሃይሎች ሰላምን ለማደፍረስ ብርቱ መፍጨርጨር ማድረጋቸውን ገልጸዋል።”**

When literally translated, it means: *Armed groups tried hard to reverse the reform which is realized with sacrifice and change the area to war zone (Addis Zemen: 11 Feb. 2019).* (Translated by the researcher)

Here, this news also made those ‘armed groups who want to change the area into a massive turmoil’ responsible for the conflict. However, the news says nothing about who these groups are and why they want to change the area to a conflict prone one. Similar to the other news, this news also doesn’t try to crosscheck about what was happening from neither the warring groups nor the inhabitants.

The news story which was published on 4 Dec. 2018 also mentioned these unknown armed forces for the attack in the area. The news is read as **“ህዳር 24 ቀን 2011 ዓ.ም ከቀኑ 8 ሰዓት አንክራ ጎጥ ላይ ቁጥራው በውል የማይታወቁ ታጣቂች ግጭት ማስነሳታው ነው የተነገረው”** The statement is literally translated as: *unknown armed groups created turmoil on 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. at about 2 pm in Ankra district (Addis Zemen:4<sup>th</sup> Dec, 2018).* (Translated by the researcher)

These news stories clearly show that Addis Zemen newspaper fails to investigate and search for the root causes of the conflict. Here, it should be clear that, what has been said in those news stories (‘armed groups who want to change the area into a massive turmoil’) might be the cause for the conflict. However, the media needs to pass through systematic verification and cross-checking to figure out whether what has been said was the real cause or other things caused the conflict. If the information gathered from residents, warring parties, people who have close attachment with the scenario, representative or victims confirm that, then that should be reported that way. If, to the

contrary, the information from the aforementioned sources shows different reason/s, the reasons from the two sources should be displayed parallel. As a result, we can conclude that the root cause of the story, which is well known by the residents of the conflicting parties than any other government officials, hasn't been figured out and reported.

Reporter also stated different causes of the conflict in its news stories. The news story which was published on 2 October 2019 stated as «**የአማራን ክልል የጦርነት አውድማ ለማድረግ የሚጥሩ አካላት አይሳካላቸውም፣ ይህን ለማድረግ የሚመጡ ካሉም ለመከላከል አቅሙ ሆነ ብቃቱም አለን፤**» It is literally translated as: *forces that try to make Amhara region a war zone will never succeed. We have the capacity and readiness to deter forces that come to do so (Reporter: 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct, 2019).* (Translated by the researcher)

The above news story made ‘forces that try to make the region a war zone’ the root causes of the conflict. The news story cited Agegnehu Teshager, the Regional state’s head of peace and security office and try to infer anonymous sources to further discuss about the causalities reported.

The same news story also cited the head as: “**የጥፋት ኃይሉ ዋና ዓላማ የመተማ - ጎንደር መንገድን ዘግቶ ባለሀብቶች ምርታቸውን በወቅቱ እንዳይሰበስቡና ለገበያ እንዳያደርሱ በማድረግ በኢኮኖሚ ማዳከም ነው። በዚህ ደግሞ አንደራደርም። በአጭር ጊዜም መንገዱ ክፍት ይሆናል፤**» When literally translated, it means: *the main goal of this force is to block the Metema- Gondar road and hinder the investors from harvesting and supplying their product to market thereby, weakening the economy. We never negotiate on that. The road will be open soon (Reporter: 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct, 2019).* (Translated by the researcher)

Here as to the report, the goal of that attack was to block the Metema- Gondar road and hamper the market transaction of products such as sesame and thereby weakening the region’s economy.

Similarly, the news story which was published on 6 October 2019 on Reporter stated that “**ሰሞኑን የተፈጠረው ሽብር ሲገለጥ የሚገኘው ሀቅ፣ በአማራና በቅማንት ሕዝቦች**

**መካከል የተለየ ግጭት ኖሮ ሳይሆን የሁከት ነጋዴ የሆኑ የጥፋት ኃይሎች፣ በተቀናጀ መልክ ያደረጉት ሴራ ነው።** The statement is literally translated as: *the terror act which has been evident recently discloses the conspiracy of merchants of havoc; there has never been a unique conflict between Amhara and Qimant people (Reporter: 6<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2019).* (Translated by the researcher)

This news story also discloses that the root cause of the ‘terror act’ is not the conflict between the Amhara Qimant people; instead it is caused by ‘merchants of havoc’ who used the Qimant identity quest as a cover.

The following statement is taken from the news story published on 9 Oct. 2019. The statement is attributed Merhatsidk Mekonnen, the Regional President’s legal advisor at a conference on the Amhara - Qimant conflict.

“የቅማንትና የአማራ ሕዝብ አንዱን ከሌላው መለየት በሚያዳግት መልኩ ተሰባጥሮ እንደሚገኝ በመግለጽ፣ ጥያቄው ደም አፋሳሽ ሆኖ መቀጠሉን አንስተዋል። ለዚህም ተጠያቂ የሚያደርጉት «በመጀመሪያ ደረጃ በጠብ አጫሪነት የሚሠለፉት ከሚካሄደው ግጭትና ብጥብጥ ለማትረፍ ማጎበረሰቡ ሳይወክላቸው በማጎበረሰቡ ስም የሚንቀሳቀሱ ጽንፈኛ ወገኖች» ሲሆኑ፣ በሁለተኛ ደረጃ «እሳቱ ቶሎ እንዳይጠፋና ቃጠሎው እንዳይበርድ ቤንዚን በማርከፍከፍና ደረቅ ጭድ በማቀበል ረገድ እነዚህን ወገኖች የሚተባበር ኃይል መኖሩም በተሰጠ እውነታነት ከታወቀ ቆይቷል፤» በማለት፣ «እዚህ ላይ <ክልሉ ጭር ሲል አልወድም> የሚለው ሕዝባዊ ወያኔ ሳይሆን ትግራይ (ሕወሓት) ፊት አውራሪነት <የቅማንት ሕዝብ መብት ሲጨፈለቅ የፌዴራሉ መንግሥት ችላ ቢል እንኳን እኔ በበኩሉ ዝም ብዬ አላይም> በማለት በቅርቡ ያሰሙትን የድፍረት ዛቻና ማስጠንቀቂያ ለአብነት መጥቀሱ ብቻ ይበቃል፤» ሲሉ ሕወሓትን ይወቅሳሉ።

Its literal translation is: *Recalling that Qimants and Amhras are homogeneously mixed to identify one from the other in the area, the Qimant identity quest still continues to be blood shading. Explaining the responsible bodies for that, he*

*said “the primary responsible bodies are those who claim themselves ‘representatives’ and aim to gain profit from the conflict. Secondly, we figured out that there is another force who supplies aggravating factors for these forces to ensure that the conflict expands. Here TPLF has taken the leading role claiming that it is their responsibility to combat the exploitation of the Qimant though the federal government ignores the violation of Qimant’s right (Reporter: 9<sup>th</sup> Oct.2019). (Translated by the researcher)*

Here, this news story contains vague information for at least two reasons. Who are these ‘responsible bodies who claim themselves ‘representatives’? If these groups and their hidden agenda are clearly known, why didn’t the concerned body stop the armed conflict? If the report had tried to answer these questions, it would have been interviewed more sources and gave complete information. But, that hasn’t been done.

According to this news story, TPLF is also involving in creating turmoil by backing armed forces who claim themselves ‘representatives’ of the Qimant community. However, this news story didn’t add the counter comment of TPLF, where the information could have given a balanced insight for readers.

As it could be seen from the above news stories of Reporter, the root cause of the conflict are the ‘merchants of havoc’, ‘the anti-peace group’ who are working tirelessly to put the region into instability. All the news stories reported the root cause as it has been said by the respective government official they attributed. As a private newspaper, Reporter had better freedom to think out of the box and search and research for the truth. Although three of their news stories, try to cross-check the fact from anonymous sources, their cross-checking was limited to number of causalities, not about the root causes. Their sources were governmental officials, and similarly, their news stories were also event based ones. As a result, according to their news stories, they didn’t dig deep to find what is there on the grassroots, inhabitants, victims, conflicting groups, elders and others who are close to the scenario.

Although their news stories clearly told us the reason for the conflict is not the ethnic difference between the Amhara and Qimant people, they didn’t say what really causes it,

why it is causing havoc and death of civilians, why the conflict is happening now than any other time, and who is really behind it. This would have done with determination and sense of responsibility, which require massive effort and courage. From the perspective of responsibility of an independent media this responsibility might be the same for the three newspapers. However, the two newspapers, Addis Zemen and Bekur, might not enjoy this complete sense of freedom since both of them are state owned i.e the former by federal and the later regional state.

