

*Addis Ababa
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**Challenges of Media Independence and Professional Practice
In Ethiopia:
The Case of Dehub FM 100.9 Radio**

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Journalism and Communication**

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**MEDIA INDEPENDENCE AND PROFESSIONAL
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Abstract

The objective of the study was to assess, identify and analyze the challenges of media independence and professional practice in Ethiopia; taking Debub FM radio as a case in point. The study assessed the current status of the freedom of expression and the press based on the views of the practitioners in media houses. The study examined whether a gap exists between the law and the professional practice. It also assessed the perception of audiences. The research employed qualitative methodology that helps approach the subject of the study from the view of the sources used. Data were gathered using semi-structured questions with different practitioners and audiences. The research used purposive sampling technique to choose key informants. The researcher deliberately selected participants for both the interview and focus group discussion from government media and the public in order to get relevant and diversified data which are significant to the study. The Hallin and Mancini's freedom of expression, media systems model, media independence, framing theory, websites and other relevant literatures were reviewed for the study. The findings of this research indicated that there is a gap between the law and its actual implementation. There is lack of political commitment in paying proper attention to the realization of the press law. In spite of the fact that the press law allows the media to express views or criticisms on various issues, the government is very critical of those views and less tolerant to very important criticisms of its activity. The absence of credible, strong and all inclusive and independent union of professional journalists have significantly affected the media and the profession. Regardless of very little progress, accessing information easily from government officials has been the great challenge for the journalists and this in turn affect press freedom and the perception of audiences. Based on the research findings, one can argue that the media independence and professional practice is depend on the contribution of educational institutions, the public, media and other related stakeholders. The study contended that the government could show commitment to the realization of the press law and make conducive environment for the journalists to practice professionally and inform, educate and entertain the public at large.

List of Acronyms

AAU - Addis Ababa University

UNESCO - United Nation Education, Science and Cultural Organization

FGD - Focus group discussion,

SNNPRG - Southern nations, nationalities and people's regional government

SRTA - South Radio and Television Agency

EBA - Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency

FM - Frequency modulation

EHRICO - The Ethiopian Human Rights Council

EPRDF - The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary and Democratic Front

UDHR - Universal declaration of human right

ICCPR - International covenant on civil and political rights

ACHPR/Afc- The African charter on human and people's rights

DPFEA - Declaration of principles on freedom of expression in Africa

IMF - International Monetary Fund

UN - United Nations

ICFJ -International Center for Journalists

IREX - International Research & Exchanges Board

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university, and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Clearly Ethiopia radio was the only national radio available for a long time in Ethiopian electronic media history. However, a number of FM radio channels have recently been operational in capital towns of different regions. According to Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (2011), the first FM radio channel in Ethiopia, which is FM 97.1, was launched in June 2000 G.C in Addis Ababa. It has been transmitting its various programs for 24 hours daily, focusing mainly on urban issues and confined to Addis Ababa city and nearby towns only. Beginning from its establishment, it has captured a large number of audiences. Years after the establishment of FM 97.1, other FM channels like Fana FM 98.1, Bahir Dar FM 96.9, Debub FM 100.9, Addis Ababa FM 96.3 and Dire Dawa FM 106.1 were established and started their transmission in their respective regions. Besides expanding such kinds of media channels, preventing unnecessary political intervention from their daily activity is significant for the development of the media industry in the country.

In order to achieve these desired goals, the government and private media owners have to be committed on making the channels operate independently as the press law permits, and should consider their audiences' need to be perceived positively towards their program. Most of the media industries have to know whether their audiences are listening or not on the programs that they transmit because the life of any media relies highly on the existence of active audiences. As a result of these, media practitioners often work with an image of audiences and what they want. Thus, this particular study focuses on Debub FM 100.9 radio.

Debub FM 100.9 is a radio station owned by the Southern Nation, Nationalities and People's Regional Government(SNNPRG) addressing its programs to the people of the region and some areas of neighboring regions. It is the first radio station in the region and began its transmission on March 2005 G.C and under the support of Southern Mass Media Agency that was established in accordance with proclamation No.87/2005 (Nagarit Gazetta (2005)). Its purpose of

establishment as stated in the proclamation is “...*discharge its responsibility by making a close and wide coverage of the life of the society in the ever rising international need for swift information exchange*” (Negarit Gazette, Proc No.87/2005:1).

Currently, Debut FM 100.9 has a transmitter capacity of 10 KW, and the station is headquartered in Hawassa. Furthermore, it has 8 re-broadcasting stations (each with a transmitter capacity of 1kw). In addition to Amharic, this radio station broadcasts its programs in more than 40 (forty) local languages (SRTA Journal, January, 2019). It is expected to have potential audiences of 15 million people in the ethnically diverse region.

The channel has 18 hour coverage a day, which is 126 hours a week. During the week, there are regular programs transmitted, which mainly deal with economic, social, cultural and developmental issues that take place every day (like news program). Throughout the week, at present, there are about 18 programs. These programs are seen to be changed according to the political situations, holidays (religious and national victory commemoration days), and other national and international events. When such things happen, the regular programs will be cancelled and current issues will be aired instead.

Among many of the programs, however, this study selects ten programs from informative, educative and entertainment categories to assess how much they are perceived by audiences. As a result, the study will identify the challenges of media independence and the issue of professional practice by examining the broadcasted programs and news in a year 2019/20. Hence, audiences, journalists, editors, media managers and government officials take the necessary action for the proper implementation of freedom of expression and the press law.

This study assesses the key challenges around the concept of media independence in relation with the practice of professional journalism and that of freedom of expression. It discusses the return of media practitioners and audiences’ perception towards the media activity and the notion that an operation might constitute some kind of crisis of media independence in the country. It examines the core conceptual issues and challenges in defining the term media independence, freedom of expression and the press law and framing. Some of the main arguments that are

presented by supporters and critics of media independence in respect to the role that any information should have in the public sphere are also explored in the study.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Ethiopia, in the post Derg regime, has not only introduced a new constitution that fits in the international level, but also ratified basic international agreements relevant to freedom of expression including the Universal Declaration of Human Right(UDHR), International Covenant on Human Rights(ICHR), the African Charter on Human Rights and People's Rights etc. And the same time gave equal recognition to all religion.

Especially, in independent media freedom of expression and the press is one of the fundamental rights that each human being has to be gifted with. Hence, Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia guarantees all citizens the right to freedom of expression without any interference. The rights include *“freedom to seek, collect and impart information and views of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing, or in print; in the form of art, or throughout any media channel of his choice”* Article 29/2. (Negarit Gazzeta (1995).

The Ethiopian broadcasting proclamation that was ratified in 1999, providing the power for the establishment of Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency as autonomous federal administrative agency with different powers and duties. One of the greatest effects behind the implementation of freedom of expression in the constitution is the provision of special and legal protection to the press. This protection is guaranteed under article 29(4) of the constitution that states:

“In the interest of free flow of information, ideas and opinions which are essential to the functioning of a self-governing order, the press shall as an institution, exercise legal protection to make sure its operational independence and its capacity to entertain diversified views and opinions” Article 29/4. (Negarit Gazzeta, (1995).

The constitution also puts boundaries as freedom of expression could be limited *“only through laws which are guided by the principle that freedom of expression and information cannot be incomplete on account of content or point of view expressed”* Article 29(6).

In order to provide appropriate service and satisfy the needs of the public, the media as well as its practitioners have to be responsible and accountable to the wider public by being their eyes and ears. Ethiopia as being the only nation in Africa that survived colonial oppression, the country has been suffering from poverty and under development for years. The reality in the country demands significant and progressive media operation in all regional and national level that would help the country address the social, political and economic challenges that were the feature of Ethiopia.

The Southern Nations, Nationalities and Regional Government FM 100.9 radio is one of those regional radios that need strong improvement on its production and presentation of variety of programs to satisfy its audiences and mobilize the society to contribute in the country's development. In the process, media can play its crucial role. However, those crucial roles can be made possible when there is government and other stake holders' commitment on providing good opportunities for the media practitioners. The media editors and managers are also responsible and accountable for the professional activity of the media. So they are expected to avoid or minimize their political orientation to realize the media law of the country.

In response to this need the current Ethiopian government granted media independence and press freedom to actualize professional practice. And the fundamental contribution of the press is only attainable through permissive media laws along with their proper realization of the media. In implementing the press law and freedom of expression in media houses Journalists' first duty is to seek truth and report it completely and fairly in a way that satisfies the audience. This is an accurate journalistic standard. The values of accuracy and fairness define the precise connection where journalistic ethics meets the professional standards that guide a reporter's daily activity. The range of issues includes judging the reliability of material sources, confirming credible facts, use of deceptive methods and decisions on deadline.

While exercising freedom of expression and the press in media, it is understood that Professional Journalism makes inflexible demands on its practitioners. It requires practitioners skill, to put aside one's own opinion, view or interest and instead to follow the truth on behalf of readers and

society; it asks us to throw away any personal agenda and to write based on facts and reporting, even if that runs counter to our own favorite causes. Journalism independence demands avoiding conflicts of interest and even the appearance of a conflict of interest in actual life.

When we see the media trend of Ethiopia the government media produces contents which often tend to be highly pro-government and stands for the interest of the state. According to Shimelis (2000) some reporters exhibit a deficit in the professional skills, ability or experience to ferret out facts, and Birhanu's (2009) claim that the mass media are inefficient in professionally satisfying the public and discharging their watchdog role, some of the journalists in Ethiopia are improperly practicing the profession in government and private electronic media. Mainly broadcasting media in Ethiopia is very indispensable for the country where most of the public are influenced by social, political and cultural values and are illiterate that could not use the print media broadly. Therefore, this study aimed at examining the main challenges of media independence and journalists' professional practice with regard to the relevant international legal frameworks for freedom of expression.

1.3. Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to indicate the challenges and opportunities of media independence and professional practices of South Television and Radio Agency. It also calls on media scholars to look into the Ethiopian media landscape seriously and come up with a relevant media model for the Ethiopian context.

Specific objectives are:

1. To explore the role of journalists towards freedom of expression and the broadcasting proclamation.
2. To investigate audiences' perception towards a variety of programs of Debu FM radio.
3. To assess how political orientations influence media practitioners in Debu FM radio.
4. To identify the challenges of media independence and professional practice on radio stations taking Debu FM as a case in point.

1.4. Research Questions

As part of the statement of the problem the following basic research questions are expected to be answered in the present study;

- a. What are the opportunities to exercising freedom of expression and the press in Ethiopia?
- b. What are the roles of professional journalists in practicing freedom of expression in the public media?
- c. How would the political interest of different parties affect the media independence, freedom of expression and professional practice while covering variety of issues in the channel?
- d. How does the journalist's intention and media owner's interest in each program would affect audiences' perception during transmission?
- e. What are the main challenges that the journalists face when exercising freedom of the press?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The main benefit of this study is to journalists, SRTA, and audiences who listen to Debut FM 100.9 radio programs. Journalists will acquire some knowledge and experience about clear, interesting, and simple ways of producing programs independently. By doing so, they will improve their professional output and carry out responsibilities. And audiences that will get information to understand easily, catching the ear and encouraging actions of the media. It will help identify factors affecting press freedom in Ethiopia.

Findings of the study will be vitally significant as an input to media regulators (broadcasting authority) and advocates of freedom of expression or the press, it will indicate the status of freedom of expression and the press and media independence in Ethiopia that help policymakers and arbitrators for knowing the right based claims of the public. In addition, it will help activate further discussions on press freedom and media independence in Ethiopia in relation to professional practice. It will also be helpful for private sectors to initiate them deal with the authority and will be significant to know the stance of their sector on freedom of expression in respect to their activity. On top of this, it will be hopefully significant being as a highlight for other researchers who want to deal their study in this area.

1.6. Scope of the Study

Since the study is an assessment of the challenges on media independence and professional practice with the implementation of the press law, it includes facts from journalists, editors and media managers working in Debub FM 100.9 radio channel. In addition, it includes the perception of audiences towards the programs. The views from professionals were included as the press law governs the operation of the media.

The study was conducted only in Debub FM 100.9 radio. This was so for different reasons. First, it was because the majority of the nation and nationalities of ethnic group of Ethiopian people are found in SNNPRG with diversified social and cultural identity. Second, when I was working there for about 2 years I realized that no researches made to assess the challenges of professional media practitioners. Third, the channel is expected to produce quality programs to satisfy the audiences' interest at large. Moreover, it has the responsibility in bringing equality in most of social and cultural aspects of life in the region.

1.7. Limitations of the study

This study has been conducted in a single media organization, Debub FM 100.9 radio. So as with any other qualitative research study, the results of this study may not be generalized to a larger population. However, it would provide detailed information on how Debub FM 100.9 radio prepares the production of social and political programs based on media independence and the information produced will help raise issues, research questions, and agendas for future large-scale research. Besides, since there is a shortage of archive programs in the station, producers separately might store the programs on their shelves in which it makes difficult to find out individual programs.

The fact that the study did not go through each article of freedom of the press and information proclamation to make analysis, rather it focused on the entirety of the law and its implementation. Interviewees' refusal to give an interview has limited the researcher's ability to collect data from a larger pool. The busy timetables of the journalists have also been another factor that discouraged some journalists from participating in the study.

1.8 Organization of the study

The study has been prepared into five chapters. Brief background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, scope, and limitation of the study are treated in the first chapter. Most pages of the second chapter are devoted to various related review literature to the study, including media independence, freedom of expression, and framing theory. The third chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the research methods i.e. the design employed in the study such as data gathering techniques and other related things. Presentation of findings and analysis makes chapter four. Finally, the last chapter, i.e. chapter five talks about the concluding marks and recommendations.

Chapter Two

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a review of related literature on media independence and professional practice in review with framing theory as theoretical framework and freedom of expression as conceptual framework of the study. It will also try to touch other issues that are significant to the study.

2.2. An overview of media in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is the oldest sovereign country in Africa and is an early lead in developing script written literature (Deneke, 1991 quoted in Shemelis, 2000, p.6). The development of modern periodicals can be traced only to the last years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth century (Negussie, 2006, p.6). According to Shemelis (2000), the beginning of print medium in Ethiopia was irregular and foreign inspired for the most part with its predominantly religious issue publication. The start has been traced by some to the mid-nineteenth century, when the first printing press was arranged in 1863 at Massawa by a Lazarist missionary known as Father Lorenzo Biancheri. Later on, the Swedish Evangelical Mission began a small press at Mankullo, near Massawa, in 1885.

According to Negussie (2006), father Bernard, a Franciscan missionary, is normally credited with publishing the first duplicated publication *Bulletin de la Leproserie de Harar* in French and Amharic that intended to win support against leprosy. As Shemelis (2000) put out, Father Bernard began publishing; using a duplicating machine (Roneograph), a weekly French-Amharic newspaper entitled '*Le Semaine d' Ethiopie* (that continued till 1911) in 1896. Just before the turn of the century, an Eritrean patriot Blatta Gabre Egziabher prepared a weekly hand written sheets as a newspaper (if it is called) in Amharic language which was distributed to the readers. The paper focused on unity, strength and modernization, though he was also critical of the feudal around Menelik (Negussie, 2006, p.6).

According to Negussie (2006), the first real Amharic newspaper, "Aimero - intelligence", was issued in 1902 by a Greek business man called Endreas E. Kavadia .The name "Aimero" was given by Emperor Menelik, and it had 4 pages and prepared weekly having a circulation of only 24 copies. Later on Kavadia acquired a duplicating machine and the stream reached two hundred copies. Hence during the reign of Menelik II, the press was encouraged though it was not understood as a means of development for national identity or in enhancing government powers.