Bekur similarly reported different reasons as causes of the conflict. The news story which was published on October 5, 2019 stated:

**“ግጭቱ በሕዝቦች መካከል የተፈጠረ ሳይሆን የቅማንት ብሔረሰብን ሽፋን በማድረግ ሥርዓት አልበኝነት እንዲነግሥ በሚፈልጉ የፖለቲካ ኃይሎች አማካኝነት የተፈጠረ መሆኑን የተናገሩት ደግሞ የአማራ ብሔራዊ ንቅናቄ (አብን) የፖለቲካ ጉዳዮች ኃላፊ አቶ መልካሙ ሹምየ ናቸው። ድርጊቱ የአማራ ክልልን ሕዝቦች አንድነት እና አብሮነትን ለመሸርሸር የተፈጸመ በመሆኑ የክልሉ ሕዝብ አንድነቱን አጠናክሮ ማስቀጠል እንዳለበትም አሳስበዋል።”** When literally, translated, it means: *Ato Melkamu Shumye, political affairs head of National Movement of Amhara (NAMA), on his turn said that the conflict is initiated by political forces who aim to create instability and turmoil in the name of the Qimant community. It has nothing to do with the public. Hence the action is purposively done to diminish the unity of the regional inhabitants; the public should tighten its unity and harmony (Bekur 5 Oct. 2019). (Translated by the researcher)*

As it could be seen, like Addis Zemen and Reporter, Bekur also blamed ‘political forces that aim to create chaos in the region’ for the conflict.

The following statement was quoted from the news story published on Bekur on October 3, 2019 by citing the regional state’s stance.

በሠሞኑ በክልላችን የተፈጠረው የሽብር ተግባር ጀርባ ሲገለጥ የሚገኘው ሃቅ በሠላም ወዳዱ የአማራና የቅማንት ማህበረሰብ ላይ የተለየ ግጭት ኖሮ ሳይሆን ህዝባችንን እንደሚኸገር ተጠብቀው ሲመጡት የኖሩና የሁከት ነጋዴ የሆኑ የጥፋት ሀይሎች በተቀናጀ መልኩ “ኢትዮጵያን ለማፍረስ አማራውን በልዩ ልዩ መልኩ ማዳከም” በሚል በሚከተሉት ያረጌ ዘመን ቆሞ ቀሮች እቅድ መሆኑ በግልጽ ሁሉም ሊያውቀው ይገባል። The statement is translated as: *It should be crystal clear that the terror act which has been witnessed recently is the result of integrated and well planned evil act of anti-peace forces and there is no conflict between Amhara and Qimant people. It is part of their manifesto ‘weakening the Amhara in any means to destroy Ethiopia’ (Bekur: 3 Oct, 2019).* (Translated by the researcher)

The regional stance, which was full of strong words and blamed the ‘old age gamblers’ for the conflict that take place around the Central and North Gondar where the Qimant community mostly resides, was one of the stance’s that aggravate the tension between TPLF and ADP. The stance labeled TPLF and its media institutes and digital armies as enemies of the region and its publics, especially for their role to dismantle the area in the name of ‘helping Qimant to secure their identity quest’ and Bekur reported it without incorporating the view of TPLF.

Bekur, as the news media operating in the regional state where this conflict is taking place, could have done better in seeking the real cause of the conflict by searching beyond what has been said by official. Its proximity and the magnitude of the problem should have given it the opportunity to entertain the issue differently. However, as the discussion showed, it has done nothing different from other newspapers.

Portraying ‘hidden forces’ as root causes of the conflict was also been the finding of other research that focus on ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. In his MA thesis entitled: *Analysis on Media Framing of Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia (from April 2-October 2, 2018): The Ethiopian Herald and The Reporter Newspapers in Focus*, Getnet (2019) disclosed that stories tend to either totally hide, or to only implicitly mention the actual cause(s) of ethnic conflicts.

In conclusion, most of the news stories of the three newspapers about the conflict portrayed that the conflict has been caused by ‘forces that want to change the area to chaos and war zone.’ However, none of the news stories tried to elaborate who these forces are and why they want to do that.

#### 4.3.2. The Qimant Identity Representatives

##### *Some news stories portrayed the Qimant Identity Representatives as causes of conflict*

The Qimant identity committee representatives have been portrayed as root causes of the conflict next to ‘Vested interest of anti-peace forces.’ The committee has been accused of causing conflicts for its economic benefit.

This news story which was published on 18 January, 2019, on Addis Zemen states: **ብርጋዴር ጀነራል አሳምነው ጽጌ በተለይ ከአዲስ ዘመን ጋር ባደረጉት ቃለ ምልልስ እንዳሉት፤ ሰሞኑን ከልጋ ወጣ ብሎ ከአይክል ወደ ሰባት ሎትር ርቀት በሚገ ስት ቀበሌዎች በቅማንት ስም በሚንቀሳቀሱ ኃይሎች ጥቃት ተፈጽል።”** The statement is literally translated as: *In an exclusive interview with Addis Zemen, Brigadier General Asaminew Tsige said that an attack has been committed on three kebeles some seven kms from Aykel by forces working in the name of Qimants* (Addis Zemen, 18 Jan., 2019) ( Translated by the researcher)

This news story made the Qimant committee accountable for the attack. The news story didn’t give a balanced insight by attributing the committee though. Other similar news stories also portrayed the Qimant committee as the cause of the conflict by mentioning specific conflict incidents.

The news story which was published on October 4, 2019, on Reporter following the discussion held between Gondar city youths and the Regional State’s Peace and Security bureau states: **“ግጭቱ በአማራ እና በቅማንት ማኅበረሰብ መካከል የተፈጠረ አለመሆኑን ይልቁንም በ“ጽንፈኛ” የቅማንት ኮሚቴዎች እና በደጋፊዎቻቸው አማካኝነት መከሰቱን ቢሮ ኃላፊው ተናግረዋል።”** The statement is literally translated as: *He expressed that the conflict does not happen between Amhara and Qimant community, instead it was*

*created by extremist Qimant committees and their supporters (Bekur: 4<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2019).*  
(Translated by the researcher)

As it could be understood, the above news story blamed extremist Qimant identity committees to cause the turmoil in the area. However, members of the committee were accusing different state owned media houses of the federal and regional states for purposely ignoring them in news stories related to Amhara – Qimant conflict. This news story should have made it balanced by asking their comment about the claim of the head. Apart from balancing it, it would have given readers a complete insight of the situation.

The news story which was published on December 6, 2019, by Bekur on its turn reports the following reason by citing inhabitants from Amharas and Qimants.

**ሌላው የቅማንት ማህበረሰብ ተወላጅ አቶ ሙሌ አለሙ "የማህበሩ ተወካይ ነን" በሚሉ አካላት እንጅ በማህበረሰቡ ግን ችግር አለመኖሩን ያነሳሉ። በጥርጣሬ ከመተያየት ከልብ ውይይት አካሄዶ ጠላትን ማጋለጥ መቻል ከሁሉም የሚጠበቅ መፍትሄ መሆኑን አስገንዝበዋል። የአማራ ብሄር ተወላጅ አቶ ዘላለም አለበል በበኩሉ ገንዘብ ለማግኘት ግጭት እየቀሰቀሱ ትናንት ያልነበራቸውን ሀብትና ንብረት በግልጽ ማፍራት የጀመሩ አካላት መፈረራቸውን ታዘቧል።** When it is literally translated it means: *the other Qimant national Ato Mule Alemu, expressed that there is no problem with the community; it is with those who claimed themselves representatives of the community. He stressed the importance of holding all inclusive heartfelt discussions than suspicion to identify common enemies. Ato Zelalem Alebel, an Amhara national on his turn said he has witnessed individuals who instigate conflict to earn money and thereby became owners of massive wealth and properties (Bekur 6<sup>th</sup> Dec, 2019).*  
(Translated by the researcher)

This news story is different from the others because it cites Amhara and Qimant ethnics though they were participants of peace conference. These two indigenous people clearly showed what causes for the conflict, hidden economic interest of Qimant identity committee members.

In general, members of the Qimant Identity Committee were found the second most portrayed cause of the conflict by the three newspapers. However, none of the news stories entertain the response of the committee for the claim. The committee has been lauding its complaints of the media's, especially state owned media, neutrality as it has been discussed in the background part.

### 4.3.3. TPLF

#### ***TPLF has been portrayed as the cause of the conflict too***

The third category of portrayal of the conflict is TPLF. Some news stories from the three newspapers were found portraying TPLF as the root cause of the conflict. The ANRS regional stance which was released on October 2, 2019 by the ruling party in the region, Amhara Democratic Party (ADP) and was full of strong and provocative blaming words has been the initial starter for such news stories.

Some Addis Zemen's news stories portrayed TPLF as the cause of the conflict. In a news story published on 2, October, 2019, Addis Zemen, blamed TPLF and their extremist media institutions for creating chaos and instability in the region. The statement which is headlined as: **“ክልሉን ወደ ግጭትና ሁከት እንዲገባ እየሰሩ ያሉ አካላትና ጽንፈኛ ሙገናኛ ብዙሃን ከድርጊታቸው እንዲታቀቡ የአማራ ክልል የሰላምና ደህንነት ቢሮ አስጠነቀቀ።”** which is literally translated as: *ANRS Peace and Security Bureau warned forces and extremist mass media working to put the region to chaos and instability (Addis Zemen, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2019) (Translation by the researcher) is show case here.*

As it could be seen, the news story which cited the then head of peace and security bureau, clearly warned TPLF and its extremist media (Dimtse Woyane and TTV) portraying them as the causes of the conflict and instability in the area. The story not only blame them, but also warned them explaining that the region has informed their evil works for the concerned federal governmental force.

Reporter's news stories also portrayed TPLF as root cause of the conflict. The following statement is taken from the news story published on 9 Oct. 2019. The statement attributed

Merhatsidk Mekonnen, the Regional President’s legal advisor at a conference on the Amhara - Qimant conflict.

“የቅማንትና የአማራ ሕዝብ አንዱን ከሌላው መለየት በሚያዳግት መልኩ ተሰባጥሮ እንደሚገኝ በመግለጽ፣ ጥያቄው ደም አፋሳሽ ሆኖ መቀጠሉን አንስተዋል። ለዚህም ተጠያቂ የሚያደርጉት «በመጀመሪያ ደረጃ በጠብ አጫሪነት የሚሰላፉት ከሚካሄደው ግጭትና ብጥብጥ ለማትረፍ ማጎበረሰቡ ሳይወክላቸው በማጎበረሰቡ ስም የሚንቀሳቀሱ ጽንፈኛ ወገኖች» ሲሆኑ፣ በሁለተኛ ደረጃ «እሳቱ ቶሎ እንዳይጠፋና ቃጠሎው እንዳይበርድ ቤንዚን በማርከፍከፍና ደረቅ ጭድ በማቀበል ረገድ እነዚህን ወገኖች የሚተባበር ኃይል መኖሩም በተሰጠ እውነታነት ከታወቀ ቆይቷል፤» በማለት፣ «እዚህ ላይ ክልሉ ጭር ሲል አልወድም» የሚለው ሕዝባዊ ወያኔ ሓርነት ትግራይ (ሕወሓት) ፊት አውራሪነት <የቅማንት ሕዝብ መብት ሲጨፈለቅ የፌዴራሉ መንግሥት ችላ ቢል እንኳን እኔ በበኩሌ ዝም ብዬ አላይም> በማለት በቅርቡ ያሰሙትን የድፍረት ዛቻና ማስጠንቀቂያ ለአብነት መጥቀሱ ብቻ ይበቃል፤» ሲሉ ሕወሓትን ይወቅሳሉ።

Its literal translation is: *Recalling that Qimants and Amhras are homogeneously mixed to identify one from the other in the area, the Qimant identity quest still continues to be blood shading. Explaining the responsible bodies for that, he said “the primary responsible bodies are those who claim themselves ‘representatives’ and aim to gain profit from the conflict. Secondly, we figured out that there is another force who supplies aggravating factors for these forces to ensure that the conflict expands. Here TPLF has taken the leading role claiming that it is their responsibility to combat the exploitation of the Qimant though the federal government ignores the violation of Qimant’s right (Reporter: 9<sup>th</sup> Oct.2019). (Translated by the researcher)*

This news story clearly portrayed both TPLF and representatives of the Qimant Identity as the causes of the conflict. The collaborative work of the two groups has been labeled

as the cause of the conflict. However, unsurprisingly, the news story didn't try to balance by asking their take ons from both TPLF and 'representatives'.

Bekur's news stories similarly portrayed the TPLF as the cause of the conflict. The newspaper published the October 2, 2019 state stance of ADP as it is. As discussed in previous sections, this stance is full of strong words which blame TPLF for its multifaceted interference including supporting the representatives of the Qimant committee and using extremist regional media outlets to dismantle the Amhara region.

In general, the three newspapers have reported news stories that portrayed TPLF as the root cause of the conflict in the area. The news stories attributed different regional officials for their news stories. Besides, none of these news stories tried to balance the idea by attributing to TPLF or at least trying to get response and disclosing what has been replied to them.

#### **4.3.4. Ethnic Difference**

##### ***No news story portrayed ethnic difference as cause of the conflict***

The news stories reported on the conflict didn't portray the ethnic difference as the root cause of the conflict. Almost all the news stories framed that the conflict has nothing to do with the ethnic difference of the two sisterly people.

The news story which was published on Bekur on 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2019, is read as: **“ግጭቱ በሕዝቦች መካከል የተፈጠረ ሳይሆን የቅማንት ብሔረሰብን ሽፋን....”** It is literally translated as: *The conflict is caused by those who used the cover of Qimant ethnics, not by the Amhara and Qimant*”( Bekur, 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2019) (Translation by the researcher)

The above news story states that the conflict is not caused by the ethnic difference of Amhara and Qimant ethnics; instead it is caused by some individuals who used the Qimant identity as a cover to their interest.

Similarly, Reporter has also reported the same news story on 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2019. **“ግጭቱ በአማራ እና በቅማንት ማኅበረሰብ መካከል የተፈጠረ አለመሆኑን ይልቁንም...”** It is

literally translated as: *The conflict hasn't occurred between Amhara and Qimant; instead ...* (Reporter, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2019)(Translation by the researcher)

This story was also developed based on the same press conference delivered by the regional states peace and security bureau head. It clearly put that the conflict has nothing to do with the two ethnic groups.

In general, the news stories of the three newspapers stressed that the conflict has nothing to do with the two sisterly and brotherly people who have been living together for years in peace and harmony.

### ***Commonly known causes of conflict have been ignored***

Although conflicts are often explained in terms of ethnic, religious, cultural or national differences the most experts writing about conflict believe that these terms are generally just labels that are used to hide something else. There is a general opinion that the fact that people have different ethnic or religious backgrounds is not cause of conflict in itself. Conflicts may well have ethnic or religious dimensions to them, but the underlying causes of these conflicts will lie elsewhere, such as in scarce resources and their allocation, uneven distribution of power and structural imbalances, lack of or little information and communication, goal incompatibility, uncertainty and interpersonal relations (Pani, 2017).

The common causes of conflicts, which are enlisted in different scholarly works of conflict, such as uncertainty, scarce resource uneven power distribution and communication gap were mentioned only in three news stories. This is primarily happened due to the failure of the media houses to dig deep and reach the hidden causes of the conflict.

Over all, as a conclusion for the portrayal of the root cause of the conflict, the three newspapers portrayed the real cause of conflict in their news stories as 'vested interest of forces to change the area to turmoil and chaos', 'the Qimant committee representatives' and 'TPLF' respectively. Unsurprisingly, nothing has been said about who this forces and why they want to change the area. Besides, no news story was found portraying the

ethnic difference as the cause of the conflict, while the commonly listed causes of internal conflict have only been listed three times as causes of the conflict.

#### **4.4. The role of the newspapers to flare or resolute the conflict**

##### ***The news stories were trying to contribute for peaceful resolution of the conflict***

According to Pani (2017: 28) “*It is important for media to understand what conscious and unconscious role it plays in its routine work reducing or at times aggravating conflicts.*” The media may contribute to resolute the conflict or to the contrary may aggravate the conflict.

Bridging communication gaps, correcting misconceptions, confidence building, identifying underlying interests, framing stories, encouraging power balance and emotional outlet are among the common ways advised by scholars for the media to contribute to resolute conflicts. To the contrary, if the media act to the opposite ways, the media will contribute to flare the conflict Pani (2017).

The news stories of the three newspapers were trying to contribution to the peaceful resolution of the conflict in different ways. Their news stories tried to promote peaceful resolution for the conflict, focus on the things that made the two ethnics similar than focusing on differences and prioritize humanity.

##### **4.4.1. Promoting peaceful discussion Vs. Armed struggle**

##### ***Most of the news stories promoted peaceful discussion to resolute the conflict***

According to UNDP Oslo Governance Centre media and conflict prevention research and policy roundtable (2017) media can serve as a mediator between political parties especially in situations where there is no other means of communication particularly during conflict and post-conflict reconciliation. “The media can be an effective tool to build relationships. It can support greater understanding and cohesion” (UNDP, 2017, P.12)

The three newspapers focused on promoting the essence of peaceful discussion than armed conflicts in their news stories.