The establishment of Berhann ena Selam printing press and Berhann ena Selam-government owned weekly newspaper by Ras Tefari Mekonnen in 1923 and 1925 respectively became a land mark in the history of the Ethiopian press. Berhan ena Selam became a medium for addressing progressive views by some of the young intellectuals of the country at that time despite many poorly written articles, subject limitation, less attractive of the paper and limited circulation (Shimelis, 2000, p.8). According to Tadesse (2000), Emperor Minilik, who is the founder of modern Ethiopia, played an important role in establishing diplomatic relations with European states.

According to Shemelis(2000) and Tadesse(2000), the progress of the Ethiopian press was broken up for about five years (1935-1941) as a result of the country's occupation by Mussolini's forces despite some like Bandirachin (latter renamed as Sendeq Alamachin) of the liberation force. The publication industry reasonably expanded in the number of periodicals and the size of circulation as witnessed by the coming out of Addis Zemen, the Ethiopian Herald, Yezareyitu Ethiopia in 1941, 1943 and 1952 respectively. As Tadesse (2000) states until 1990's, running the mass media in general was the responsibility and role of the government. Woletaw and Tedbabe (1990 E.C) quoted in Shimelis (2000) stated that the period of military dictatorship from 1974 to 1991 was one of government control of media and the flow of information. Unlike the proclamation of 26/1967 which did not specify the possibilities for private press, the constitution of 1987 contained freedom of expression although its actuality.

The future of the media did change in the after math of the collapse of the dictatorial regime in 1991. According to Shemelis (2000), the assumption of power in 1991 by the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front ushered in a period of fundamental transformation in the

political economy of the country. As part of the democratization process, the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front-led government granted freedom of the press. The recognition to freedom of the press was in tandem with the new government's acceptance of the 1948 Universal Declaration of the United Nations (217 A/111), especially Article 19, states:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and thoughts via any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Therefore, following the new change the press started growing. In fact the number of newspapers and magazines diminished after the nationwide election of 2005. According to the website of Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority, presently 6 newspapers and 9 magazines, a total of 15 periodicals circulated in more than one regional state in September, 2020 G.C. As to the broadcast media, radio that was begun in 1935 at Akaki town in south-eastern part of Addis Ababa stopped its transmission till 1941 though the fascists installed their own radio for their propaganda in the meantime. And following the evacuation of the Italians, the radio station left behind was restored and put into operation, so normal radio broadcasting started in 1941(Ethiopian Radio Magazine, 2000,p.6 & Negussie, 2006,p.9).

The World Federation of Lutheran Churches broadcaster, Radio Voice of the Gospel aired religious and entertaining materials since 1963, Tadesse (2000).The Educational Mass Media Center, which has been established by the Ministry of Education in 1965, has also played an important role in the development of mass communication in Ethiopia (Negussie, 2006,p.12). Television broadcasting which began in Ethiopia in 1964 was the result of both the country's wish to catch up with the rest of the world in information service and the medium's potential for education and in shaping Haileselassie's personality cult. In addition, it was a time that the Organization of African Unity was established (Negussie, 2006, p.11). According to the website of Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority, there are about 110 broadcasters of which twenty five (25) are government/public owned broadcasters, including subscription thirty six (36) commercial broadcasters and forty nine (49) community broadcasters.

The change of the regime from military dictatorship to the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front brought a shift in the state of the print media; it did bring the same change on the broadcast media as shown in subsequent broadcast proclamations, i.e. the broadcast proclamation of 1999 allowed the launch of private broadcast media although the right of privately owning such type of media is limited only to the medium of radio. After the seizure of power by Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the media are allowed to operate based on the regulations laid down by the government and hence the 1992 press proclamation, 1999 and 2007 broadcast proclamation and the 2008 freedom of the mass media and information proclamation are the major ones put into effect to govern the media in the country.

According to Getaneh (2012), In order to address the criticisms of the law which was in operation since 1992, the government introduced two draft press laws in 2003 though neither version was adopted into law. After this, the ministry of information released another draft press proclamation in May 2004. Indisputably, the drafts laid the ground for the draft press law and nearly after six years of the introduction of the first draft law that the Ethiopian house of peoples' representatives passed the mass media and freedom of information proclamation on July 1, 2008(Ross, 2010, p.1058).

As stated in Negarit Gazzeta of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2008), the need to amend the existing press law and replace it by a new law is commensurable with the ongoing democratic transformation in Ethiopia drove the formulation of the 2008 proclamation of the media and information. The prelude of the proclamation promised better conditions for the media mentioning the grant of free expression and media freedom in the constitution including the prohibition of censorship. According to Getaneh (2012), the good thing in this proclamation is the incorporation of freedom of information act, which was not given any special place in the previous press law, although some restrictions are also there.

According to Ross (2010), the press law restricts the operation of the media despite the government's liberal press law preamble. The defamation provision put out that any false accusation and defamation against the executive, legislative and judiciary will be prosecutable

despite the victim's claim of any charge. Ross (2010) expressly forwarded the oppressive nature of this provision in that:-

“Members of the private media and even the public will likely be scared by the possibility of prosecution for any comments they make about government business or officers. Without the freedom to comment on any and all news, whether regarding the government or not, the media cannot fulfill its responsibility to provide complete and accurate information to the public. Additionally, the public's right to receive the information is clearly violated.” (p. 1060).

The idea is that the government may accuse on the base of any article written on its officials who even may disregard whether the article sound defamatory. It is also the same to say that if the media stop writing and commenting concerning officials probably the right of the people to get information is forgotten. The fines and retributions seem very repressive and formidable.

According to Ross (2010), the fines for mere media offenses imposed by the Ethiopian Press Law may easily be seen as cruel and unusual punishment. Furthermore, exorbitant fines will help perpetuate oppression by making journalists unable to pay, media out of business for even minor criminal offence. While the government is not using the Press Law to directly censor the media, the threat of legal action, the requirements for obtaining a media license, and the consequences of a violation will indirectly censor what the press is willing to publish.

According to Ross (2010), when the media are forced to balance the risks of publishing reports questioning government officials or policies against the importance of broadcasting critical information, there is inherently a form of censorship involved. This means any channel that attempt to write and publish or broadcast any article critical of government and or its officials will risk the aftermath consequence. Despite the fact that the government claimed the press law will create amicable environment for the exchange of information, it tends to do the opposite in that it allowed the government to prosecute journalists and members of the media for expressing their views and sets strong foothold for government regulation of the media.

2.3. The independent media

The media is a significant means for democratic control, regulation, and for civic activism to hold governments accountable and responsible for service delivery. With less censorship, less economic interests in the media by the ruling powers, and more legal protection of free press, the media is more likely to be able to perform its informative and questioning roles in society. So, what matters is media independence: legally, politically, and economically. Independent media concerns the production of information, and is therefore at the beginning of the chain of effects of government accountability.

In 2000 the IREX began covering only European countries. But after years it extended its measurement to the Middle East and North Africa in 2005 and to Africa in 2007, and covers 80 countries today. It is not in Asia and Latin America. The Media Sustainability Index measures, like the two press freedom indices, media independence. But it covers it more broadly. It includes an indicator on whether the public media reflects the views across the political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest; and a pointer on whether a broad range of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources. But the large majorities of indicators overlaps with or are identical to those in the two press freedom indices.

According to Kumar (2006), Independent media indicates non state media or media enterprises owned by individuals, corporations, and nonprofit organizations. Such a definition sets aside separate considerations about the possible control over media by vested economic and political interests. An independent media was important in building a functioning democratic system. The success of democratization efforts often depended on a free and unfettered flow of information and idea.

According to Kumar (2006), there are two reasons why the media is not independent, first is the government control or regulator, and the second is control by the owners of media houses. While the government practices its control on the independence of media through the use of censorship. Other media owners, on the other hand, are motivated by profit. The ability to realize and inspect

the connection between press and democracy is important because media has the power to tell a society's story and thereby influence thoughts, beliefs and behavior.

The media independence is the absence of external regulation, control and influence on an organization or individual working in the media. The notion of media independence has often been contested as a normative principle in media policy and journalism. The public need independent media because it is important for growth, services and reduction of poverty, as well as being an important end in itself. Encouraging an open and efficient press serves to improve the environment for long-term social, political and economic stability.

2.4. Alternative media

In many developed countries, alternative media are media which are alternatives to the business or government-owned mass media. Proponents of alternative media often argue that the state owned media are not credible due to their unfair reporting, or serve the interests of those in power. While sources of alternative media can also be unfair (sometimes proudly so), the bias tends to be significantly different than that of the state owned media, Hence alternative as such advocacy journalism tends to be a component of many alternative outlets. Because the term “alternative” by itself; has the implication of self-marginalization.

With variety of reasons some media outlets now prefer the term “independent” over “alternative. In such circumstances, it is mostly difficult to identify those outlets which are really independent from those that are under the control and influenced by the government. For example, a newspaper may provide credible, quality, fair, unbiased coverage of the economy, education, health, and other social issues, but still avoid reporting on the government. This issue is particularly compounded by issues of self-censorship, soft censorship, and other subtle government influences. (www.rienner.com)

2.5. Self-censorship

It is the activity of censoring or identifying one's own practice out of fear to the sensibilities of others without any authority directly enforcing one to do so. It is often practiced by film producers and publishers, news anchors, journalists, musicians and other kinds of authors. In

some of authoritarian countries, creators of artworks may avoid material that the government might find contentious for fear of sanction by their governments. (www.rienner.com)

2.6. Soft censorship

Soft or sometimes called indirect, censorship is the practice of influencing news coverage by applying financial pressure on media companies that are deemed significant of a government or its policies and rewarding media outlets and individual journalists who are seen as friendly to the government. This problem goes mostly unnoticed, yet can have a dramatic influence on the reporting of media outlets that can otherwise be considered independent. (www.rienner.com)

2.7. Media development

Many organizations participate in efforts to help the development of free and independent media in countries around the world. Such common efforts at free media development include: journalists training and education; improving the legal environment for media; efforts to improve the sustainability of existing outlets; media literacy training; digital media capacity building and integration; infrastructure development; and monitoring and evaluation efforts. Media for development has been applied to agriculture, education, healthcare, business, disaster relief, corruption prevention, minority empowerment, and local community engagement, among other development goals. (www.rienner.com)

2.8. The media institution regulations

Although the government is most probably the important regulator through its legislative framework, it is not always the only one. Media institutions are part of the society and hinging on this broader perspective: policy that will affect the media directly or in other way is made by various interest groups in society which also interact with each other (Oosthuizen, 2001, p.164). Hence there are forces in a society that come together to influence the functioning of the media. As Snyman quoted in Oosthuizen (2001) points out, the most decisive source of policy formulation is the state. Within the jurisdiction of the state, political parties (in multiparty system) can formulate their policies on information and the communication media.

All government and non-government institutions or individuals outside the media and in the position to regulate the media in some or other way could explicitly and implicitly lay down media policy in the external framework. These parties may simply be referred as regulators and

include groups or institutions like governments, advertisers, pressure groups and the expectation of the journalistic profession itself (ibid,p.166). Regulators function within the external framework and are institutions or measures that determine or codetermine media content from outside.

2.8.1. Government as a regulator

According to Gerbener(1977) quoted in Oosthuizen(2001), the nature of the connections between a national government and the media is decisive for what the media are allowed to publish for legal, normative and structurally subject to the regulation of political institutions. This implies that the media of the nation is highly shaped by the prevailing political power in the country. Concerning governments' control of the media Oosthuizen(2001) stated:

Governments have specific expectations about how media should fulfill their role in society. These expectations are normative pointers that governments provide to the media and could, of themselves, become forms of intrinsic regulations. i.e. the media will tend to act in certain way for the governments want them to act like that and any deviation from such expectation will result in negative feedback from governments in the form of criticism and hazards, if this feedback effected in corrective action by the media, it serves as indirect form of control (p.167). Therefore, the type of political power can have a profound effect on the nature of the media system in a country and region in particular on the rights afforded to the media, the restrictions that are placed on them and expectations about how they should behave in order to best serve the society (ibid,p.167).

2.8.2. Other regulators

In addition to government, norms (unwritten rules of conduct that apply within a community) tend to regulate media functioning. With regard to the news media the customs state what to be published and what may not be published .i.e. how the output of the media tastes to the recipients of the media content (Oosthuizen, Faure & de Wet, 1991 quoted in Oosthuizen, 2001, p. 178). Oosthuizen stated that pressure groups can also influence content of media. Individuals join for their voices to be heard and pressurize journalists to change or omit stories. He further argued that advertisers are guilty of subtle manipulation and hence influencing news content.

In view of present economic demand, the newspapers are in challenge of producing news stories that may anger their largest advertisers however this effect is depends on the degree of dependence of the newspapers' income from advertisement (Hierbert et al 1991 quoted in Oosthuizen, 2001, p.179). Journalism profession can also act as a regulator, and journalists have to make complicated decisions in their daily work and they use ethical codes to guide them in making these decisions for codes and journalistic conventions or professional standards of the media works are important in determining media content (ibid,p.181).

There is a disagreement inherent to the concept of regulating what are supposed to be the free means of expression and information in a modern society. Regulation by its very nature sets limits to freedom, which is the most basic principle of democratic society. At the very least, this means that there have to be clear and convincing reasons for regulation (media regulation, 2011).

The grounds given in support of media regulation include: the protection of public order and support for instruments of government and justice, the defense of individual and sectional rights and interests that might be out of action by unrestricted use of public means of communication, the encouragement of access, freedom to communicate, variety, diversity and universal provision as well as protecting communicative and cultural ends chosen by the people for themselves, maintaining respect for public mores in matters of taste, respecting human rights of expression and protection from insult and prejudice, preventing danger to society, especially by way of harm to children and young people from undesirable content and indecency, and the promotion of the efficiency and development of the communication system, by way of technical standardization, innovation, connectivity and universal provision(ibid).

Similarly, media regulation is sought for issues of private concern like; protecting individual rights to reputation, preventing offence to individuals, avoiding harm to individuals from violent or perverted content, protecting property rights in communication and information (ibid). When talking about an aspect of media regulation, the point that needs to be thought is the insulation of the media from falling under the monopoly of a single body that do not let entertain diverse voices. As the regulation of the media Hitchens(2006) put:

“The media have become the town square. For citizens, the media is a major source for information and commentary on public issues. To be an efficient contributor to this democratic process, the media, as a channel for ideas and information and generator of debate, must be able to offer a variety of voices and views, and operate independently, without undue dominance by public or private power (p. 32).”

The idea is that the media which grant multifaceted benefit should not fall under private or government power supremely. If the media are within the sheer power of the government or the private power then they will not serve the people as expected in the right thinking for they cannot endure the influence of the power of the owners.

2.9. Conceptual Framework

2.9.1. The Basis of the Freedom of Expression and the Press

According to Pearson (2004) Freedom of expression being an important human right, various scholars have been advocating for it since the seventeenth century. Freedom of expression is the prerequisite for the search for truth: as Milton, Locke and Mill argued, it is an instrument for truth to be discovered and thrived. Mill in his famous essay on ‘Liberty’ argued that without freedom of expression we might be deprived of the opportunity to learn the reality-if we have not discovered it yet, and we cannot perfect our partial knowledge of the truth we have learnt, or will not have the opportunity to have a clearer understanding of received truths (Pearson, 2004, p.25-28; Gedion, 2010, p.202).