The news story which was published on October 2, 2019, is read as: **“የቅማንት ኮሚቴ ያነሳቸውን ጥያቄዎች የክልሉ መንግስት በወንድማማችነት መንፈስ በድርድርና በመነጋገር እንዲፈታ ይፈልጋል ያሉት አቶ አገኘሁ፤ ይህን ለማድረግም ሰሞኑን ችግሩን ለመፍታት ስንሞክር ሰላም እንዳይሆን የሚፈልጉ አካላት ጉዳዩ ወደ ግጭት እንዲገባ እንዳይረጉት አመልክተዋል።** Its literal translation is: *The regional state wants to resolute the questions of the Qimant committee through discussion and negotiations in brotherhood sense. However, while we were in the effort to do so, groups who don't want peaceful discussions pulled the situation to conflict (Addis Zemen: 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct, 2019).* (Translated by the researcher)

As it could be understood, this news story emphasizes the regional state's readiness to resolute the conflict in a peaceful discussion. According to scholars, one way the media can contribute for peaceful resolution of conflicts is their emphasis on the readiness of conflicting parties to resolute the condition in a peaceful way. However, the media should work on issues which bring them to peaceful discussion.

The news story which was published on 6 November 2019 citing the chairman of the Qimant identity quest committee Ato Fikadu Mamo from the conference held at Chilga woreda, one of the conflict prone woredas where both the Amhara and Qimant people live heterogeneously, states:

**“በግጭት ምክንያት በሰው ሕይወትና በንብረት ላይ እየደረሰ ያለው ጉዳት መቆም አለበት። ችግሩ በሰላማዊ መንገድ እስኪፈታም በጠረጴዛ ዙሪያ ለመነጋገር ከሚፈልጉ ማንኛውም አካላት ጋር ለመወያየት ዝግጁ ነን፤» ብለው፤ ሁለቱ ወንድማማች ማኅበረሰቦች በምንም ዓይነት ሁኔታ መጋጩት አይገባቸውም ሲሉ አክለዋል።”** ... *The loss of human life and destruction of propertied due to the conflict has to be stopped. We are ready to negotiate to any interested body till the problem alleviated peacefully. The two brotherly communities should not fight in any means. (Reporter: 6 Nov, 2019)*

This news story appreciates the interest of the two warring parties to come to discussion and resolute their differences in a peaceful way and hence lauded the readiness for discussion especially the chairman of the Qimant identity quest. The headline of the story which is read as: “**የቅማንት ኮሚቴ በጠረጴዛ ዙሪያ ለመደራደር ዝግጁ ነኝ አለ**” Literally translated by the researcher as: *The Qimant committee express readiness to peaceful negotiation*” also clearly shows the interest of the media to promote peaceful resolution for the conflict.

Similarly, the news story which was published on 6th Dec, 2019 stated: “**ህዝቡ የራሱን ችግር መፍታት የሚችለው በራሱ መንገድ በመሆኑ በችግሮች ላይ ተቀራርቦ በጥልቀት በመነጋገር ትልቅ ለውጥ ያመጣል።** ... *Since the public can resolute its own problem by itself, detailed and inclusive discussions yield in meaningful change. (Bekur 6th Dec, 2019)* (Translation by the researcher)

As mentioned earlier, one way the media could play an important role to contribute for peaceful resolution is through promoting peaceful discussions among the conflicting bodies. As it could be seen, the above news story was trying to promote close and in depth discussion between the two people.

In an assessment to other researches, Chebii (2015) also disclosed that media contributes for peaceful resolution of conflicts by promoting peaceful discussion. Chebii (2015) concluded that media has played massive role to the promotion of peace and reconciliation in Uganda where MEGA FM of Uganda play tremendous role to bring the LRA leaders to radio phone- in talk discussions with government and civil society representatives that finally lead to agreement (Chebii, 2015). Similarly, Likewise, Open Broadcast Network (OBN), a media network established in Bosnia two decades ago, is one of the most ambitious and earliest intentional media attempts to reduce violent conflict (Chebii, 2015).

In conclusion, most of the news stories focused on calling the conflicting groups for peaceful discussion to find lasting solution for the conflict. Peaceful discussions have been prioritized while no news story was found promoting/ instigating armed conflict.

Stressing on calling for peaceful resolution by itself may not help bring peaceful solution for the problem. However, it will not at least contribute to flare the conflict.

#### 4.4.2. Promoting Unity Vs. Difference

##### *Other news stories paid attention to the oneness of the two ethnic groups*

UNDP Oslo Governance Centre media and conflict prevention research and policy roundtable (2017) stressed that media can support greater understanding and cohesion between people who involve in conflicts.

Amidst of the above point, the second category of the news stories role in contributing for peaceful resolution of the conflict focused on promoting oneness of the two sisterly brotherly people in the area. These news stories traced back how these two people were living in peace and harmony over years.

Of the fourteen news stories Addis Zemen has reported on the Amhara Qimant conflict, one of the news stories which was published on January 18, 2019 stated: «አዝቡ አንድ የነበረ ነው። አንዳንዶች የግንን አጀንዳ ነው እያስፈጸሙ ነው የሚለውን ነገር እየተረዳው ነው» ያሉት ብርጋዴር ጀነራል አሳምነው፤ ሀብረ ተሰቡ ችግሩን በውይይት ለመፍታት የሚያጋጥሙትን እክሎች ሁሉ ተቋቁሞ በችግሮቹና በመፍትሄዎቹ ዙሪያ በየቀ በሌው እየመከረ መሆኑን አመልክተዋል። በቅርቡም ወደ መግባባት ይደረሳል ተብሎ እንደሚታሰብ ጠቁመዋል። When literally translated, it means: *The inhabitant has been one. The public now gradually understands whose agenda some of these groups are implementing. Despite the challenges it encountered from these forces, the public is now holding discussions on the problems and possible solutions under each kebele to seek peaceful resolutions. The discussions are expected to end up with agreements (Addis Zemen: 18 Jan 2019).* (Translated by the researcher)

As it could be understood, the above news story of Addis Zemen encourages peaceful discussions between the two people while recalling the unity between these two sisterly people have been showing over years. Expressions that underline the unity, togetherness

and readiness to come to peaceful discussions usually foster peace between conflicting groups, and that was the aim of the previous direct quote.

Another example of the similar report from Reporter is the news story which was published on December 16, 2018. The news is read as:

**«ይህ ሕዝብ አብሮ ኖሯል፣ ተዋልዷል፣ ደም አስተሳስሮታል፤» ያሉት ምክትል ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር ደመቀ፣ «ይህ ቀን አልፎ ነገ አብሮ መኖሩ አይቀርም መሪና ድርጅት ግን ያልፋሉ። ሕዝብና ታሪክ ግን በዘመናት ይቀጥላልና በሚያልፍ የመሪነት ዘመናችን የማያልፍ የታሪክ ጠባሳ እንዳንተው ልንጠነቀቅ ይገባል፤» ብለዋል።»** ... *The Deputy Premier stressed that this public has lived together, conjugated and bonded in blood. It will live together as usual again for eternity while leaders and parties vanish through time. We need to be careful to avoid historical black point in our limited time of leadership. (Reporter: 16 Dec, 2018)*  
(Translated by the researcher)

As it could be understood the Deputy Prime Minister used strong expressions to remind that the public hasn't got any problem to live together as usual and leaders and parties should take off their hands from the situation. The news story also stressed how the community is homogeneously mixed through marriage, and other social bonding.

The news story which was published on October 22, 2019 is read as: **“የአማራና የቅማንት ሕዝብ የማይነጣጠሉ፣ ከማንም በላይ አንዳቸው ለአንዳቸው ቅርብ፣ አንድ አይነት ሕዝብ መሆናቸውን ለምክር ቤት አባላቱ አስረድተዋል።”** When literally translated, it means: *He explained to the house that the Amhara and Qimant people are inseparable, close to each other and similar people (Bekur:22<sup>nd</sup> October,2019).*  
(Translation by the researcher)

The above news story is reported based on the Prime Minister's response to the HPR about a question on the stand of the government on the Amhara Qimant conflict. The news story underscored the essence of harvesting on the long practiced living in harmony and seeking peaceful resolution based on the Premier's response.

In general, the news stories under this category stressed on the things that unveil the unity of the two people ( Amhara and Qimant) in living together in the area. Words and expressions such as bonded in blood, conjugated, passed together through centuries of ups and downs, shared the sorrows and happy moments have been frequently used.