According to Hitchens, L. (2006), enabling free discussion will help to arrive at a discovery of the truth. Free speech is necessary if true facts and reliable opinions are to be ascertained and false claims discerned and hence enabling truth to be discovered. Speech must be unrestricted to enable individuals to develop, if they are to develop as persons with their own sets of beliefs and opinions, then they must be free to engage in discussion and to hear ideas. This is an argument for free speech which appears to be more concerned with the interests of the speaker, although it may also be in the interests of the individual, and his or her development and self-fulfillment, to be able to have access to speech as a recipient, since the ideas and opinions of others may contribute to the individual’s development (Gedion, 2010, p.204; Hitchens, 2006, p.33). And this

helps the media in the dissemination of material which may contribute to the individual's self-development.

Freedom of expression is essential to citizens' participation in democracy and as check on government. This explanation implies that freedom of speech is necessary for the proper functioning and accountability of democratic government. Freedom of speech helps citizens to receive information, to debate and assess government actions and policies, and so to include in the democratic process (Zelezny, 2011, p.39; Hitchens, 2006, p.33). The proponents of this view like Alexander Meikle John claim that democracy as a system of self governance requires that citizens be well informed of issues or events of public interest so they could make informed decisions taking into account all available alternatives. It serves to deter or bring to light abuses of power by public officials (Zelezny, 2011, p.39).

Freedom of speech in fact helps assure social stability, different to the traditional assumption of some government officials that it interrupts society. This is due to a free flow of information allows society to see its challenges better and to respond with continual, incremental adjustments. It also permits unsatisfied individuals to expel their anger before they reach the boiling point, a sort of therapeutic or safety valve effect. On the other side, government control of speech in a mission for "order" breeds fear, resentment, and hate-the perfect mix for social unrest and a violent eruption against authority (Zelezny, 2011, p. 39).

The media, in addition to their entertainment role, have an important function providing information, and facilitating and encouraging the public debate that is seen as essential to the functioning of a democracy. Governments, politicians, and public figures are rarely able to obtain access to citizens in efficiently large numbers except through the media and so the media have become the town square, be able to offer a variety of voices and views, and operate independently, without undue dominance by public or private power (Hitchines, 2006, p.31).

To the extent that the practice of democracy requires the exchange and debate of information and ideas, the media are a participant in the democratic process, as well as forming a space which facilitates that interchange(ibid,p.32). The role of the media is significant in elevating the spirit

and initiation of citizens' towards democratic debates that has to do with their life and that is why they are equated with town square.

2.9.2. Access to information

According to Kahn(2003) quoted in Mendel (2008) the free flow of information and ideas lies at the heart of the very concept of democracy and is significant to effective respect for human right. In the absence of respect for the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, it is not possible to exercise the right to vote, human rights abuses take place in secret, and there is no way to expose corrupt and inefficient government. Central to the guarantee in exercising a free flow of information and ideas is the principle that public officials hold information not for themselves but on behalf of the public. These officials hold a vast wealth of information and, if this is held in secret, the right to freedom of expression, guaranteed under international law and most constitutions, are seriously undermined.

According to Mendel (2008), effective involvement at all levels depends, in fairly precise and clear ways, on access to information, including information held by public officials. The people should have access to information in order to participate in the decision and policy making of the government, if not for the government to get inputs from them. In addition, democracy involves accountability and good governance. The public have the right to examine the actions of their leaders and to participate in full and open debate about those actions. They must be able to obtain the performance of the government and this depends on access to information about the state of the social systems, economy and other matters of public concern.

One of the most effective methods of addressing poor governance is through open and informed debate. Apart from the political feature of the right to information, the right to access one's personal information is part of respect for fundamental human dignity, but it can also be central to effective and efficient personal decision-making. The right to information is most commonly related with the right to request, and receive information from public officials. Most right to information laws also puts an obligation on public bodies to circulate information on a proactive or routine basis, even in the absence of a request (ibid, p. 5).

According to Global Campaign for Free Expression(2004), freedom of information is a significant component of an internationally secured right to freedom of expression, which includes the right to seek, receive, as well as to pass on information and views of all kinds regardless of frontiers. So, it got recognition during the first meeting of United Nation General Assembly in 1946, which adopted Resolution no.59 (1) stating: freedom of information is a fundamental human right and the standard of all other freedoms to which the United Nation is consecrated.

In the same way, the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa affirms the principle that everyone has a right to access to information apprehended by public officials, subject to clearly defined regulations recognized by the law. The notion of freedom of information is based on the principle which public officials hold information, not for themselves but as custodians of the public good, and everyone should have the right to access this information, subject only to clearly defined exceptions to be determined by the law (ibid, p. 23). This access to information should be led by the principle of maximum revelation.

2.9.3. Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Ethiopia has signed various conventions on freedom of expression; among such conventions is the universal declaration of human rights. Though signatory states are expected to act in accordance with this convention, there is no legal and binding force. Article 19, 1948 of the Universal Declaration states; *the right to freedom of expression includes freedom to seek, receive, and impart information through any media and regardless of frontiers.* This right is limited by Article 29, which allows restrictions *“solely for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of others and of joining the requirements of morality, public category and the general benefit in a democratic society.”* Furthermore, the rights explain in the Universal Declaration *“may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.”*

Article 29 of the 1995 constitution of Ethiopia affirmed the article of Universal Declaration of Human Rights on freedom of expressions. In addition, the constitution in article 9 (4) states; *“all*

international agreements confirmed by Ethiopia are an integral part of the land.” Hence citizens are entitled to seek, receive, and impart information.

2.9.4. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that Ethiopia approved in June 11, 1993, (was originally adopted in 1966) entered into force in March 1976 and it states that:

1. *Everyone shall have the right to hold views and ideas without interference.*
2. *Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression and the press.*
3. The practice of the rights provided for 'in paragraph 2 of this article' takes place with special concern and responsibilities.

Therefore, it may be an issue to certain restrictions, but these shall only provide by law and are necessary:

- a) For the respect of the rights or status of others;
- b) For the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Art.19).

2.9.5. African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity adopted by the African charter on human and peoples' right in 1981 and it entered into force in 1986. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; that Ethiopia approved on June 15, 1998, guarantees the right to freedom of expression as follows:

- 1) Every individual shall have the right to receive variety of information
- 2) Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his views through the law (African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, Art.9).

2.9.6. Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa

The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, session on its thirty second meeting, in Banjul, Gambia, from 17th to 23rd October, 2002 adopted the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa. The introductory explanation of the Declaration states:-

“Re-affirming the fundamental importance of freedom of expression and information as an individual’s human right, as a cornerstone of democracy and as a means of ensuring respect for all human rights and freedoms.”

In addition, the declaration under the guarantee of freedom of expression section states that:-

“Freedom of expression including the right to seek, receive and disseminate information and ideas, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other related form of communication, including across frontiers, is a fundamental and unchallengeable human right and an indispensable component of democracy. Everyone shall have an equal opportunity to exercise the right to freedom of expression and to access information without discrimination” (Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, 2002).

It is a basic and absolute human right and an indispensable component of democracy. Everyone shall have an equal opportunity to practice the right to freedom of expression and to access information without discrimination (Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, 2002). The media’s freedom of expression is not a privilege of the individual but an unmistakable public good, suggesting that the public interest is a weighty factor in assessing the way in which media actors exercise their freedom (Gies, 2008, p.93).

2.9.7. Windhoek Declaration

The Windhoek Declaration was authorized during the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization seminar on promoting a free and pluralistic African press, held in Windhoek, Namibia, from April 29 to May 3, 1991. Since then the last day which was May 3, is commemorated as World Press Freedom Day. The declaration confirms the significance of freedom of expression, media freedom, access to information and free press which African countries are encouraged to act in favor of. Moreover, it states that; *“Consistent with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the establishment, maintenance and nurturing of an*

independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development of democracy in a nation, and for economic development”(Windhoek Declaration, Article 1,1991).

Any restriction on freedom of expression shall be stated by law, serve a lawful interest and [must] be necessary in a democratic society (Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, 2002 and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966). According to Global Campaign for Freedom of expression (2004), not only is the restriction based in the law but also the relevant law must meet certain standard of clarity and accessibility. The requirement of necessity means that even where measures seek to prevent a legitimate interest, the government must demonstrate that there is a “pressing social need” for the measures; the restriction must be proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued and the reasons given to justify the limitation must be relevant and sufficient.

Therefore any sort of indirect restriction and impediment on the practice of the press is not justifiable and is an attempt to bridle the progress and improvement of freedom of expression and the press. The operation of the media hinges on the political system of the country: in a country where there is better political condition running through a well-established democratic system, the purpose of the media will go advance in benefiting the people. However, in countries with fledgling democracy, the media are engulfed by myriad problems originating from within and out of the media house. As Ethiopia is one of those countries struggling to deepen the system of democracy, the media operating in the country are facing many obstacles in their daily routine.

The absence of strong professional association, the division among the media based on political lines and their being used as instrument for politics, the great role of the government through media regulation, the presence of less autonomy of journalists coupled with low level of professionalism being reflected in the media is attributed to the presence of polarized media system in the country. In such media systems, the relationship between the private media and the government is not healthy. The government capitalizes on any mistake the media may commit to further tighten media regulation. So freedom of expression and the press will be eroded by those who exercise it and from administrative body.

2.10. The limitations of the freedom of the press in Ethiopia

According to Getaneh (2013), the destiny of independent media in Ethiopia has been subject to a qualitative evaluation on the question: The research showed that the rhetoric about the consequences of un-stability in political economy and social values of the country remains strong as part of state oppression on media independence. However, the reason for the decline of freedom of press and speech for the past years has been an intention to keep the ongoing term of EPRDF for additional terms through realizing legal boundaries (censorship) on media. To hold the media under regulation the study presented the confirmation which the government created difficulties also known as censorship such as registration of media organizations through the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority, enforcing criminal codes for the offense of official authorities, terrorism codes, and unauthorized threats towards journalists.

In addition to that, the study identified some deficits such as lack of professionalism among journalists, lack of access to information, and the internet. Given the results of secondary and primary sources, the research identifies that the freedom of press possibly will not be free under the current administration and will continue facing censorship, if international organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, UN, Human Rights Watch will not put prerequisites before aiding Ethiopia.

2.10.1. Local studies and background to the current press law

This part assessed local studies carried out in relation to freedom of expression and the press. It also highlighted the underpinnings for the enactment of the law that is operational today. The first of those studies which is articulated to the right of citizens to access information held by public bodies was conducted by Getahun in 2005. The study was induced by the right granted to citizens of the country to access information including the right to seek, receive and impart information in the 1995 constitution of Ethiopia.

The research used predominantly survey method and interview as secondary to gather the data. The research revealed that public institutions in Ethiopia are not effectively discharging their responsibilities of informing the public about their activities. The reason is partly attributed to

the absence of specific legislation governing public access to government information. This research was done in the period where there was no particular information legislation.

Merone Berhane on her part studied the Ethiopian media law with particular reference to the 1999 broadcast proclamation in which she critically examined the constitutionality of the broadcast proclamation of the specified period. She found some contradictory and inconsistent clauses that enforce undue limitation on freedom of expression. A year after Meron's study, there was another study by Netsanet Yilma, who examined the Ethiopian broadcasting media regulation till 2007. Using interview and document analysis, he found that private broadcasters and licensees do not work together; the new broadcasting regulation policy gives broadcasters a chance to appeal, and most importantly, imprisonment has been excluded from the punitive articles.

Hallelujah Lulie dealt with A Political History of the Private Press in Democratic Ethiopia 1991-2007. In so doing, he used informal conversation and in-depth interview techniques to gather the data. He identified that the Ethiopian independent press failed to play its role as an independent institution in the new system. He set it that the press performed irresponsibly and unprofessionally against internationally accepted ethical and professional yardsticks of journalism creating a negative state-press relation where one considers the other as an arch enemy.

The study on media independence and freedom of the mass media and information proclamation focuses on how the current press law is operating on the ground. So the core of this study is assessment of the realization of the press law through the basic mirrors of freedom of expression and the press as well as media independence and professional practice. Successive studies on the various press laws enacted at different times are essential in order to understand the changes and the accompanying features introduced. Hence the press law which functioned for about sixteen years since 1992 was replaced in 2008 by freedom of the mass media and information proclamation. So this press law has been in operation for the last years.

The current press law is established on the foundation of the general direction put for the Ethiopian media in 2002, as part of the key players in the process of building a democratic structure of the country. The government has been closely monitoring the activities of the press since the inception of the private press and making sure that the press is discharging its responsibilities: informing the public. The media contributes a lot to mobilize the public and create consensus among the public. So to make sure that the media play a key role in the growth effort of the nation and to create conducive media environment, it was found important to enact a new press law (Ministry of Information, Press and Audio Visual Unit, 2002, p.109-126).

The realities of the Ethiopian media are construed as the preconditions for making the draft of the new mass media and information freedom proclamation. Hence a meticulous assessment on the role of the Ethiopia media for developing the country necessitated the draft of the new proclamation (Shemelis Kemal, Zemedkun Tekle, Tesfaye Goyte, Fantahun Asres, 2001, p.12). The media play important role in strengthening further the process of building a democratic system that has been underway and in creating national consensus that can perpetuate the successive higher economic growth being registered. In a democratic system the media are key players in shaping and molding societal outlook by disseminating current and accurate information. They give out as democratic meeting for unlimited discussions and debates on various national issues and having understood these roles of the media, the Ethiopian constitution declares that the media should be given the necessary protection (ibid, p. 12).

Since the period of the transitional government censorship is abolished and the necessary legal frame works that are important for the growth and existence of the media have been set. As a result it became possible to see many private periodicals in the market and the broadcast frequency wave which was under government monopoly was allowed to the private sector that resulted in the existing commercial Fm radio stations. That being the case, the growth of the media both in broadcast and print is not satisfactory. Both the private and government owned media are constrained by many factors. Among the factors that affect both the private and government owned media: Low level of journalistic profession, absence of professional association that works on capacity building and ethical issues, absence of detailed law procedure

that helps access government information, absence of structural and legal instruments that help protect professional autonomy and absence of autonomy of editors(ibid,p.13).

Factors influencing the private media are inclusive of higher unethical practice that came up with reports and media products which can endanger the national interest of the country, the reliance of the private media for their revenue on illegal support from both the external and internal forces other than advertisement. In addition, absence of institutional and structural procedure that helps reinforce the media industry based on free market and rule of law. Hence to avoid these factors constraining both the private and government owned media and to build a good media industry, making a move on having structural and institutional changes is necessary. So freedom of the mass media and information proclamation is a leap forward in this regard. The new proclamation is made so as to avoid the weaknesses of the proclamation which has been in operation since 1992 and to bring changes on the aforementioned media problems (ibid, p.14).

The press proclamation that operated till 2008 had its shortcomings: the registration system created unnecessary pressure on the media in addition to its license renewal system. The previous press law included articles that contained criminal decrees and responsibilities which should have been in the criminal law. The previous law (1992) lacked decrees that would ensure diversity of media outlet and content. It did not have a system to reduce accusations on the press and above all it did not have details on the issue of access to information and also on those categories of prohibited information along with the obligations of information delivery. Therefore to address the above problems which did not get any solution in the press law of 1992, it is important to initiate and enact a new press law. Hence mass media and information proclamation was enacted in 2008 (ibid, p.15).

2.10.2. Media Law and Practice in Ethiopia

The contemporary freedom of the press and information proclamation has five parts under fifty one (51) articles: The very first part of the proclamation is a prelude about the need to freedom of the mass media and information maintained by the core perceptions from the constitution on freedom of expression and the press. The first part of the proclamation deals with general provisions about the proclamation, definitions and statements about freedom of the press. The

second part is about the right to engage in mass media activities including issues of ownership and registration. The third part in fact the broadest section of the proclamation and it is predominantly concerned with access to information(the right to access information), request to obtain information, duty to publish, exempted information, appeals against refusal of information among others. The fourth part deals with the rights and responsibilities of the media, which talks about the right of reply or correction. The last and the fifth part of the proclamation are about the lawful measures to be taken on the media for failing to act pursuant to the law.

2.11. Theoretical framework

2.11.1. Framing Theory

As Price and his colleagues noted down and cited in Scheufele (1999: 103), the framing and presentation of an issue or event in the media can affect how recipients of the news or programs realize and decode the stories. The challenges of media independence and professional practice is becoming world's number one problem. Thus, how the issue is framed by the media and the journalists can affect the public's interest and the response received from the audience regarding the issue. Weaver (2007) defines media frames by quoting authors like Tankard and others as: the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and recommends what the issue is through the use of selection, prominence, exclusion, and elaboration. In her typical study of media technology, Tuchman (1976:1066) noted and quoted by Miller and Riechert (2000:47) that framing implies identifying some items as facts, not others.

Similarly, in a study of news coverage of students for democratic society, Gitlin (1980:6-7) observed that frames are the principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of implicit little theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters. These statements emphasize selection and emphasis of facts. Framing allows journalists to focus on facts and still shape discussion; either consciously or unconsciously (Gitlin, 1980:6-7). The process of framing involved in both definitions is similar, that is, they each take into account selecting, emphasizing, decoding and with the exception of as the principle additives of framing. Weaver (2007) has provided more than one definition for media framing by quoting Entman (1993, 2007). His famous definition of framing is: to choose some aspects of a perceived reality and make them

more salient in a communicating text, in this kind of manner as to sell a selected problem definition, causal interpretation, ethical evaluation, and/or remedy advice for the item described.

Using the equal topic, Entman (2007) defines framing as: *the technique of culling a few elements of perceived truth and assembling a story that highlights connections amongst them to promote a particular interpretation*. In different words, framing is supposed to make the audience think or experience in a positive manner about the issue under discussion. According to Entman's (2007) definitions, well organized frames more often have four functions: problem definition, causal analysis, moral judgment and remedy promotion. In the first place, frames define problems that are significant to the public. Then, they verify and highlight causes of the problem. Thirdly, they encourage moral evaluations by providing the causal analysis. And finally, they promote remedies, so the concerned bodies can come up with favored policies. Frames can influence the way people recognize and interpret issue or events (Shen, 2004:123-125).

Similarly, McManus and Dorfman (2002) state that: news frames are influential in making certain elements of issues and events accessible for mental processing while ignoring others. We know levels of contexts in stories mostly influence comprehension. Some of the news coverage appears to promote a political or social reaction while others elicit only indifference. As to Carlyle et al (2008:168) the success of frames is expressed in their ability to make certain elements and viewpoints more significant, thereby increasing the chances that certain diagrams of interpretation will be aroused. Frames can be obtained in the properties of news coverage, thus encouraging certain interpretations and understandings of issues. The media diverts the public attention to certain topics, it decides where people think about, and the journalists prefer the topics. This is the real agenda setting thought. The way that the news is brought, the frame in which the news is presented, is also a choice made by journalists.

Thus, framing implies to the technique journalists and media gatekeepers arrange and present issues they cover and the way audiences interpret. Frames are intangible concept that serves to structure or organize social meanings. Frames affect the perception of audiences towards the issue, this form of agenda-setting not only tells what to think about, but also how to think about it. The term framing has been used interchangeably with concepts like agenda setting and

priming (Scheufele, 1999:110). Entman (2007) suggests agenda setting to be considered as an alternative name for successfully performing the first function of framing: defining problems worthy of public and government attention.

2.11.2. Kinds of Framing

The subsistence of one or another frame in the news or programs and its consequences for the public opinion has been a focus in many studies (Semekto and Valkenburg, 2000: 93- 97). Framing can be classified under two Conflicting dimensions: *episodic and thematic coverage*. (Shah et al, 2004:102-107). Episodic framings are used to assemble social problems round precise times and individuals. This type of framing, according to Carlyle and others (2008:170-172) tends to depend on individual explanations. They describe individual explanations as; those that focus on the personality disposition or motivational states of the people involved. On the other hand, *thematic framing* focuses on society's role in addition to the individual (Iyengar, 1991. cited in Carlyle et al., 2008: 174-177). The frame relies on social explanations which focus on circumstances and situational forces (Sotirovic, 2003. in Carlyle et al., 2008:178-181).

Semetko & Valkenburg (2000:95-107) discuss five dominant news frames that have been identified in earlier studies: *conflict framing*, *human interest framing*, *economic framing*, *morality framing*, and *attribution of responsibility framing*. In addition to this, other frames like diagnostic and prognostic are commonly used frames. According to these authors, while conflict framing focuses on conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions so as to attract audience attention, human interest framing puts a human face or an emotional viewpoint on the report of an issue. It personalizes the news and dramatizes or emotionalizes the story as a means to capture and retain audience interest. The frame is also referred as *human impact frame*, and is considered the second common frame in the news next to conflict frame (Neuman et al., in Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000:96).

As Bennett said and cited in Semetko and Vakenburg (2000:96-97), because of the increasing competition in the market for news, journalists and editors are exerting greater effort to produce stories that capture the public's interest. *Economic framing* on the other hand presents issues or events focusing on their economical outcomes on an individual, group, institution, or country

(Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000:98). When an issue or event has wide impact, it adds value to the news, and its economical out comings is often vital (Garber cited in Semetko and Valkenburg 2000:100). ***Morality framing*** is also emphasizes moral or religious contexts of an issue or event (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000:99). In order to keep the professional norm of objectivity, journalists often make use of the moral frame indirectly by using quotation and inference, for example, having others raise the question (Neuman et al., in Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000:99-101).

As Semetko and Valkenburg (2000:103) set it, attribution of responsibility framing; presents an issue or problem in such a way as to characteristic responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group. Iyengar (1987) argued; when television news covers an issue or individual (episodically) rather than presenting the larger historical social context (thematically), it promotes individuals' explanations for social problems (Cited in Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000:105). Diagnostic framing focuses on identifying a problem and assigning blame and causality. (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992 in Scheufel, 1999:118) similarly, prognostic framing which sometimes called predictive framing can be described as a solution frame which specifies what needs to be done. (Gerhards and Rucht 1992 in Scheufel, 1999)

2.11.3. Affecting Factors of Framing

Framing can be affected by various factors. According to Scheufel(1999:120-122), journalists' framing of an issue may be affected by several social-structural or organizational reasons and by individual or ideological factors. Based on the abovementioned study, the author further identifies five variables that may potentially affect journalists' framing of an issue or an event: such as; Social norms and values, organizational pressures and shortcomings, pressure of interest groups, journalistic routines and journalists' ideological or political orientations. Likewise, McLeod et al in Shen (2004:109-114) point out framing social and political issues and events can be exaggerated by journalists', individual values, ideological constraints, and market forces.

In case of journalists, their common reliance on politicians, interest groups and other experts for speech marks and analysis means that the media may serve as instrument for individuals and interest groups ready to promote their perspectives (Shen, 2004:116-120). As a result, journalists

accept frames suggested by interest groups or political actors as sound bites and comprise them of their document of a difficulty or event. Moreover, type and political orientation of the medium can also manipulate news framing (Scheufel, 1999; 121-122.). Although framing theory has been used in many different researches, it has been criticized by some. As to Scheufele (1999), most of the limitations of framing theory are accredited to its lack of clear conceptual definition and generally applicable operation.

As mentioned above, framing plays a significant role in presenting and implementing relevant issues to the public. In addition, as scholars agree, the discursive context in which issues are presented has an important impact on public opinion and policy-making processes. It makes a difference in terms of political, social and economic development. The current study will play its vital role by examining how the variety of issues covered in the media done independently by Dehub FM radio according to this theory.

2.12. Media systems Model

Hallin and Mancini (2004) developed three models of media systems in which they showed the differences that exist among media systems and the ways in which these differences are associated with other characteristics of political and social systems and with dissimilarities in both histories. Therefore, The Liberal, Polarized pluralist and Democratic corporatist are the three models of media systems identified by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Even though, only the polarized model is more important in relation to this study, the researcher felt that the remaining two, the liberal and democratic corporatist models would help understand the media systems of other countries. Also, the addition of liberal and democratic corporatist model can help to understand the polarized pluralist model is not the only model Hallin and Mancini developed. So it avoids confusion.

After the control of power by the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (1991), journalists in the state-owned print medium were let loose to follow their traditional function, which they did with great dynamism and dedication: glorifying and praising the government, at times beyond reasonable proportions, condemning and castigating actions of previous governments as well as those of current political antagonists of the regime in power. This

unprofessional and unethical campaign of criticism, spreading and name-calling could not be said to have been carried out without official approval (Shimelis, 2000, p.14).

This is significant of the route the government owned media are taking though their original goal put on paper is quite different as can be understood from the constitution on government/public media. The polarized nature of the society seems to have opened the difference among the media too. According to Aadland and Fackler(1999), quoted in Hallelujah(2008), the public debate in Ethiopia seems polarized, events and statements are easily interpreted to fit into the patterns of old conflict, and few people seem willing to engage in constructive dialogue with opponents. This view is further supported by Tafari, in a personal interview held with Hallelujah in 2007, that the political and ethnic polarization in the public is clearly reflected in the activities of the independent media. “If you are not unkind on the government you will be labeled as government affiliated as it is supposed that the government press is there to talk about the good practice of the government and the independent press should always talk the bad side and be an enemy” (Hallelujah,2008,p.60).

“The current Ethiopian media situation, as for the past 20 years, is commonly expressed as a polarized state of affairs between the state media and private media outlets” (Aadland and Fackler, 2001. price et al. 2008); quoted in (Skjerdal, 2012, p.35). In relation to the polarized state of the media in Ethiopia, Stremlau (2011) quoted in Skjerdal(2012) attributes, polarization in the press to Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) revolutionary democracy ideology, that leaves little room for a dynamic opposition. According to Aadland and Røe (2000) cited in Skjerdal(2012), the tendency of polarization is credited to the absence of a tradition of dialogue in the local society, where disagreement usually ends in enmity and division.

The present government in its prejudice to diverging views along with the poor culture of dialogue in the society to solve problems tended to have paved the way for the emergence of polarization which happens in the Ethiopian media environment. The difference among the media is not limited only to government versus private but also among the private ones. This experience of polarization is still enduring, noticeable between the government and the privately

owned media. Additionally, the difference of the private media can be easily understood in their output in that, some are pro-government in either visible or invisible way while others which appear and disappear seem to be very critical of the government.

The polarization also exists in the presence of party newspapers and the affiliation of the private media to opposition political parties and the government owned media to the government, and therefore, the media are being used as an instrument for political intervention. Privately owned newspapers are established, though they appear and disappear, partly as a medium for political intervention. The level of professionalization is still toddling like a baby and the practice is a mix of information, commentary or advocacy journalism. Therefore, the state of the Ethiopian media can be best expressed by *polarized pluralist model* other than *democratic corporatist or liberal model*.

The state plays an important role in shaping the media system in any society. In fact there are considerable differences in extent of state intervention and the form it takes. The most vital form of state intervention is public service broadcasting and state intervention is also expressed in owning of news agencies, newspapers or other media related enterprises either directly or through state owned enterprises. The intervention of the state according to Hallin and Mancini (2004), is also explained in libel, privacy, defamation and right-of-reply laws, hate speech laws, professional confidentiality laws for journalists (protecting the confidentiality of sources), laws regulating access to government information, laws regulating media concentration, ownership, and competition, laws regulating political communication, particularly during election campaigns are among others.

Chapter Three

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Methods

A research design is a technical plan that is adopted by the researcher to obtain answers to the research questions or problems. According to Gasken et al., “a research design is the arrangement of conditions for gathering and analysis of data in the approach that aims to combine significance to the research purpose with economy in procedure”. The research focuses on examining the challenges of media independence and professional practice in present regional media via the mirror of freedom of expression especially, in southern nation nationalities and peoples region (SNNPR). So it attempted to assess the ground practice of the press law in the media and the challenges that may hinder the application in the daily activities of the media operation.

Hence this chapter is hallowed to the presentation of methodology, data collection process and sampling method. The research employed qualitative methodology, for it helps approach the subject of the study from the view of the sources used in the research. The technique that helps achieve this objective is qualitative. Thomas et al (2002) writes that qualitative methods generate information only on the particular case study, and any more general conclusions are only hypotheses (informative guesses). Quantitative methods can be used to clarify which of such hypotheses are true.

Qualitative research let the subjects being studied to give much richer answers to questions put to them by the researcher, and may give valuable insights that might have been missed by any other method. Not only it provides valuable information to certain research questions in its own right but there is a strong case for using it to complement qualitative research methods. According to Mack et al (2005), it seeks to know a given research problem or topic from the view of a local population. Yin (2011) states that qualitative research varies because of its ability to represent the views of the participants. In addition, this methodology is beneficial as it depends on variety of sources to get consolidated evidence about the issue under study.

Qualitative study strives to collect, integrate, and gift information from quite a few sources of proof as a part of any given look at. The range will probably observe out of your having to look at a real-global placing and its individuals. The complexity of the sector placing and the variety of its individuals are probably to warrant using interviews and observations or even the inspection of files and artifacts. The look at conclusion is probably to be primarily based totally on triangulating the information from the exceptional sources. This union will add to the study's credibility and trustworthiness (p.9). Qualitative methods are usually more flexible, permitting greater naturalness and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant, whereas quantitative methods are inflexible (Natasha et al. 2005:4). Participants in qualitative research have the opportunity to answer in greater detail.

The setback of qualitative research is that, consistently, only small number of subjects can be studied because data collection methods are so labor intensive. It is also frequently criticized for: being subject to researcher bias; the difficulties in analyzing qualitative data rigorously; Lack of reproduction and generalization of the findings (i.e. findings might not be rightful to different subjects or settings). Supporters of qualitative research would however argue that there are techniques available to the qualitative researcher to protect against these potential biases and to enhance the rigor of the findings. Hence qualitative methodology is useful in order to get data on sensitive issues there by involving different sources.

3.2. Data gathering procedures and Sampling

The researcher used primary and secondary sources with inside the study. The main data collecting instrument for this research is focus group discussion and in-depth interview and hence the researcher has conducted interviews with various sources. Documents are also secondary sources for the study. The sources interviewed for the research have experiences developed from being a junior journalist to senior reporter and editor-in chief. The FGD and in-depth interview included not only journalists but also editors and media managers who have been engaged in Debub FM 100.9 radio station, Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority Director and audiences of different ethnic identity.

The researcher, in the first place, formulated the interview questions in a semi structured way in English language. Those questions were translated by the researcher into Amharic language in an attempt to maintain the same sense of the questions in both versions. The researcher did not stop by this rather he wanted to get the same version of the translation of those questions by another translator. Accordingly, the translator came up with more or less the same sense of the translation helping the researcher to reconsider the first version of the translation of the questions. Though the researcher prepared the questions for the FGD and in-depth interview, he was free to change the sense of the questions according to the situation of the discussion and interview. Note was taken during every discussion and individual in-depth interviews.