#### 4.4.3. Promoting Humanity Vs. Ignoring Humanity

##### *Some news stories prioritize humanity*

The category under the contribution of the news stories to either resolute or flare the conflict is prioritizing humanity. News stories under this category promote humanity than anything. They stressed on the essence of diminishing the impact of the war on the inhabitants, avoiding armed confrontations and the need to calm from both parties and the need to supply humanitarian aids for the displaced ones.

The news which was published by Addis Zemen on June 16, 2019 stated that: **በተለያዩ ምክንያት በተፈጠሩ ግጭቶች የማዕከላዊና ምዕራብ ጎንደርን ጨምሮ ወደ መቶ ሰባት ሺ የሚጠጉ ተፈናቃዮች የተለያዩ ድጋፎች ሲደረግ ቆይቷል፤.....** When it is literally translated, it means: *Aid has been rendered to over 700, 000 dislocated people including in Central and North Gondar.*

As it could be seen, the news story stated the need to supply humanitarian aid and what has already been done in doing so.

The news story which was published by Bekur on 6th Dec, 2019 read as: "**‘ከግጭት ማንም ምንም አያትርፍም’ የሚሉት አቶ ሞገስ ተፈናቃዮችን ለማወያየት በሄዱበት ወቅት መገንዘብ የቻሉት ሁሉም በዚህ ችግር ተጠቂ በመሆኑ ለሰላም መስፈን መስራት እንደሚገባ ነው።**" The statement is literally translated as: *Ato Moges, who remarks that no one benefits from conflicts, said that he figured out that everyone was victim. He underlines that everyone should work to bring about peace (Bekur 6th Dec, 2019). (Translation by the researcher)*

As it could be understood, the news story which was published on 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019, was trying to emphasize the essence of prioritizing humanity. It concluded the story by

reminding that no warring parties benefited from armed conflict in the course of history and hence only peaceful discussion will help get sufficient answers for the questions of the conflicting parties. Besides, the news tried to create awareness on the negative impact of armed conflict on everybody involving in.

In general, the news stories under this category emphasize the essence of prioritizing humanity than any interest. These stories promoted the need to cease fire and stop killing innocents. Besides, they advocated the need to address the question of humanitarian aids for those displaced due to the armed conflicts.

Although most Addis Zemen's news stories on the Amhara - Qimant conflict tried to contribute for peaceful resolution of the conflict, some news stories were found flaring the conflict. These news stories focus on encouraging the civilian to defy themselves and there by stand together to fight these 'armed anti peace groups'

The Addis Zemen news story which was published on 11, Feb 2019 by interviewing Brigadier General Asaminew Tsigie is read as: **“የበለጠ አጀንዳውን ለሚያራግቡ አጀንዳው በዚህ መንገድ እንዲሄድ ለሚቀጥሉ ሀገር ለመበታተን ለሚዘጋጁ ኃይሎች ሕብረተሰቡ ራሱን አሳልፎ እንዳይሰጥ፤ የበለጠ ነቅቶ ራሱን፣ ቤተሰቡንና አካባቢውን እንዲጠብቅ ራሱን እንዲከላከል ከምንም ነገር በላይ ደግሞ የራሱ አካባቢ ባለቤት ራሱ መሆኑን አውቆ መጠበቅ መቻል አለበት ብዬ አሳስባለሁ።”** The piece is literally translated as: *I want to remind the community that, realizing that it is the owner of the area, it should protect and defend himself, his families and the area from forces that aim to destabilize the nation (Addis Zemen: 11 Feb 2019). (Translated by the researcher)*

This news story encourages the local community to protect and defend itself and its surroundings from what it called 'forces that aim to destabilize the nation.' Here these kinds of news stories aggravate violent and armed solutions than discussion and peaceful solutions. The community is encouraged to use personal armaments, which may lead to escalated civil war and havoc, to defend their self instead of conversation and negotiation. The report in one hand says armed forces are causing the havoc. If, as it is said 'forces that aim to destabilize the nation' are causing the conflict, deterring these

forces should be carried out with responsible government armed forces like defense or police.

Overall, most of the news stories of Addis Zemen were found positive in promoting peaceful resolution for the conflict. They emphasized the essence of negotiation, saying no to forces that want to create conflict between the two people and far beyond that, the need to stop armed conflicts. In their attempt to do so, the news stories encouraged seeking constitutional quest of identity claim and self-governance and patience for the quests that have been already presented for concerned governmental institutions.

Reports of Reporter newspaper on their turn pay due attention on the essence of peaceful discussions between the conflicting bodies to resolute the problem. Most of the news stories try to contribute to resolute the problem in a neutral way.

In general, Reporter has been found promoting peaceful resolution of the conflict than hostility and armed conflicts. Its attempt to entertain the voices of victims, though that was limited and anonymous, is also showcase of its effort to promoting peaceful resolution.

Bekur's news stories had also different expressions and wordings which could contribute to either flare or resolute the conflict. As a regional state newspaper which is proximate to the conflict, it had the chance to play pivotal role in seeking peaceful resolution.

Melkamu, (2019) also found that, ATV, the regional television, was reporting with an aim to calm down the conflict. Though the medium is different, ATV and Bekur are both owned by the AMMA and have similar leadership and editorial policy.

In general, it was found that most of the news stories of the three newspapers were trying to help the situation get peaceful resolution than flaring the conflict. In doing so, they tried to focus on the long lasting unity of the two brotherly and sisterly people, promoting peaceful discussion among the public and isolating the groups with hidden agenda from the public's interest were among techniques the three newspapers focus on to contribute for peaceful resolution of the conflict.

#### **4.5. Ethical considerations of the newspapers in reporting the conflict**

Keeble(2005: 269) states that “ethics tends to draw on universal values such as accuracy, honesty, fairness, respect for privacy, the avoidance of discrimination and conflicts of interest.” On another view, according to Society of Professional Journalists (1996), seeking the truth and reporting it, minimizing harm, acting independently (objectivity) and becoming accountable are the cornerstones of ethical considerations of journalism. Similarly, A Guide for Professional Journalism in Conflict Zones, a book published by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) also listed professional guidelines journalists and the media should follow during conflict reporting. These lists are, in one way or another, related to the above ethical considerations of conflict reporting. The commonly listed ethical consideration by different experts include searching for the truth, objectivity, putting humanity before everything, balancing the interest of the conflicting bodies, controlling emotional feelings, and others which are clearly discussed in the literature review part.

Reports of the three newspapers fared differently in reporting the conflict from the view of ethical considerations of conflict reporting. The researcher coded and categorized the news stories based on their content in terms of ethicality of the newspapers and the news stories as follows.

##### **4.5.1. Balance**

*The three newspapers showed massive limitations in balancing their story.*

According to Eti (2009), balancing the opinions of conflicting groups is one of the ethical considerations of conflict reporting. Media need to bring a balanced insight of the situation. To do so, the media need to attribute about the situation from the conflicting parties.

The three newspapers showed massive limitation in balancing the stories. At the very first point, as it was discussed on ‘sources of news stories’ part, the three newspapers were dependent to government officials. It will be difficult to assess how the three newspapers were balanced when they were not even attributing the conflicting bodies. Victims of

armed conflicts, eye witness, inhabitants, elders, religious fathers, and conflicting groups were not attributed in the news stories. Looking in a comparative way, Reporter's two news stories tried to add unanimous sources to crosscheck the trustworthiness of officials' remarks. However, since the sources are unanimous and noting is said which conflicting party they are from, it is difficult to talk about balance.

The three newspapers had limitations in giving balanced space for the conflicting parties. Most of the news stories found were taken from events organized on the conflict and didn't even try to interview inhabitants to entertain their view on what has been decided on that events. Actually the failure to interview residents was consistent to both the Amharas and Qimants.

In his research entitled: *Journalistic Ethics in the Newsroom: The Case of the Amhara Mass Media Agency*, Wolelaw (2012) also concluded that unbalanced reporting is a common practice in the Ethiopian media especially in the war time, and racial, reporting. He concluded that, political affiliation, journalist's attachment to a particular group, sensitivity of the issue and skill related gaps are among the reasons for unbalanced reporting (Wolelaw, 2012).

Thus, generally speaking, one of the ethical considerations, balancing has been ignored by the three newspapers in reporting the Amhara – Qimant conflict.

#### **4.5.2. Objectivity**

Many scholars agree the difficulty to achieve objective reporting, because of the impossibility to practice detachment and write a report without any interpretation. Some scholars and journalists even say objectivity is 'an illusion' and difficult to achieve, (Sanders, 2003:43). Objectivity in journalism is an effort to exclude subjective judgment (Sambrook, 2012). Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know. Though difficult to attain, it is one of the core journalistic ethics.