The individual responses of the interview and the discussion were recorded through the help of a digital audio recorder in order to support the note taken and to avoid some elements that might have been ignored during the note taking process. Furthermore, the researcher managed to get worthwhile information from the interviewees as he kept on probing and asking follow up questions. So the semi structured questions designed lead to initiate further relevant questions based on the discussants' and interviewees' response there by contributing further sense to the analysis part of the study.

3.2.1. Focus group discussion

A focus group methodology is helpful in elaborating and examining what people think, how they think, and why they think the way they do about the issues significant to them without stressing them into making decisions or reaching a consensus. According to Jenny Kitzinger (2005:57), a well-known focus group researcher, the focal point organization method is an 'ideal' technique for inspecting the stories, experiences, factors of view, beliefs, wishes and issues of individuals. The method is especially valuable for letting the participants to develop their own questions and frameworks.

According to Gaiser (2008:44), focus group discussions permit group dynamics and help the researcher capture shared lived experiences, having access to factors that different strategies won't be capable of reach. This method allows researchers to uncover aspects of understanding that often remain hidden in the more conventional in-depth interviewing method. The

communication between the participants themselves leads to more emphasis on the points of view of the participants than those of the researchers. A focus group is not simply a means for gaining accounts of individuals. Rather, it is a means to arrange a negotiation of meanings through intra- and inter-personal debates. Focus groups do not aim to reach agreement or consensus on the discussed issues. Rather, focus groups promote ranges of responses, which provide a greater understanding of the attitudes, behavior, critiques or perceptions of members at the studies troubles.

This study used focus group discussion to gather information about a specific or focused topic in a group environment, permitting for discussion and interaction by the participants. Focus groups are typically described as uniting a small group of people to participate in a carefully planned discussion on a defined topic. The purpose of the technique is being to make use of group interaction to produce data and insights. Because the method creates the opportunity for the participants talk “naturally”. The focus group interview thus reproduces oral circulation through the active participation of the people.

This approach is believed in producing much richer and more sensitive type of data. Particularly focused group interview is more close to the natural setting that can generate meanings and interpretation in reaction to media use and content. Hansen et al. (1998; 257) emphasized on the significance of focused group interview in studying the relationship between the media and audience as:

“For examining the dynamics of what experiential understanding and frames of interpretation convey to undergo of their use of media content, what role media use has in their everyday lives it is significant to turn to more qualitative methods” Hansen et al. (1998; 257).

3.2.2. In-depth interviews

An in-depth interview in a qualitative data gathering method, offer the opportunity to capture rich, descriptive data about peoples’ behaviors, attitudes and perceptions, and unfolding complex processes. In-depth interview is a qualitative studies method that consists of conducting intensive

individual interviews with a smaller variety of respondents to find out their views on a specific idea, application or situation.

According to Carolyn Boyce (2006:74) in-depth interviews are helpful when we want to gain detailed records approximately a person's mind and behaviors or need to discover new troubles in-depth. Carolyn states that the primary advantage of an in-depth interview is that they offer plenty extra designated records than what's to be had the different records series strategies. People may also additionally sense more comfortable having a dialogue with the interviewer approximately their feeling as contrasting to filling out a survey. According to Mytton (2014:78), the goal of qualitative in-depth interview is to show or understand. It is characterized via way of means of open-ended, flexible, respondent-centered, and designed to apply respondent's creativity and imagination. Like the focus group discussion; it's also used to try and move past those things, which can be at the surface.

3.2.3. Sample selection method, size and recruitment of groups

The term selection is to express that choosing or figuring out a specific subject for distinct purposes. In the study, we select samples of our given subject issue representing the majority to be taken in to consideration. Sampling in qualitative research is specifically worried with facts richness where in crucial considerations; appropriateness and adequacy take relevant stage (Kuzel, 1992:20).Morse (1995:55) in other words argues, *sampling in qualitative research needs the importance of identifying appropriate participants who can best report to the study and the need to recruit sufficient sources of information to successfully address the research question and develop a full-fledged description.*

The researcher used purposive sampling for conducting group discussion and in-depth interview with people who have close relations with media organizations. According to Kothari (2004), this sampling method involves purposive or deliberate selection of precise devices of the universe for constituting a pattern which represents the universe. The researcher purposively approached those journalists, editors and managers who work (have worked) in the media. He selected such persons who are supposed to be representative of practitioners in the media organization. The researcher also selects audiences randomly with variety of demographic

background for the discussion. The selection of these key informants from the media organizations would help get diverse and relevant data for the study.

According to Oliver (2012), *“purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be involved in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of requirement which might also additionally encompass expert understanding of the studies issue, or ability and willingness to take part with inside the studies.”* Some kinds of research design require researchers taking a decision about the individual participants who would be most likely to contribute proper data, both in terms of significance and depth.

Hence, journalists, editors, media managers and audiences were chosen with the complete carefulness of the researcher for he thought that these chosen sources are representative samples of the population. Accordingly, twenty individuals (twelve of them are for two FGD and eight of them for individual in-depth-interview) from the media station, audiences who explain their perception and reason why they listen radio and Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority Director who elaborate the current overall media practice in Ethiopia and its independence with the challenges and opportunities were chosen and interviewed in order to gather the relevant data for the study.

Particular consideration is given to the fact that focus group studies should have a minimum of six focus group members, until comments begin to repeat themselves and little new material is generated. For this study, two groups that constitute six participants are formulated. Six individuals are selected in each group discussions using purposive sampling. One group from the journalists' side, the selection is based on their age and experience that they have in media organization. The other from the audiences' side, that comprises six participants drawn from elders, women, teachers, farmers and youths of three towns which are Hossana, Durame and Halaba Kulito.

From the in-depth interview and focus group discussion a total of 176 text data gathered interpreted and analyzed further according to the prepared questions. In other words, as Jensen (1988: 4) suggests the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions are not considered

finished accounts. Given that the interviews formed data in the form of transcripts, thus the researcher duty should be interpret the meaning of these data and present. The researcher duty therefore, is to report those sections of interviews and discussions which shed most light on the research questions at hand. Attempts are made to select convenient interview settings where every participant felt comfortable. Two settings are thus used, Southern Radio and Television Agency in Hawassa and Halaba Kulito town.

3.2.4. Secondary Sources

The documentary sources are key data invention methods used in media study. In addition to in-depth interview and focus group discussion, the researcher identifies variety of ten Dehub FM radio programs which covered different issues in a single year after the transition of power from EPRDF to Prosperity party. Because, the time boundary helps the researcher to examine the current status of media landscape in Ethiopia whether there is a change in relation with the transition of power. These programs also help the researcher assess the perception of audiences. The selected programs are aired in Dehub FM radio in informing, educating and entertaining categories between January 2019 and December 2020. And selected deliberately as a secondary source of the document for the study: Such programs are; Local News, Current Affairs, Investigation, Question and Answer, Health, Agriculture, Advertisement, Drama, Music and Sport. All the aforementioned programs are categorized in infotainment, edutainment and entertainment programs as the media objectives state.

According to Prior (2004), documents are put forward for thought in schemes of social research, and are approached in terms of what they contain and the focus is primarily on the language embodied in the documents as a medium of thought or expression. Documents are source of data, and are used in relation to the subject under study. The document can be put within a context and hence, will support the main tool of data collection. Besides, the document itself can be analyzed depending on the objective and perspective of a study. Within the context of this research, documents like the constitution, press proclamation and other commentaries are used.

Chapter Four

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the presentation, discussion and analysis of results. As it has been indicated earlier, the study targeted at the challenges of media independence and professional practice of Debut FM 100.9 radio. The data obtained through interview and focus group discussion will be presented and analyzed in light of the research objective. It also discusses findings of the analysis and the interpretation of the researcher.

4.2. Current status of freedom of expression and the press

According to interviewee no.2, the Ethiopian Constitution concerning freedom of expression and the press may nearly take the first position in the world (personal interview, March 06, 2021). He explained that Article 29 of Ethiopian constitution is the direct copy of Article 19 of the United Nations on freedom of expression and the press. The country internationally accepted right of human beings to express ones opinion or idea, and the constitution also states that freedom of expression and the press is given the necessary protection. According to the discussants, the bigger question simply becomes why the constitution is not completely respected.

The laws which govern the media originate from the constitution and hence these laws should be given the necessary attention. But there is lack of commitment on the part of the leading party in paying attention to the implementation of the press law and the journalism profession. According to interviewee no.5, appreciated the abolition of censorship both in the press law and the constitution. The informant put the state of freedom of expression and the press as follows:-

“The recent freedom of the mass media and information proclamation is very much helpful for journalists, because it explains some of the issues that were not clear in the press law of 1992. However, there are different challenges on media and journalists’ independence when practicing the rights mentioned in the press law on actual ground” (personal interview; April 20, 2021).

It can be understood from the discussion that the government in one or another way interferes on the field and lacks concern to implement its own laws. The importance of the law is not its mere presence on paper rather when it comes to practice properly it brings a change in the media industry. If the press law does not get strong attention with respect to its implementation, there could not be seen changes because the law can be eroded by different entities. According to interviewee no.1, the government is concerned about freedom of the press and expression since the period of the transitional government. He added *“the government showed conviction for the right of free expression of citizen’s views and thoughts since the first press law”* (personal interview; March 09, 2021).

In fact, the destiny of the media in Ethiopia has changed in the after-math of the downfall of the dictatorial regime in 1991. According to Shemelis (2000), the assumption of power in 1991 by the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front ushered in a period of fundamental transformation in the political economy of the country. As part of the democratization process, the government granted freedom of the press. As a result the press started to burgeon within short period of time. Interviewee no.1 expressed *“After the new transition of the government, media independence, freedom of speech and the press is at good condition than the past, and it is showing progress. Access to information and press freedom is getting promoted, and the base for this is the constitution”* (personal interview, March 09, 2021).

However, if the present freedom of expression and the press is considered in terms of the number of both print and broadcast media which can help people express their views on different socio-economic and political issues, level of press freedom is still at its infancy. Most interviewees agree that freedom of expression and the press should have gone far considering the country’s journey in a democratic system. The government, which is responsible to serve the public in a democratic system, expected to provide opportunities, in addition to making press laws, to help the society participate in their country’s affairs. Citizens should be motivated to actively express their views which have a significant contribution to democratic governance. According to Zelezny (2011) and Hichens (2006), freedom of speech is necessary for the proper functioning and accountability of a democratic government. Freedom of speech enables citizens to receive information, to debate and assess government decisions and policies.

Independent media should entertain variety of views and ideas to help the public see different aspects on different issues of importance. The need for the reflection of diverse views in the media is supported by the constitution that state, “*Any media financed by or under the control of the State shall operate in a manner ensuring its capacity to entertain diversity in the expression of opinions*” (Article 29(5) of 1995 Constitution). Thus government owned media should entertain diverse opinions from different parties and be independent of any party interference. However, the role of these media in being the mouth piece of the government hardly makes them different from the Derg regime despite the presence of democratic system in the country today.

4.3. The challenge of exercising freedom of expression and the press

Clearly based on the discussion, one of the challenges to exercise freedom of expression and the press is lack of understanding about the rights and duties established or granted to the media. As to P3, experienced journalist who worked in Debut FM 100.9 for long years, the editors who are placed in the management of the media have party affiliation. They scarcely have a relation to the profession, but they are assigned because of their political commitment. He argued “*these persons do not have a good knowledge of media operation, profession, freedom of thought or expression rather they tend to protect the interest of the ruling party than protecting professional freedom*” (FGD1, March 04, 2021). This reminds what Hallin and Mancini stated in relation to politically based activities in media houses.

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), appointments tend to be made more on the basis of political loyalty than purely professional criteria in the case of public media and this helps to use the media in favor of one entity or party. Lack of understanding about the rights and duties of the press along with its legal framework is also a challenge for many journalists. P4 shared the idea that lack of understanding about the rights and duties of the press is a challenge of both journalists and editors. She expressed:-

“I do not believe that most journalists fully understand the content of the press law and work accordingly. The person who is on the leadership level starting from the editor has to clearly know the law with its detailed information and encourage journalists working in the media organization”. (FGD1, March 04, 2021).

It is believed that professionally trained graduate students in journalism and communication from higher education institutions can better minimize the professional knowledge gap and skill in the area. However, since the vacancy of media houses is open almost for all graduates in social science, it is difficult to know that how many of professional journalism graduates join the media. Hence the gap in professional knowledge is evident on journalists who join the media without taking any journalism training.

Interviewee no.3 stated that; “*other than putting documents of the press law, press freedom and expression in the library of the media station, there is no any proper in-service capacity building training given to journalists within the media station*”(personal interview, March 06, 2021). So it can be understood that it is up to the journalist to read and know the rights and responsibilities of the press including the limits of press freedom media independence. In order to increase the professional capacity, knowledge and skill of journalists, in-house training on issues of press freedom and journalistic responsibility should be given to journalists to better perform their professional responsibility. The research finding clearly shows that those who join the field are from various disciplines. Considering such a situation, no matter how difficult it might be, providing in house training is crucial for the effectiveness of the profession and the media itself in Ethiopia at all.

Self-censorship has been another constraining factor in professional practice, media independence and in the exercise of freedom of expression and the press in the media landscape. The majority of the informants believed that the reason not to fight against self-censorship is the risk of job security. Because of economic problem, they do not dare to tackle self-censorship because they want to earn livelihood. In addition, interviewee no.7, explained that journalists are not confident about what is put on paper as the right of the press. He added “*to avoid self-censorship, we choose to write issues that are less critical and less sensitive*” (personal interview, March 25, 2021).

Apart from any influence, lack of regulation and control sometimes pushes some journalists into self-censorship. P1 believed that “*some journalists themselves lack courage to do what is expected and instead externalize their own weakness on government officials*” (FGD1, March

04, 2021). Journalists fail to be courageous enough partly because of their own past experience and by the experience of others they heard. The tendency of censoring oneself also arises from the general observable media industry. In fact the reason for censoring oneself can hail from various internal and external things.

According to interview no.4, political intervention on issues which have to be handled by professionals and practitioners has been the routine challenge in media institutions (personal interview, April 20, 2021). As politicians get involved, especially in those regional state media, through the rejection of program stories by editors, journalists feel frustrated and lack courage to argue with editors. Sometimes disagreement happen between the producer and editor to get the story published or broadcast, finally it will result in harsh relationship with the editor. Once a journalist knows that a story of some sort of an issue will bring discomfort for the editor then he will choose another story that will put both the producer and the editor at the safer side. In any case if there is political intervention on the professional practice the media independence cannot be implemented properly. Especially when the intervention is clearly identified the journalists get frustrated to practice professionally.

4.4. Government intervention in the media

According to interview no.1, in professional practice nothing that can reduce freedom of expression and the press exists. He added that constitution does not allow any kind of government intervention for influence in the affair of the media activity. He said “*the government should take the initiative and made the operative press law (freedom of the mass media and information proclamation), which explains the need for a democratic media. In fact, media law obliges government bodies give the necessary information to the media*” (personal interview, Mach 09, 2021).

The government should operate in line not only with the constitution but also with international laws which the country is member. Accordingly any act and interference of the government to satisfy its interest in the media is violating the law which the country granted. The media independence and professional practice should be encouraged for actual democratization in the country. In the concern of the free flow of information, ideas and opinions which are essential to

the functioning of a democratic order, the press shall, as an institution, enjoy legal protection to ensure its operational independence and its capacity to entertain diverse opinions (Federal democratic republic of Ethiopia Constitution article 29/4).

P5 contended that there is government intervention in the media which affects freedom of the press. She expressed *“the interference of some higher officials who do not want to see their weakness broadcasted on the media is significant”* (FGD1, March 04, 2021). Officials force to change the agenda and even angle of a story in favor of their interest and sometimes they tend to give an option to cover a story in other way. However, in some cases the strength of the journalist and the media house determines whether to cover or reject the story which came from the officials based on the evidence. Most of the time, government intervention in the media is implied.

P6 supported the view of P5 that there is unstated government intervention in the media. He expressed government owned media should serve all political parties independently and fairly (FGD1, March 04, 2021). The government media are expected to avoid partiality of journalists as much as possible and serve the public, government and political parties fairly and properly. These media are assumed to be intermediary between the people and the government without being influenced by the government. However, it is the big challenge that most of the time the influence of the government is greater and the media become under the control and regulation of the ruling party. P2 held the view that the ruling party puts difficulty or pressure on the media through officials who may or may not understand that freedom of expression is also the right of the media institutions (FGD1, March 04, 2021).

No matter how the media are doing the right thing, some government officials are likely hide significant information if it exposes them for the public. They tend to put pressure on journalists and the media houses in a variety of ways when the wrong activities and gaps of their offices are covered based on an issue. The government in countries where there is developing democracy seems to react to criticisms by the media inevitably. This is when the government worries that allowing criticism on its performance will expose weaknesses and gaps in its administration in spite of the consideration of the constructive role media criticisms play. While the press is

usually expected to give opinion and criticism that are valuable in indicating the gaps on the actions of government, the government should not take the criticism of the press as an attack. All public bodies shall have regard to the right of the mass media, in fulfilling their public function, to express opinion or criticism on various issues (freedom of the mass media and information proclamation Article 4/3(b)).

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), the intervention of the state is explained by issues or factors such as libel, defamation and hate speech. While it is not relevant to damage some body's reputation, the retribution on defamation is inflated. The law states that "in an action for defamation through the mass media the court may award, having regard to the seriousness of the moral damage, compensation up to 100,000 birr having regarded to the seriousness of the damage". The increment according to interviewee no.1 is to encourage individuals to stand to protect their reputation during media defamation (personal interview, March 09, 2021).

However the financial penalty has an alarming effect on the media as the punishment is exaggerated. It also puts a pressure that constrains the media from criticizing and commenting on the activities of the government offices. According to Ross (2010), the fines for mere media offenses imposed by the Ethiopian Press Law may easily be seen as cruel and unusual punishment. Furthermore, exorbitant fines will help perpetuate oppression by making journalists unable to pay, media out of business for even minor criminal offence.

4.5. Press council

According to interviewee no.8, the absence of strong journalists' union and press council has contributed its part to the weak performance of the press and professional practice. He stated; "*the absence of collaboration among journalists and other stakeholders to establish strong press council in the country has given the government and other organizations to take advantage on the gap created*" (personal interview, April 17, 2021). This situation is a reminder of what Hallin and Mancini argued about a decade ago. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), professional associations are weak and journalistic practice is not strong in a situation where the profession is not deep rooted in the system. Today's Ethiopian condition comes up to this same point in a sense that professional journalism practice is still embryonic and very budding. In

addition, there is lack of strong press council in the country and or journalists' union that can work efficiently for the better standing of the media.

According to interviewee no.8, the absence of strong press council has left the profession exposed to variety of challenges (personal interview, April 17, 2021). Obviously, the council would help to promote the profession thereby giving trainings to journalists and formulating code of ethics that can govern the practitioners. The council can also help solve problems related to the journalist's media practice without taking him/her to the court. In the short run, such an activity reduces time wastage and protects the journalist from unfair punishment. The lack of combined effort among the Ethiopian journalists in establishing strong press council has contributed to the decline of freedom of expression and the press. It is very advantageous to create unity and cooperate among media practitioners in the struggle to establish a body that serves as foundation for the routine and professional function of the responsive and accountable media.

In developing state union of journalists or press council should be strong enough to stand for the actual profession and hence it should avoid relations to a political party which may jeopardize its existence. In Ethiopia, the presence of division among journalists of government owned media and private media may discourage the confidence of journalists to establish a credible and responsible council. To this end, there must be a healthy relationship among and between journalists and a press council. The split that has been witnessed between National Ethiopian Journalists' union and Free Ethiopian Journalists Association is the case in point. The issue of establishing press council is omitted from the press proclamation of 2008 in the sense that the government should leave the task to the media.

4.6. Polarized Media

According to interviewee no.1, the presence of unethical journalists in different media in Ethiopia who reflect antagonistic politics, have clear political attachment or dependence and partiality will negatively affect Freedom of the press. He stated:

“In the past few years relatively some media were run by the group of individuals who share the same political view. The dependency of the media with political parties shows that they serve as an instrument for those parties. This is unsafe for it badly encourages the ruling party to take serious administrative measures on issues that even can be tolerated” (personal interview, March 09, 2021).

The private media organizations cannot be appreciated to broadcast or write in favor of the government. Hence the private media may not cover related and same stories in which the government media covers for their stand is different. The critical coverage on issues of government activities by the private media institutions should in no way appreciate the government to take measures against the private media. One of the informants from the focus group discussion expressed that the government labels the press as such to get the pretext of taking measures against the private media organizations.

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), being instrument of the media by the government, by political parties, and by industrialists with political ties is common. According to Befirdu Woldeamanuel (2012), the media which the government labels dangerous to the system cannot exist very long. When the private media becomes critical of the deeds of the government, the government labels such media as politically affiliated. The private media journalists do not cover the positive deeds of the government because they think that the government media are enough for it. So they focus on the negative ones to show the gaps and weakness so that the government can learn from it. The government except taking measures on private media does not have any interest to take lessons from criticisms on its activity. The private media should publish and broadcast about the wrong deeds of the government.

The lessons in which the media have been taking partly contribute to the frequency of the division among the media. The division exists because government owned media dependently claim as a watch dog for the government while they are supposed to serve all political parties, the public and the government of the nation. In contrast, the private media depending on the owners' interest focus on the shortcomings of government activities. However, As long as there is a democratic constitution that granted freedom of expression and the press, nobody can force the

private media to cover the positive deeds of the government. What matters is how balanced, accurate and impartial their news and program coverage on different issues.

The trend of the private media to serve both voice of the market and the voice that is not being heard by state owned media resulted in polarization in the Ethiopian media landscape. The tendency of the media's dependency in both cases is visible. *"The current Ethiopian media situation, as for the past 20 years, is commonly described as a polarized state of affairs between the state media and private media outlets"*. (Aadland and Fackler, 2001; Price et al., 2008) quoted in (Skjerdal, 2012, p.35). The polarized nature of the society seems to have opened the divergence among the media too. According to Aadland and Fackler(1999) quoted in Hallelujah(2008), the public debate in Ethiopia seems polarized and events and statements are easily framed and interpreted to fit into the patterns of old conflict, and few people seem willing to engage in constructive dialogue with adversaries.

After the supposition of power by the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front, Journalists in the state-owned broadcast and print medium were let loose to pursue their traditional function, which they did with great vigor and dedication: praising and glorifying the government in power, at times beyond reasonable proportions, and condemning and criticizing actions of previous government as well as those of current political opponents of the regime in power. This unprofessional and unethical campaign of vilification, smearing and name-calling could not be said to have been carried out without official blessing (Shimelis, 2000, p.14).

This is meaningful of the route state owned media are taking through their original target put on paper is quite different as can be understood from the constitution on state media. Clearly, the media will not be out of the political and economic situation in any country so they are likely to be attracted to political lines. So in turn the media independence and the professional practice of the journalist's still come in to unsolved problem. The infancy of professionalization with low level of press freedom will make the situation worse. This fits to what Hallin and Mancini (2004) calls, Political parallelism; that is, the degree and nature of the links between the media and political events or, extra broadly, the volume to which the media device displays the predominant political divisions in society.

The basic concerns and principles that dictate the practice of the profession should be the ethic, credibility, accountability and responsiveness of the public service. Thus, professional journalists in Ethiopia should work strongly to narrow the gap on polarity, dependability and avoid unhealthy competition between the private and state media to better serve the public. The contribution of the media in informing, educating and entertaining the people on different issues of importance will be greater provided that journalists and media institutions avoid taking sides based on political parties.

4.7. The bound of freedom of expression and the press

The practice of freedom of expression and the press is bound to certain limitations. Hence, the media institutions and the professional practitioners are responsible for their actions. So they should respect the limitations imposed in the constitutional/press law. P2 stated *“anything journalists do on a daily basis should not jeopardize the interests of the public”* (FGD1, March 04, 2021). The activity of the journalists and the media organizations must be in way that should not compromise national security and public safety. In order to operate in a way that the media routine will not cause any public disorder and confusion, the media practitioners/journalists should be aware of the impact of each activity. The Ethiopian constitution has put the condition where freedom of expression and the press is subject to limitation. For example, Article 29 (6) reads as follows:

“Freedom of expression and the press can be limited only through laws which are guided by the principle that freedom of expression and records cannot be confined due to the content material or impact of the factor of view expressed. Legal barriers may be laid down with a view to guard the wellness of the youth, and the honor and recognition of individuals. Any propaganda for war as well as the public expression of opinion intended to injure human dignity shall be prohibited by law” (1995 Constitution, Article 29/6).

The universal Declaration of Human Rights puts restrictions on freedom of expression stating *“solely for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.”* Moreover, the rights set forth with inside the Universal Declaration; *“May in no case be*

exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19, 1948). While interviewee no.4, stated that limitation on freedom of expression is dependent up on the law of the country, interviewee no.6 maintained that anything that threatens national security and public safety should be limited (personal interview April 20 and March 25, 2021 respectively). The reality is that freedom of expression and the press should be implemented with responsibility.

Therefore, national security deserves greater attention in both state and private media. The protection of national security is the protection of the people of the country. So the media institutions should be responsible and accountable for keeping the interest of the nation. It should consider the benefit and disadvantage of exposing the information to the people. The main thing is that no media benefits from endangering national security, creating public disorder, compromising the moral of the society.

4.8. Political orientation of editors and managers

Media editors are the first gatekeepers who separate any kind of material sources that either will be broadcast or published. No matter how refined or polished the article is or well written broadcast piece is, it has to go through the gatekeeper. Interviewee no.8, concerning the influence of political views put:

“Because of being an editor there is a possibility of merging political interest and views of a party with the news story. It is difficult to say that editors operating in the media should not have their own political stand or cannot be member of a political party. However, it is mandatory on them to work in a way that their political orientation does not interfere with their profession” (personal interview; April 17, 2021).

The editor may have his or her political interest like any citizen but that political interest or view should not affect the practice of the media. Not only editors but also trained journalists should avoid their political leaning and attach to the norm of objectivity. The media practitioners should not take sides by depending on the political party interest instead they should entertain the interest of the public. According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), the professional practice of

journalism should provide enough information that the audience wants and needs for variety of purposes. Hence the media have to be a place where the public interest is entertained and media practitioners should perform strongly to provide the information that the public need. However, P3 expressed that the political dependency and view of the editor and editor in-chief has a great influence on the rest of the journalists in the media. He expressed:

“I believe that it is not good to influence journalists; it is the country’s system which forces us to categorize ourselves in this way. So I look for journalists who have the same political direction as mine. Mostly professional journalism practice requirements are becoming secondary but the back political view is obligatory when hiring journalist.” (FGD1, March 04, 2021).

This view is similar to the view of P4 who said *“the collections of journalists with the same political view and without professional ethics in a few newspapers write based on personal opinions and animosity to the system.”*(FGD1, March 04, 2021). The Practice of professional journalism should never be based on the hiring of journalists with the same political orientation or view. Unlike political parties where the collection is based on sharing the same political viewpoint, media houses are organizations where professional journalism practice should be guided by professional ethics, and public service. Clearly, the hiring of journalists should not be based on political rather professional requirement and criteria. The media would be more credible when professional journalists and program editors’ practice in the media based on professional norms and independence from different factions that the media can deliver unbiased information to the public.

According to P6, the political orientation of either the editor or manager does not have any influence on the content of the channel (FGD1, March 04, 2021). However, editor-in-chief’s and media managers are likely to influence the content of the channel. Sometimes ordinary journalists become soft and do not question whatever change is made to the content of their article. A bold journalist who says no when a part of content is omitted or when a news story is given another slant significantly contributes to inform what has happened. However, it does not mean that a journalist always should be inflexible enough not to accept the idea of his or her

editor. And also it should not be mistakenly understood that all editors are politically attached. There are editors who even do not have any political link both in broadcast and print outlet. However, they think of the influences imposed on them by each story journalists write.

The management of the media station is another key issue in each activity in a sense that better managers considerate the interest of the public and the role of the media will create promoting attractive environment for journalists. This is because there are good professional journalists in the media station. If the management or leadership of the institution is constraining then it is difficult to see content diversity and change of content. There are varieties of hierarchies in different media institutions to which individuals are assigned. The positioning of individuals above the editors are appointments. Those appointments are based on merit, political loyalty or both. In the media houses any appointment based on professional skill is much preferable than politically based assignment for the latter works towards being political gatekeeper.

A professional journalist who argues such politically assigned individuals mostly in government owned media will face dismissal. The fact that journalists in different media institutions first of all know what sort of news the editor wants, they tend to write in a way that it pleases the editor. Furthermore, they get used to the political system of the media house gradually. In turn, the editor also thinks of the influence from persons above his level. So to bring a change in the professional practice, it is important to bring a change on the managerial aspect as well.

4.9. Access to information

According to Kahn(2003) quoted in Mendel (2008), the free flow of information and ideas lies at on the coronary heart of the very perception of democracy and is critical to powerful appreciate for human rights. In the absence of respect for the right to freedom of expression, it is not possible to exercise the right to vote, human rights abuses take place in secret, and there is no way to expose corrupt and inefficient government. One of the great challenges for journalists is accessing information on time. P5 stated that it is hard to get information from government officials. She stated:

“Government officials lack willingness to give accurate information for private and government media. Especially, there is isolation of the private media by some government officials attributed to the separation that exists between the private and government owned media. In addition, the government officials suspiciously observe the private media and this has influenced the private media to get information”. (FGD1, March 04, 2021).

The majority of the informants in time of data collection stated that, despite little improvement to access information after freedom of the mass media and information proclamation was put into effect, there still is a great challenge to get information from public bodies. The broader section of freedom of the mass media and information proclamation is the part that deals with issues of information. It is predominantly concerned with access to information (the right to access information) request to obtain information, duty to publish, exempted information, appeals against refusal of information among others (freedom of the mass media and information proclamation 2008, Article 11).

Accordingly, it states that any individual has the right to access information from public bodies who are assigned in government offices unless the information requested is prohibited. An encouraging and interesting part of the proclamation is that it also allows foreign citizens to get the necessary information from public officials and representatives. So the public bodies that have a duty to give information for foreign citizens should not refuse to give important information to the private media which are operating and giving service in the country. The challenge of getting information is partly caused by the poor trend of giving information in the society. Public bodies do not understand that giving information to the media is their obligation. Interviewee no.6, expressed that some of the officials do not know whether giving information to the media is part of their duty. He stated the challenge of accessing information in relation to public relations practitioners as follows:

“Those public relation practitioners who are at institutions, organizations and companies are not alert enough to give us the information in the time frame we need it. So they appoint us day after day and we get fed up of going many times to their office so

we leave it. They call us to give the information after we forget it. Because of lack of transparency, I do not think the public is getting the right information in the right time which they must get” (personal interview, March25, 2021).