Regarding the target media outlets of this research, the news stories didn't show any subjective judgments or insertions. The ideas have been taken from events related to the conflicts or press conferences of officials. Presenting what has been said by itself doesn't

guarantee objectivity. Because, in conflict reporting, objectivity requires the presentation of the views of two opposing arguments (Eti, 2009). In this sense, the three newspapers said nothing about the viewpoints of the conflicting groups. Their reports were simply dependent on the federal and regional officials. This condition makes it difficult to evaluate the objectivity of the newspapers.

To the contrary, their news stories didn't show any sign of bias about the conflicting bodies. As stated, their news stories haven't been framed to the favor of one of the conflicting bodies or blaming one of the parties and vice versa.

Thus, we can conclude that the three newspapers were objective in avoiding bias in their reports while they showed limitation in entertaining the views of the two conflicting groups.

#### **4.5.3. Seeking the truth and reporting it**

##### ***The news stories showed limitations in seeking the truth and reporting it***

One of the most important journalistic principle and measurement of ethicality is seeking the truth and reporting it. Seeking the truth and reporting it has an eminent significance to contribute for the peaceful resolution of conflict. Society for Professional Journalists (1996), stressed that the journalist should test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. According to Eti (2009) in practice, journalists have been criticized for their "tendency to merely juxtapose two competing claims without making any effort to look for the truth behind the claims" (Eti, 2009, p.101). The same has been observed in the news reports of the target newspapers. The news stories not only failed to look for the truth behind the claims, they didn't entertain the claims of the two parties competing claims well.

They showed massive limitation in digging deep and unveil something different from the words of officials. As frequently expressed in this paper, the news stories didn't add anything which hasn't been said by officials.

The three newspapers fail to dig out on what has been going on beyond officials' remarks about the conflict. The media need to plan project news which goes beyond what is said on press conferences to search for the truth on such issues. Looking back on the inception of the identity quest, looking back on governmental decisions about the recognition of the Qimant, the feeling of the community on those decisions, assessing the involvement of civilians on the conflict, assessing the reaction of victims of the conflict, contacting and entertaining the comments of eye witnesses and similar broad researches may have given the complete image of the conflict and paves the way to seeking peaceful, inclusive and lasting solutions for the problem.

As to Addis Zemen and Bekur, which are owned by the federal government and Amhara regional state respectively, the journalists might not have a complete freedom to dig deep and report something that may contradict from what the governmental officials said. However, the dependency on governmental officials for attribution was almost equally observed by both the state owned and the private media.

Most of their news stories cite government officials who may not clearly and implicitly underline the real scenario for the sake of political advantages. They could have done better by searching and researching what is happening there from the grassroots. Getting the reason behind the conflict requires getting balanced views from the two conflicting bodies. Assessing the historical background, how things come to such complexity and there by costing lives of people and massive destruction of properties, failure of attempts of peaceful discussions and failure to seek lasting solution for the problem all have their own reasons behind them. However, knowingly or unknowingly, the news stories of the three newspapers didn't say anything all about the reasons behind this bloody conflict except those common reasons the government frequently blamed.

#### **4.5.4. Minimizing harm**

##### ***The three newspapers strive to minimize harm***

According to Society for Professional Journalists, the journalistic role to minimize harm is related to treatment sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of

respect on one side and their role in minimizing the harm on another side. Regarding the first role, the three newspapers engagement right with the victims was almost meager, and hence nothing can be said about their role. Because, no news story was prepared and published by going right to the conflict area, since all news stories were produced based on events.

As to the second role of minimizing harm, the three newspapers did well from the ethical perspective of minimizing harm. The news stories were trying to minimize the harm that may happen due to the armed conflict of the two people. The news stories emphasized that no one will gain from warring conflicts and the groups should come to a common background for discussion.

The news story which was published on 6 Nov, 2019 states that: «አኛና እናንተ ሳንባል በሕዝብና በመንግሥት መካከል ያሉ ችግሮችን ለመፍታት ውይይት መጀመሩ አስፈላጊ ስለሆነ ወደ ውይይት መጥተናል።» It is literally translated as: *We come to the discussions cognizant of the essence of discussions to seek solutions for the problems between the government and the public avoiding the ‘us and them’ labeling. (Reporter: 6 Nov, 2019)* (Translated by the researcher)

As it could be seen the news stories like the previous one and others tried to minimize harm by calling for public discussions. The news stories framed the condition as something which should not have happened and which will never add an important asset for the two parties.

#### **4.5.5. Emotional feelings**

*No emotional feeling has been observed in the news stories*

Regarding avoiding emotional feelings, the news stories were free of emotional feelings and provocations of one group on the other. According to different scholars one way of the manifestations of emotionality is the backing/ blaming game. Journalists come to blame one party and back every action of the other party which has an emotional attachment to them. The news stories of the three newspapers mostly call for calm and

peaceful solutions for the conflict. No news story was found blaming one of the conflicting bodies and backing the other.

In conclusion, the news stories of the three newspapers were found at two opposing junctions regarding ethicality. At one pole, the three newspapers were found ethical in relation to avoiding bias, avoiding emotional attachments, and trying to minimize harm. Regarding avoiding bias, no news story was found framing one group in favor of the other and vice versa. No news story was found blaming one of the conflicting bodies and backing the other. As to avoiding emotional attachments, the news stories didn't blame one part for the conflict while taking the action of another group right for granted. As to their contribution to minimize harm, the newspapers framed the condition as something which should not have happened and which will never add an important asset for the two parties.

On another junction, the three newspapers found unethical in terms of seeking the truth and balancing the viewpoints of the conflicting groups. Their limitation in seeking the truth is manifested in their failure to entertain opinion of the public from the grassroots. Their news stories didn't add anything which hasn't been said by officials. The three newspapers showed massive limitation in digging deep and unveil something different from the words of officials. As to balancing the viewpoints of conflicting parties, almost all the news stories didn't try to entertain the view points of the conflicting points due to the fact that their news stories only rely on government officials.

## **Chapter five: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents the conclusion and of this thesis and recommend ideas that have to be done for concerned bodies. The first part deals with the conclusion of this piece of work. This part tries to preset the summary or gist of the work. Following the conclusion, important tips are recommended based on the findings for concerned bodies.

### **5.2. Conclusion**

This study rooted on examining the media coverage of the Amhara – Qimant conflict by relying on Addis Zemen, Reporter and Bekur. The three newspapers are published in Amharic, the federal working language of the country. Addis Zemen is owned by the federal government while Bekur is owned by the Amhara National Regional State. Reporter is a privately owned newspaper. The three newspapers are purposively selected for the research. Addis Zemen and Reporter have relative wider coverage while Bekur is added it is the regional state newspapers where the conflict happens.

Different studies and books related to conflict reporting, Qimant identity quest, the role of media in conflict resolution, ethical considerations in conflict reporting and so on have been reviewed. Besides, this research is guided with Framing Theory. Framing Theory is found to be an important theory to assess how the three newspapers framed and reported the conflict.

Based on the problem statement and the reviewed literatures, this research developed the following three research questions. How do the three newspapers portray the root causes of the conflict? How do the three newspapers cover the news of the conflict from the ethical perspective? What does the contribution of the three newspapers to flare or resolute the conflict looks like? So, the research answered these questions to draw conclusions.

The researcher used qualitative research approach to conduct this study. The researcher collected a total of 41 news stories which focus on the Amhara – Qimant conflict from the three newspapers. Fourteen news stores were reported by Addis Zemen, while

Reporter and Bekur reported fifteen and twelve news stories respectively during the research time frame. The news stories got systematic coding for interpretation. The conventional content analysis technique was used to analyze these news stories qualitatively. Conventional qualitative content analysis is one of the content analysis techniques where coding categories are derived directly from the raw data. Conventional content analysis is generally used with a study design whose aim is to explore a phenomenon, in this case the media coverage of the Amhara – Qimant conflict.

This research unveiled that the three newspapers produced almost all the news stories about the conflict based on events such as press conferences, government briefings, conferences and press releases. No project/ planned news story was found about the Amhara – Qimant conflict by the three newspapers during this research’s time frame.

Similarly, the news stories about the conflict all found completely relying on government officials as a source. Although the truth is very close to victims of armed conflicts, eye witness, inhabitants, elders, religious fathers, and conflicting groups, the three newspapers didn’t take them as sources. Apart from that, no news stories tried to cross-check the trustworthiness of the information of the official from the conflicting groups. However, two news stories of Reporter tried to cross-check causalities from residents though they prefer to use anonymous sources.