Most of the informants in the focus group discussion stated that some public relation practitioners postpone appointments not to give the necessary and accurate information to journalist in time in relation with the issue raised. So when a journalist gets fed up, he stops requesting the public relation practitioners and look for other ways. Whenever journalists do not access information what they want, they tend to write unbalanced and inaccurate scripts based on the accessible sources. In relation to this, interviewee no.7, attributed the problem of broadcasting unbalanced stories to the refusal of government officials to give information on the area requested (personal interview, March25, 2021).

According to Mendel (2008), the people should have access to information in order to involve in the decision and policy making of the government. In addition, democracy involves accountability and good governance. The public have a right to inspect the actions of their leaders and to participate in full and open debate about those actions. They should be capable of investigate the overall performance of the authorities and this relies upon on get right of entry to facts approximately the country of the economy, social structures and different topics of public concern. The participants in FGD1 stated that regardless of the good will to give information to the media, public bodies still discriminate the media on the basis of ownership to give information. In fact, this is degrading the role of concerned media in creating awareness of the public about variety of issues and their overall democratic exercise.

The media institutions should contribute their part to strengthen the best view of the public thereby informing the people about issues of importance. To do so the public need to have information access to encourage or criticize the activities of the government. In addition, the creation of positive relationship between the government media and the private media is helpful in reinforcing the contribution of the media towards the development effort of the country. Though professional journalists in media houses like any citizen have the right to blame those

persons who refuse to give important information, they do not take it to the concerned office like the court.

This is official to the fact that sources will be closed in the future in addition to journalists' unproven fear of losing the case. One of the informants from FGD1 claimed that journalists will not win if they accuse the body who refused to give information after the informant saw an experience from his friend. The informant added that most journalists do not have the initiation or courage to stand for their right of getting the necessary information from public officials. They rather look for other alternatives to get the information or they leave it.

In order to increase the contribution of media in creating a point for public debate and discussion, peace building and democratization process, the government should have a commitment to the implementation of the information provision. Hence public officials should be responsible to give information about their activities to the media. The presence of the law on paper does not bring expected change if it is not properly implemented and perused as most informants remarked. The public relation practitioners on different organizations should be cooperative to journalists' activities in both giving information and facilitating the request for satisfying the public.

4.10. The future of freedom of the press

According to interviewee no.3, freedom of expression and the press is determined by the country's political system. He stated: *"any improvement on the political system dictates the press system and therefore it lies on the politics, not only on the media themselves"* (personal interview, March 06, 2021). The technology will be one part of the changing instrument on the future of press freedom. In line with this, interviewee no.1, expressed that the professional practice of the media will get better in relation to the growth of technology and new media. The growth of ICT (information communication technology) and infrastructure will help the growth of the press in the future (Personal interview, March 09, 2021).

P4 seemed to be sure that freedom of expression and the press will face better future on the condition that the press counsel is realized. She put the conditions as follows: *"If the government*

promotes the media to investigative on reporting and is committed for the implementation of the press law, then there will be progress in professional practice. The government should not leave the constitution and media law on paper. It has to supervise the realization of the law” (FGD1, March 04, 2021). The majority of the informants from FGD1 believe that the future of freedom of the press is at the hands of different organizations. The improvement of freedom of expression and the press depends on the establishment of strong press council, the commitment of the government to the implementation of the press law and the active role of stakeholders in the country.

The future of freedom of expression and the press will turn out to be better if the people understand the media role in democracy development and become stakeholder. Moreover, freedom of expression and the press will be encouraged if the government becomes attentive to the various roles of the media in a democratic system. In addition, if higher educational institutions play their role in contributing skillful and highly professional journalists then there will be a change in the practice of the press. Furthermore, the establishment of press council together with the government’s strong attention to check the implementation of the press law is more important. Finally, freedom of expression and the press will be on better situation and will be improved if the government promotes the practice of professional journalists in the country and encourages both the private and government owned media through creating open access to information without any isolation.

4.11. Analysis on the Perception of Audiences and their Needs

Perception is an intrinsic procedure through which viewers’ change physical illustration of the outside world into inner experience. Using this procedure, humans select, examine and arrange matters in a manner they are able to understand (Samovar and Porter, 1991). The ideas humans have, the cost they deliver to matters, the attitudes they broaden about them, the social organizations they participate in, and other factors affect individual’s perception while listening.

Audiences are independent in the perception process. Scholars (Abercrombie and Langhurst, 1998, Cogley, 1994) verify that audience can extract their own meanings of texts with the absence of any significant implication that without bothering whether the preferred reading has

been undermined. Perception can be influenced by economic, cultural and political beliefs of audiences. Accordingly, audiences listen to the radio and interpret messages depending on the viewpoint they have. The audiences' interpretation capacity inclines on a number of factors outside the text. In addition, it includes; class, gender, age, education and ethnicity. Previous knowledge and experiences can also affect perception.

In addition, places of listening radio and watching television affect meaning construction process and then negative perception with programs may happen. Audiences who listen to the radio and watch TV in distractive situations frame or decode meanings differently from those who listen or watch alone in a quiet room. The decoding/encoding manner might be attested through viewers' background, the temper they're in, the surroundings and different factors (Morley, 1986). Furthermore, political trends may also have an effect on perception. Especially in our country where ethnic based politics is practiced, the probability of switching off the channel with programs that are out of one's own ethnic group will be very high. Thus, this political attitude may blindly push people to hate the medium, Debub FM 100.9 radio for example.

Education and experience enjoy, furthermore, have an effect on the deduction of meanings since the perception power of the public varies according to educational background and experience. Radio audiences need cognitive involvement with attention, recognition and elaboration in order to maximize their perception of the programs aired. According to researchers, intellectual involvement in media messages needs cognitive and emotional experiences. This offers with giving interest and spotting components of the content material as familiar/unfamiliar, and referring to the content material with previous knowledge (Perse, 1990).

Radio listeners could have superb notion and live unswerving to the media they use, in the event that they broaden accept as true with in reliability dimension. One may also speculate what is going to take place if listeners lose credibility at the media they use. In this respect, in international locations in which there are numerous alternatives, listeners will in all likelihood extrude the channel. Audiences want extra records from different media once they accept as true with the records they take is inadequate, insufficient, contradicts with gift enjoy and once they observed the records extraordinary from the reality (Assael, 1998).

According to Abel (2005), mass audiences, nevertheless, are not disorganized listeners. They have their personal reasons to listen. It is likewise genuine that any listener can reject what s/he does now no longer need and has strength to take in what s/he desires to take in. It is to intend that not like what was once believed with inside the past; audiences aren't passive listeners watching for the media to bathe them with any idea. In connection to this Abercrombie (1996:140) added, *“Audiences are not blank sheets of paper on which media messages can be written; members of an audience will have prior attitudes and beliefs that will determine how effective media messages are.”*

As it has been indicated earlier, this study targeted at Dehub FM 100.9 radio programs. The primary reason of this element is turned into evaluate the notion and response of audiences closer to the applications. To accumulate the desired information for the study, a focal point organization dialogue turned into hired as a main tool. The group was designed to get information to know the perception that audiences have on variety of programs that are mentioned in chapter three of the study. The FGD2 was arranged at Halaba Kulito town with different demographic background of the respondents.

Informants on FGD2 discussed about the programs according to their perception and expectations. It appears typically genuine to mention that every one application won't have comparable notion of audiences. Audiences are highly heterogeneous in many aspects of cultural, political, educational and language background. Let on my own those differences, humans with comparable language, subculture and political attitudes will now no longer acquire comparable gratification from comparable applications (McQueen, 1998). In something way, a few applications could have a great notion on a majority, even as others won't.

Most programs that are aired on Dehub FM 100.9 radio have been discussed, inquiring respondents to reflect their perception and interpretation of the programs according to their expectation. Here in the discussion from the framing theory types; attribution of responsibility framing, diagnostic framing and prognostic framing which sometimes called predictive framing is dominantly focused. As mentioned in chapter two of this study framing can be influenced by various factors which in turn affect the perception of audiences.

According to Scheufel (1999:120-122), journalists' framing of an issue may be influenced by several social-structural or organizational reasons and by individual or ideological factors. The author further identifies five variables that may potentially affect journalists' framing of an issue or an event: such as; Social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, pressure of interest groups, journalistic routines and journalists' ideological or political orientations.

Based on the discussion of FGD2, Question and Answer program which is broadcasted for two hours a week attracts many audiences, which is followed by Sport and then by investigation and Drama programs. On the contrary, Local news which has the highest airtime coverage in the channel, business advertisements and current affairs are selected as less attractive in their presentation. Moreover, credibility is an important aspect to keep audiences' consistent listening habit. But in Ethiopian case, maximum audiences aren't that a great deal involved with Local News unless there is special occasion of current affairs like election or instability in the country.

According to most of the participants (p1, p3, p4 and p6 in FGD2), in Dehub FM radio there are other factors which affect their good perception towards the programs. Such the discussed factors include untruthfulness, imbalance, out-datedness, and repetitiveness of the issue. They delivered that nearby information applications in Ethiopia are not said preserving the journalistic career components wherein we need to be. If audiences; however, broaden accept as true within information broadcasted, the credit score they supply to the channel might be superb and high. As stated by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), news is a symbol for national pride and a cornerstone to build trust.

In case of journalists, their common dependence on politicians, interest groups and other experts for quotes and analysis that the media may serve as instrument for individuals and interest groups ready to promote their perspectives (Shen, 2004:116-120). Consequently, journalists adopt frames suggested by interest groups or political actors as sound bites and comprise them of their file of a problem or event. Furthermore, type and political orientation of the medium can also influence news framing (Scheufel, 1999: 121-122).

It is thought that respondents of FGD2 may probable solution a couple of application as interesting/nor no longer interesting, or neutral. Due to this reason, questions were set to ask respondents to express their expectation accordingly. All the identified programs have been selected as interesting, though the degree varies from one program to the other. This is probably being felt via way of means of the numerous natures of audiences. In this connection, McQuail (1997) argues that each one of audiences do now no longer have and could in no way have comparable which means and flavor of 1application. Perception of audiences varies in line with experience, gender and academic levels (McQueen, 1998). One should bear in mind that audiences are interested or not with a certain program does not mean that the programs are faulty in many ways. The effects are handled relatively.

According to the FGD2 there are different reasons stated why they listen to the radio. The large genres, on this regard, in line with McQuail (1987), will be labeled in to four: information, private identity, integration and social interaction, and leisure desires. Based on the audiences' need, the subsequent mentioned elements are tailored from Infante, Rancer and Womack (1993).

4.11.1. Relaxation

Audiences concentrate to the radio after they need to get a few rests from the packages which are aired. Mere correct presentation is probably uninteresting for audiences. Cliché and repetitive thoughts and leisure packages may not every so often be satisfying (Herbert, 2000). In relation to this, respondents had been mentioned whether or not they get leisure from Debub FM 100.9 radio. They are not generally interested and do not feel that much comfort when they are listening with programs that are aired for entertainment purposes. In this connection, music and drama programs which are mainly presented for entertainment purposes are selected as attractive programs. That is, maximum of the audiences beneath this look at do now no longer satisfy their rest desires which they assume from Debub FM radio.

This may suggest that the packages aren't supplied in a manner that would entertain listeners. This has been confirmed by four of the group participants (p1, p3, p4 and p6 of FGD2) who expressed their bad notion with inside the packages which are supposed for relaxation. Only one

of the respondents (p2) reported his positive perception, while one of them (p5) remains undecided.

It is typically believed that one of the principal mechanisms to draw audiences' listening for a positive radio channel is the coolest best of its packages. Moreover, one of the principal targets of any media is to entertain its audiences (McQueen, 1998). If a medium like Debub FM radio forgets to attract its audiences, it will be very unlikely for its audiences to follow the programs. According to the respondents in FGD2 most of the programs of Debub FM radio are found to be unattractive in terms of relaxation.

4.11.2. Companionship

Media experts and others believe that audiences switch their radio on in order to integrate and interact via radio programs with others who are far away from them. Through the medium, they are trying to increase an experience of belonging, to have an alternative to real-existence companionship, and to have social empathy and keep away from loneliness. Listeners may develop a Para-social relationship when they believe that they have a relationship with a radio character or personality who mediates audiences with socialization processes.

Likewise, Debub FM 100.9 radio audiences might listen to the channel to avoid loneliness by the programs. In this regard, the packages aren't supporting audiences to keep away from loneliness and combine themselves with different human beings with inside the community. The focus group discussion (FGD2) indicates that four of the participants(p1,p3,p4 &p6) do not have positive perception on companionship needs, while two of the respondents (p2 &p5) believe in getting the benefits they are expecting. Though there's a giant distinction among the 2 groups. In this regard, the bulk of audiences show that Debub FM 100.9 radio is not providing companionship services, which could minimize loneliness and strengthen social bond.

4.11.3. Habit

The third element offers with the habit of listening radio. Audiences every so often concentrate to radio for ritual purposes. Audiences sometimes listen to radio for ritual purposes. They listen to radio as a habit from a high respect they give to the channel. Some audiences listen radio

regardless of its content and message. In this case, majority of the participants (p1, p3, p4, p5 & p6 on FGD2) said that they are listening Debub FM radio simply because it has become their habit, while one of them replied in opposition of radio listening for habitual reasons. Moreover, the result shows the agreement of respondents that they listen to radio as a habit, not intentionally and purposely.

4.11.4. Pass Time

The fourth factor implies that audiences listen to radio just to pass time. People every so often activate their radio channel after they do now no longer have something to do or everywhere to go. Though radio is functioning, listeners may not apprehend what its' miles being transmitted or they do now no longer significantly observe and comprehend the packages. As it can be seen in FGD2, about four of the respondents (P1, P3, P4, & P6) listen Debub FM when they want to spend their spare time. This might imply that although Debub FM transmits many programs, most of these do not have a power to catch people to listen them deliberately to get some information/message. In other words, listeners do not turn on their radio purposely due to negative perception towards the program broadcasted. Moreover for many listeners Debub FM is not a channel, which is listened by choice.

4.11.5. Learning about Things

The main purpose of media establishment is to educate citizens. Audiences are eager to know about relevant information, events in immediate surroundings, society and about the world as well. It is a need to acquire norms, beliefs, attitudes, values, language characteristics and other social and cultural phenomena in a nation and abroad. These needs of curiosity push audiences to switch on their radio. More importantly, the contribution of media in educating and molding the generation in developing countries like Ethiopia is not debatable. The main objective on the establishment of Debub FM 100.9 radio is also to achieve this important goal. With reference to education, audiences in the FGD2 indicate their strong perception with the educative power of the channel. This is supported by two of the participants (p2 & p5) who believe that they are getting relevant information that could encourage their information needs while the rest remain undecided. The gap between strong and weak perception is very large.

4.11.6. Educating Oneself

Audiences need to learn significant skills that could help them to cope up with colleagues as well as the community in which they are living in. Based on *diagnostic type of framing* journalist emphasize identifying a problem and attributing blame and causality. (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992 in Scheufel, 1999:118) similarly, *prognostic framing* which sometimes called *predictive framing* can be described as a solution frame which specifies what needs to be done (Gerhards & Rucht, 1992, in Scheufel, 1999). Audiences want to educate themselves with different media channels. They need to get some models for themselves and learn something new from the models.

In order to realize their needs audiences seek information, which help them to compare themselves with the characters and evaluate their own capacities and lives. Moreover, if they feel they are educating themselves via radio, they will develop a sense of security. Overall results stated on respondents show that listeners of Debub FM radio seem unsatisfied with the services they expect to educate themselves. In a similar way with the result of “learning about things”, as it can be observed from the group discussion, the majority of respondents do not feel they are learning while they are listening Debub FM radio.