In reporting about the root causes of the conflict, most of the news stories of the three newspapers portrayed ‘vested interest of some armed groups’ as the root cause of the conflict. The three newspapers were limited to reporting on what has been said by the governmental officials reporting about the cause of the conflict. Most of the officials were labeling ‘armed anti-peace groups who aim to change the area into turmoil’, as the root cause of the conflict and the three newspapers reported as it is without digging behind that. TPLF and ‘representatives’ of the Qimant identity quest have also been portrayed as causes of the conflict.

Regarding the contribution of the newspapers to resolute or flare the conflict, most of their news stories were contributing for peaceful resolution of the conflict. In doing so, they tried to focus on the long lasting unity of the two brotherly and sisterly people,

promoting peaceful discussion among the public and isolating the groups with hidden agenda from the public's interest were among techniques the three newspapers focus on to contribute for peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Regarding the ethicality of the three newspapers in reporting the conflict, the news stories of the three newspapers were found at two opposing junctions regarding ethicality. At one pole, the three newspapers were found ethical in relation to avoiding bias, avoiding emotional attachments, and trying to minimize harm. Regarding avoiding bias, no news story was found framing one group in favor of the other and vice versa. No news story was found blaming one of the conflicting bodies and backing the other. As to avoiding emotional attachments, the news stories didn't blame one part for the conflict while taking the action of another group right for granted. As to their contribution to minimize harm, the newspapers framed the condition as something which should not have happened and which will never add an important asset for the two parties.

On another junction, the three newspapers found unethical in terms of seeking the truth and balancing the viewpoints of the conflicting groups. Their limitation in seeking the truth is manifested in their failure to entertain opinion of the public from the grassroots. Their news stories didn't add anything which hasn't been said by officials. The three newspapers showed massive limitation in digging deep and unveil something different from the words of officials. As to balancing the viewpoints of conflicting parties, almost all the news stories didn't try to entertain the view points of the conflicting points due to the fact that their news stories only rely on government officials.

Therefore, the research concluded that, the three newspapers' source selection was inappropriate for its complete dependency to government officials and ignorance to victims of armed conflicts, eye witness, inhabitants, elders, religious fathers, and conflicting groups. Besides, the three newspapers' interest to dig the truth and search of reality beyond from what is said from different events was found too limited too. The three newspapers didn't prepare project and planned news stories about the conflict, and thereby their stories didn't show detailed information about the conflict. The three newspapers need to plan and produce project news stories in situations like the Amhara –

Qimant conflict. To forward persuasive solutions, the media need to understand the complete scenario. Their dependency on events prevented them from seeking the real scenario of the conflict from the horse's mouth.

Furthermore, ethicality of the three newspapers found at opposing junctions. The three newspapers were ethical in terms of prioritizing humanity, impartiality and minimizing harm while they show limitations in seeking the truth and giving balanced viewpoint of the conflicting groups. Their limitation to seek the truth resulted in failure to search about the inception of the identity quest, governmental decisions about the recognition of the Qimant, the feeling of the community on those decisions, the involvement of civilians on the conflict, the reaction of victims of the conflict, comments of eye witnesses and underlying interest of the conflicting groups.

Emphasizing on project news stories, mixing the sources, especially attributing to the grassroots, verifying the trustworthiness of stories and adhering with ethical principles have been recommended based on the conclusions.

## **5.2. Recommendations**

This research unveils that the three newspapers didn't produce detailed and planned project news stories which failed to show the real reason for the Amhara – Qimant conflict that causes the death of innocent civilians and caused havoc in the area. However, at least with those event based news stories, the three newspapers were contributing for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Thus, the following recommendations are forwarded based on the findings of this research.

1. Emphasizing on project news stories. The three newspapers need to plan and produce project news stories in situations like the Amhara – Qimant conflict. To forward persuasive solutions, the media need to understand the complete scenario. It is obvious that one cannot understand the complete scenario of a conflict like this without deep research and interaction with all involving parties. Thus, they should plan to go deep to the grassroots and unveil the truth beyond what is said from conferences and press conferences.

2. Mixing the sources. Most of the news stories of the three newspapers about the conflict were quoting similar government officials residing in Addis Ababa or Bahir Dar. However, the owner of the scenario such as victims of armed conflicts, eye witness, inhabitants, elders, religious fathers, community representatives and conflicting groups haven't been interviewed or cited as sources. Apart from preventing from reaching to the truth, excessive dependency on similar faces of officials, prohibit the rights of audiences to listen from the horse's mouth. Besides, such dependency may lead them to bias if the officials show sort of bias for one of the conflicting groups. So, the three newspapers should consider every reliable and rational source for their news stories.
3. Verification. The three newspapers were simply reporting what has been said by the officials without verification of the reliability of what has been said. The media need to pass through different steps of verification. For instance, all the news stories were saying the root cause of the conflict is 'armed groups who want to change the area into a massive turmoil'. Here, it should be clear that, what has been said in those news stories ('armed groups who want to change the area into a massive turmoil') might be the cause for the conflict. However, the media needs to pass through systematic verification and cross-checking to figure out whether what has been said was the real cause or other things caused the conflict. If the information gathered from residents, warring parties, people who have close attachment with the scenario, representative or victims confirm that, then that should be reported that way. If, to the contrary, the information from the aforementioned sources shows different reason/s, the reasons from the two sources should be displayed parallel.
4. Ethicality. It is found that the news stories of the three newspapers were found ethical in reporting the conflict for except their limitations to dig hard to seek the truth and balancing the viewpoints of conflicting parties. The news stories need to dig deep to seek the truth and report it and give a balanced sight of the groups. Otherwise, their report may be misleading, and gradually it may affect their credibility.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1: Headlines of the news stories of the three newspapers about the conflict

#### 1. Addis Zemen

No.	News	Literal translation	Date published
1	በጭልጋ ወረዳ በተፈጠረ ግጭት በሰው ህይወትና ንብረት ላይ ጉዳት ደረሰ	Conflict in Chilga woreda causes loss of life and havoc	December 4, 2018
2	«ጥፋት ያደረሰው የታጠቀና ስምራት የተሰጠው ኃይል ነው» - ብርጋዴር ጀነራል አሳምነው ጽጌ የአማራ ክልላዊ መንግስት የደህንነትና ሰላም ግንባታ ቢሮ ኃላፊ	'The damage is done by an armed and sited group' Brigadier General Asaminew Tsigie, ANRS Peace and Security Office Head	February 11, 2019
3	«ሕብረተሰቡ ሀገር ለመበታተን ለሚዘጋጁ ኃይሎች ራሱን አሳልፎ መስጠት የለበትም» - ብርጋዴር ጀነራል አሳምነው ጽጌ የአማራ ክልላዊ መንግስት የደህንነትና ሰላም ግንባታ ቢሮ ኃላፊ	"The Community should not hand over itself to groups working to dismantle nation" Brigadier General Asaminew Tsigie, ANRS Peace and Security Office Head	February 11, 2019
4	የመዕከላዊና ምዕራብ ጎንደር ዞኖችን ሰላም ለማስጠበቅ በቅንጅት እየተሰራ መሆኑ ተገለጸ	Collaborative work is well underway to sustain peace in Central and Western Gondar zones	February 19, 2019
5	ለቅማንት ጥያቄ የትግራይ ክልል የሚቆረቆር ከሆነ ማንም የሚያዳምጠው የለም» ክብርት ወይዘሮ ኬሪያ ኢብራሂም - የፌዴሬሽን ምክር ቤት አፈ-ጉባኤ	No one gives attention if TNRS shows concern to Qimant Identity quest	January 9, 2019
6	በጎንደር በተከሰተው ግጭት ዙሪያ የሚወጡ የተምታቱ መረጃዎች ለውጡን የሚጎዱ መሆናቸውን የኢ.ፌ.ዴ.ሪ መከላከያ ሚኒስቴር አስታወቀ	Ministry of Defense discloses confused information about the conflict in Gondar damages the concurrent reform.	January 11, 2019
7	በምዕራብ ጎንደር በተከሰተው ግጭት ዙሪያ እየወጡ ያሉ መረጃዎች ለውጡን የሚጎዱ ናቸው	The information about the conflict in West Gondar adversely affects the concurrent reform.	January 12, 2019
8	የፀጥታ ችግሩን ለመፍታት እየተሰራ ነው» - ብርጋዴር ጀነራል አሳምነው ጽጌ የአማራ ክልል የደህንነትና ሰላም ግንባታ ቢሮ ኃላፊ	"we are working to curb the turmoil" Brigadier General Asaminew Tsigie, ANRS Peace and Security Office Head	January 18, 2019
9	ብርጋዴር ጀነራል አሳምነው ጽጌ ስለ አማራ ክልል ወቅታዊ የፀጥታ ጉዳይ ይናገራሉ	Brigadier General Asaminew Tsigie talks about the current security affairs of ANRS	January 18, 2019
10	ተፈናቃዮችን በቀያቸው የማቋቋም ሥራ እየተሰራ ነው	Resettlement work well underway	June 16, 2019

11	የተፈናቀሉ ወገኖቻችንን መልሶ ለማቋቋም እያንዳንዱ ዜጋ እንዲረባረብ ጥሪ ቀረበ	Every citizen is called up on active engagement to resettle dislocated citizens	March 18, 2019
12	የኢትዮጵያ ፌዴራሊዝም ችግሮችና የመደመር እሳቤ	Ethiopia's Federalism problems and the concept of synergy	November 7, 2019
13	ግጭትና ሁከት የሚፈጥሩ ሃይሎች ከድርጊታቸው እንዲታቀቡ ክልሉ አስጠነቀቀ	Region warns forces of violence and havoc to restrain from their action	October 2, 2019
14	የቅማንት የማንነትና የራስ ማስተዳደር ጥያቄ በህጋዊ መንገድ መመለሱ ተገለፀ	The Qimant Identity and self-governance quest answered legally	October 9, 2019

## 2. Reporter

No.	News	Literal translation	Date published
1	በማዕከላዊ ጎንደር ዞን ሰዎች ሲገደሉ በንብረት ላይ ጉዳት ደረሰ	Civilian killed while properties were destructed in Central Gondar	2 October 2019
2	የቅማንት ኮሚቴ በጠረጴዛ ዙሪያ ለመደራደር ዝግጁ ነኝ አለ	Qimant Committee discloses readiness to negotiation	6 November 2019
3	የአማራንና የቅማንት ሕዝቦችን በማጋጨት ኢትዮጵያን ማፍረስ እንደማይቻል የክልሉ መንግሥት ገለጸ	Regional state discloses conflicting Amhara and Qimant people will never dismantle Ethiopia	6 October 2019
4	ለ43 ሰዎች ሞትና ከስምንት ሺሕ በላይ አባወራዎች መፈናቀል የተጠረጠሩ 156 ግለሰቦች ተከሰሱ	156 suspects suspected for the death of 34 and dislocation of over eight thousand households sued.	8 December 2019
5	የቅማንትን ጥያቄ በተመለከተ ከተሰጡት ቀደምት ውሳኔዎች መካከል ሁለቱ ከሕግ መንግሥታዊነት ይልቅ ፖለቲካዊ አቋሞች የጎሉባቸው ነበሩ ተባለ	Two prior decisions about Qimant quest were meant to be more of political than constitutional	9 October 2019
6	ከ2.8 ሚሊዮን በላይ ተፈናቃዮችን መልሶ ለማቋቋም 700 ሚሊዮን ዶላር ያስፈልጋል	Over 700 million dollar is required to relocate over 2.8 dislocates	10 April 2019
7	በማዕከላዊ ጎንደር ዞን ለተጠለሉ ተፈናቃዮች ቤቶቻቸው ሊሠሩላቸው ነው	Houses to be built for dislocates residing in Central Gondar zone	10 April 2019
8	የማዕከላዊ ጎንደር ዞን ተፈናቃዮችን ሰብዓዊ ድጋፍ የሚሻሙ መብዛታቸው ተነገረ	Swindlers raise from the humanitarians of Central Gondar	12 May 2019

		dislocates	
9	በምዕራብ ጎንደር በተፈጠረው ግጭት የነዳጅ ማመላለሻ ተሽከርካሪዎች ድንበር ላይ ቆመዋል	Fuel transport vehicles stopped at border due to the conflict at West Gondar	13 January 2019
10	በአማራ ክልል በተፈጠረው ግጭት ላይ ምክክር ተደረገ	Discussion held on the conflict in Amhara region	16 December 2018
11	ግጭት በተቀሰቀሰባቸው ሥፍራዎች በወታደራዊ ዕርምጃዎች ብቻ መፍታት ውጤቱ የከፋ እንደሚሆን ተገለጸ	Resolving conflicts through military actions alone said to have negative consequences	16 December 2018
12	በማዕከላዊ ጎንደር ዞን የተፈናቃዮች ቁጥር እየጨመረ መሆኑ ተገለጸ	The number of dislocates said to raise in Central Gondar Zone	17 March 2019
13	በጎንደር የተሰማራው የመከላከያ ኃይል አምስት ሰዎችን በቁጥጥር ሥር አዋለ	The military force assigned in detains five individuals	20 February 2019
14	በማዕከላዊ ጎንደር ጊዜያዊ መጠለያ ጣቢያዎች ሙሉ ለሙሉ እየተዘጉ ነው	Temporary reside camps shut down in Central Gondar zone	23 June 2019
15	ባለፈው ዓመት በክልሎች በተፈጠሩ ግጭቶች 1,200 በላይ ሰዎች መሞታቸው ተገለጸ	Over 1200 people killed in conflicts that emerged in regions last year	25 September 2019

### 3. Bekur

No.	News	Literal translation	Date published
1	ብሄራዊ እርቅ ያስፈልጋል	We need national reconciliation	6 December, 2019
2	ለሠላማዊ ውይይት ዝግጁ መሆኑን የቅማንት የማንነትና ራስ አስተዳደር ይከበርልኝ ማዕከላዊ ኮሚቴ ገለጸ።	Qimant Identity and Self-administration Committee discloses readiness for peaceful discussion	6 November, 2019
3	«የአማራን ሕዝብ ለጥፋት የሚፈልጉ ኃይሎችን በአንድነት፣ ክፍተት ሳይፈጥር፣ የፖለቲካ እና የግጭት ነጋዴዎችን ተልኮ ማክሸፍ አለበት።» አብን	“The public need to nullify the mission of politics and havoc traders through unity and integrity” NAMA	21 December, 2019
4	ከአማራ ብሄራዊ ክልላዊ መንግስት በወቅታዊ ጉዳይ ላይ የተሰጠ መግለጫ	State stance of ANRS on current affairs	17 October, 2019
5	በማዕከላዊ ጎንደር ዞን ጭልጋ አካባቢ እና ጎንደር ከተማ አዘዘ ክፍለ ከተማ ተፈጥሮ የነበረው ግጭት በከተማዋ እና በአካባቢው አሉታዊ ተፅዕኖ አሳድሯል።	The conflict in Central Gondar Zone Chilga woreda and Gondar City Azezo Sub city posed negative impact on the surrounding.	24 October, 2019

6	በጥናት ላይ የተመሰረተ የማያዳግም እርምጃ ለመውሰድና ለችግሮች መፍትሄ ለመስጠት እየተሰራ መሆኑን የክልሉ ሰላምና ደኅንነት ግንባታ ቢሮ አስታወቀ።	Regional Peace and Security Office discloses readiness to carry out research based and sustainable measures	16 December, 2018
7	የአማራ ክልል የማንነት ጥያቄዎችን የመለሰበት መንገድ ለሌሎች ምሳሌ የሚሆን እንደሆነ የፌዴሬሽን ምክር ቤት ገለጸ።	House of Federation hails Amhara region’s exemplary way of responding to identity	10 October, 2019
8	ጎንደር አካባቢ ተከስቶ የነበረው ችግር የተቀነባበረ ሴራ መሆኑን የፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎችና ድርጅቶች ተናገሩ።	Political parties say the turmoil evidenced around Gondar was organized conspiracy	17 October, 2019
9	የአማራ ክልል ደኅንነትና የጸጥታ ካውንስል የጋራ መግለጫና ውሳኔዎች	Briefing and decision of the Amhara region Security and safety council	24 October, 2019
10	“የሚያባሉን ሰዎች እድሜ ጠገብ ፖለቲከኞች ናቸው፤ ወጣቱ መንቃት አለበት።” ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር ዐብይ አሕመድ (ዶክተር)	“The youth need to be alert, the mess is caused by hoary politicians”	19 September, 2019
11	«የአማራን ክልል የጦርነት አውድማ ለማድረግ የሚጥሩ አካላት አይሳካላቸውም፤ ይህን ለማድረግ የሚመጡ ካሉም ለመከላከል አቅሙ፣ ብቃቱም አለን።» አቶ አገኘሁ ተሻገረ	“Groups who aim to change Amhara region to war zone will never succeed, we have complete power and readiness to deter our self if one comes to do so” Ato Agegnehu Teshager	26 September, 2019
12	የአማራን ክልል የጦርነት አውድማ ለማድረግ የሚጥሩ አካላት አይሳካላቸውም።	“Groups who aim to change Amhara region to war zone will never succeed	26 September, 2019