As shown in the discussion, most of the listeners are young who wish to be educated and integrated with the community by the help of media channel. Radio, moreover, supported by its nature, can bring a concrete change by educating the audience. However, though social integrative need is one that audiences seek to achieve from Debub FM 100.9 radio, when their level of perception is observed, it is very low. Therefore, it is possible to say that, Debub FM has forgotten the needs of psychological, social and environmental circumstances that lead audiences to perceive the channel positively.

4.11.7. Credibility Factor

A media house should take credibility as a main factor. All the programs aired mainly news, current affairs, development programs should be presented based on factual information objectively and impartially. Audiences always expect truth from media house and it is this evaluation that bond or divorce customers with dealers. If audiences develop confidence in the

media which they listen, they will stay more listening and develop positive perception for the programs that are broadcasted on the channel.

Audiences do not believe in the credibility of reports that are broadcasted on Debut FM radio. They do not have confidence in the plausibility of information, which is transmitted by the medium. From FGD2 p1, P3, p4 & p6 said, they have negative perception on the credibility of information. On the contrary, two of the participants (p2 & p5) have replied that they have positive perception with the credibility of the programs. It indicates that the programs which are produced on Debut FM radio journalists are not independent, reliable, accurate and comprehensive that citizens require them to be. Therefore, in such conditions positive perception for Debut FM 100.9 radio will never happen. In addition, lack of confidence in the reality and credibility of information will have a direct impact on the overall perception of audiences.

4.11.8. Arousal Factor

This is another factor that affects media perception. Audiences sometimes want to get emotional and physiological arousals from radio and television broadcasts. Some may listen or watch to acquire romance while others may listen or view to maximize heroic programs that show the bravery, courage, determination and fearlessness of national heroes, which have a power to hold audiences stay in listening emotionally. In this case, audiences want dramatic programs which could maximize their gratifications. Three of the respondents (p1, p4 & p6) in focus group are not interested with arousal services they get from SRTA. In other words, when half of audiences are listening to Debut FM radio or watching STV actively they do not get arousal advantages.

4.11.9. Forget/Escape Factor

This factor is concerned with the need that could liberate audiences from temporary anxiety or unhappiness. Besides, it is a demand sought by listeners or viewers in order to forget and hide oneself from bad moods that happened recently. These needs might be achieved when radio and TV programs include fantasy type of games on different issues, like astronomy, comedy, science fictions and others. Here audiences are not necessarily get relaxation. They might just sit to secrete themselves from the bad thing they are confronted with. In this regard p1, p3, p4 & p6 of FGD2) are not happy with the diversion needs they achieved from SRTA. The rest two of the

respondents, however, confirmed their positive perception. That is listening to the radio and watching TV helped them to minimize their tension and forget bad things that happened to them recently.

4.11.10. Overall perception of Audiences on Debub FM 100.9 radio

The core point of this section of the research reclines on the overall perception of audiences on Debub FM 100.9 radio Amharic programs. The results show that the majority of the respondents from FGD2 are not interested on the quality of the programs. As it has been indicated in the review of literature, audiences are most probably not interested with media products when they unmeet their social, political and psychological needs. The needs are true for all audiences. Considering the needs, media houses should try to attract their audiences by broadcasting interesting programs that go with. However, as the respondents of FGD2 indicate Debub FM does not seem to indicate that much effort to serve its audiences based on their needs.

Respondents on FGD2 were also asked eight basic questions to state their reasons for the answers they gave for “the overall perception of Debub FM 100.9 radio Amharic programs”. Overall forty eight answers/texts that are collected from the participants can be seen in two ways. The first group which is one third of the discussant those who expressed their positive perception with the services they get from the channel. This group put their reason as; because it shows unity within diversity (P2& P5 from FGD2), it mainly focuses on domestic issues rather than foreign and inappropriate to our social, political and economic issues and also all participants of FGD2 stated that; it uses our own common Amharic language, which is a sign of pride.

The second group which is two third of the participants who showed their negative perception with the channel, stated their reasons why they are not very interested with Debub FM 100.9 radio. According to P1, P3, P4 and P6 (FGD2 April17, 2021) “most of the programs are not from ordinary and professional journalists to people but they are from government elites to pro-government people”. On the other side, most programs are partial, unfair and blindly biased for the government (P1, P3, P4, P5, & P6). As Semetko and Valkenburg (2000:103) put it, *attribution of responsibility framing* presents an issue or problem in such a way as to characteristic duty for its purpose or approach to both the authorities or to a person or group.

Iyengar (1987) argued that after television information covers a problem or event, or person (episodically) rather than presenting the larger historical social context (thematically), it promotes individuals' explanations for social problems (Cited in Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000:105). If journalists get extra pre-fund from any government body as a benefit they tend to produce imbalanced and unfair programs that are pro-government even there are many wrong doings seen in the regions' developmental activity. Most of the journalists hide administrative problems of the government and unwilling to criticize the wrong activities.

According to P1, P2, P3, P4 & P6, many of the programs aired are repetitious and boring. All participants of FGD2 agreed that journalists lack the professional skills and confidence and some even act as they are cadres. Most news, development and current affairs reports are full of biases and not credible. As illustrated in the discussion session, most of the people who are interviewed for any news or program coverage are in one way or the other, pro-government allocated to echo the interests of the ruling party (P1, P3, P4, P5, & P6). **Morality framing** emphasizes moral or religious contexts of an issue or event (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000:99). In order to keep the professional norm of objectivity, journalists often make use of the ethical body circuit only with the aid of using the use of citation and inference, for example, having others ask the question. (Neuman et al. in Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000:99-101).

Most of the audiences want morally to relax themselves on weekends by listening to the radio but as stated by P1, P3, P4, & P5 the reality of the audiences' perception shows the opposite. The channel is being a propaganda machine as expressed in the discussion; it does upset the audiences instead of entertaining. Also the channels' bulky advertisements kill their desire of listening as mentioned by the participants P2, P3, P5, & P6 of FGD2. As a result of the closeness of the information from respondents, it is possible to say that, stream of audiences' perception in Debub FM 100.9 radio may result from lack of responsibility, credibility and accountability for the public.

Chapter Five

5. Conclusion and recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

As pointed out earlier in the chapter one of this study, the objective of the study has been to indicate the challenges and opportunities of media independence and professional practices of South Television and Radio Agency. As the study focused on the realization of the law, it assessed the gap between the constitutional and press law of the country and the practice with the hope of making some recommendations. Freedom of the mass media and information proclamation has come across with many challenges since it was put into implementation in 2008. The finding of the research exposed that a gap exists between the country's constitution/press law and its actual implementation.

There is intervention in the practice of professional journalism and lack of commitment on the part of the government in paying attention to the implementation of the press law. Apart from writing and preparing the law on paper, the government has been unwilling on the implementation of the press law. Although the fact that the press law allows any independent media to express opinion or criticism on various issues in a constructive way. The government is fearful and very critical of the views, opinions and criticisms of the media.

This shows that the government discourages other views of professional journalists when it was different from its own. Implicit the ruling political party official intervention has been prevalent in the media which increases self-censorship. The presence of unlimited government intervention in the media institutions through few ministers to influence the coverage of some stories that are critical to the government has been very difficult to broadcast. This is the violation of the right of the media granted not only by the press law but also by the constitution law of the country.

There is also lack of common understanding about the rights and duties of the media both on the part of professional journalists and those in different managerial levels in the media houses. The case is clearer in government owned broadcast media where editors and managers have party representation, and others are rarely professionals. These managers want the media have to be dependent and the mouth piece of the government and do not properly respect the rights and responsibilities of the media and the journalists stated in the press law since their role is political gate keeping. Lack of commitment and common understanding of such officials about the rights and obligations granted to the media through the press law has affected press freedom of the country negatively.

The research found that shortage of understanding on the part of journalists about the provision also attributed to lack of appropriate training. In addition, the effort of journalists to understand the legal frame work and media practice accordingly is found to be weak. The absence of strong, independent and credible press council or union of journalists in the country has significantly affected the progress of the performance of the media. Organized independent and credible media council would have promoted the practice of professional journalism by setting code of conducts, actively giving long term and short term trainings to journalists and minimizing professional journalism challenges of the country. It would have tried to avoid the polarity between the private and government media houses, so that the journalistic practice could have been at its better position.

The study also found that journalists stick to the fact that media independence, freedom of expression and the press has a bound. They believe that the media should not operate against the interest of the nation and its public. They strongly believe that the limitations imposed on freedom of expression and the press by the constitution and the press law should be respected for the benefit of majority people and the nation.

In spite of the fact that the editorial policy of the media institutions guides the overall running of a media, the research identified how the political affiliation and views of editors and media managers affect the way the media house performs. The influence of assigned media editors and managers on the rest of the staff has been found significant. Despite of very little improvement,

accessing information from public officials has been a serious challenge for the media. This is mainly due to unwillingness and failure of public bodies to carry out their duty of giving information for the concerned media as per journalists' request. What is more difficult is officials' unwillingness to give information to the private media. This isolation of the private media from their government counterparts in access to information from officials is another constraining factor for freedom of expression and the press.

The study found that the future of freedom of expression and the press depends on the collaboration effort of journalists and establishment of strong press council. The role of the government should not also be forgotten in creating and providing opportunities to the establishment of the council. It is also dependent on a significant contribution of educational institutions and the people, and above all the improvement of the political structure. The democratic system of good governance is still infant and on the process of development. As the political system and the structure gets more and more democratic, there will be parallel degree of improvement in media independence, freedom of expression and the press. Citizens of the country, all political gatherings and different entities will have active role in the current affair of media independence, so that the practice of journalism will be based on professional norms thereby reducing unethical and partial journalistic practices.

5.2. Recommendations

The media have a vital role in providing information, facilitating as well as motivating the public debate which is essential to the proper functioning of democracy in the country. They are the main source of information for the people who want to satisfy their need on various socio-economic and political issues. For the media to serve as forum for variety of views, ideas and individual opinions they need to function with autonomy and without interference by either government or private sector. In a developing country like Ethiopia, the contribution of the media for socio-economic, political and cultural development is indeed significant.

They are believed to create not only awareness on various issues and mould public view but also mobilize the public to contribute on various developmental aspects. Moreover, the media have a great contribution in educating and informing the public about issues that may have direct or

indirect impact on their daily life. The information provision role of the media about the country's new policies together with their potential contributions and weaknesses is so important. The media is the major instrument in setting agendas on various public issues. Hence, they contribute in bringing the problems of the public to the attention of concerned bodies.

The government, considering the reflective function of the media, should have commitment to freedom of expression and the press thereby giving attention to the implementation of the press law. The government should not ignore the views and criticisms from the media professionals since part of the contribution of the media is the criticisms they publish and broadcast to indicate the weakness and gaps of the government. Media institutions must give proper trainings to the journalists in which they can be familiar with the legal provision in the press law. Any trial to change the landscape of the Ethiopian media for the better would not be possible without bringing a change on the perception of the management or political leadership of the media. Hence, the gatekeepers of the media should be kind of the role of the media in informing the public and creating awareness on different matters of public interest.

In media landscape the establishment of independent, strong and credible press council will be significant to create a better, more accountable and responsible media for the public. The press council not only helps guide the media professional practitioners through code of ethics but also reduces various journalistic challenges like gaps of professional skill. The public officials should also make accurate and credible information available to help journalists inform and educate the public about the current real activity of the government. Easy access to information will increase the participation and motivation of the people on vital developmental initiatives and efforts. It also encourages the professional journalists to further produce or report credible information from the right person on the right time.

Finally, the contribution of higher educational institutions of the country and abroad should be high in producing well trained and skilled graduates who will bring changes in the media institutions and struggle the well-being of the profession. This will minimize the problem and shortage of skilled manpower in the media houses. In addition, to promote freedom of expression and the press, the government should have commitment and develop culture of tolerance towards independent media. What is more, the government, professionals and the media should play their

role and look for ways to narrow the gap between the government and the private media so that both can contribute better to the development of the country.

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Appendices

Appendix I

List of key informants

1. Interviewee no.1, Getinet Tesfa: Research and Capacity Building Director in Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority. March 09, 2021
2. Interviewee no.2, Biruk Habte: General Director of Southern Radio and Television Agency. March 06, 2021
3. Interviewee no.3, Muaz Gizaw: Editor in-chief in Debub FM 100.9 radio. March 06, 2021
4. Interviewee no.4, Genanew Lema: Deputy Editor in-chief in SRTA. April 20, 2021
5. Interviewee no.5, Etagegnehu: Editor in Debub FM 100.9 radio. April 20, 2021
6. Interviewee no.6, Desta W/Senbet: Content and News Editor in SRTA. March 25, 2021
7. Interviewee no.7, Tariku Legesse: was Editor in Debub FM 100.9 radio. March 25, 2021
8. Interviewee no.8, Semeredin Shifale: was an Editor in Debub FM 100.9 Radio at Hossana branch. April 17, 2021
9. FGD1 - P1, Alemseged Abreham: Editor in Debub FM 100.9 radio. March 04, 2021
10. FGD1- P2, Ewunetu: Producer of Amharic Programs in Debub FM 100.9 radio. March 04, 2021
11. FGD1 - P3, Sintayehu Asrat: A producer in Debub FM 100.9 March 04, 2021
12. FGD1 - P4, Hiwot Mitiku. A reporter in Debub FM 100.9. March 04, 2021
13. FGD1 - P5, Sara Esayas. A program producer in Debub FM 100.9. March 04, 2021
14. FGD1 - P6, Workineh Gashaw. A reporter in Debub FM 100.9. March 04, 2021
15. FGD2 - P1, Nibras Teshome: A Teacher in Hossana town. April 17, 2021
16. FGD2 - P2, Kemal Hassen: Public relation officer in Halaba zone communication, culture and tourism office. April 17, 2021
17. FGD2 - P3, Melaku Zemedede: Police officer in Hossana town. April 17, 2021
18. FGD2 - P4, Tsehay Gorfu: Midwifer in Halaba Health Center. April 17, 2021
19. FGD2 - P5, Zahra Jemal: Student in Durame town. April 17, 2021

20. FGD2 - P6, Meseret Girma: House wife in Durame town and Vocational school trainee. April 17, 2021

Appendix II

In-depth interview questions for key informants-English Version

1. What are the opportunities of exercising freedom of expression and the press in Ethiopia?
2. What are the roles of the professional journalists in practicing freedom of expression in the public media?
3. How do you evaluate the professional practice in relation with media law in covering the current issues of the country?
4. How does the journalist's dependability on media owners influence audiences' interest, belief during program production and presentation?
5. To what extent the social issue of programs aired on Debub FM 100.9 by respecting ethical values of the profession?
6. What would the journalists interest affect the media independence, freedom of the press and their professional practice while covering the different issues in Debub FM 100.9 radio?
7. How could the journalists of Debub FM 100.9 radio station make the media free from government intervention?
8. How do you explain the current status of media independence, freedom of expression and the press and professional practice in Ethiopia?
9. What are the main challenges among journalists when exercising freedom of the press media houses?
10. How do you express the solutions for the challenges you mentioned above?

Appendix III

Questions for focus group discussion participants (FGD1)-English Version

1. What are the opportunities in your media organization to practice the profession to as you are trained?
2. What are the main challenges when you are exercising freedom of expression and the press in your media houses?
3. How far you journalists are striving to improve your level of profession by getting trainings or other means thereby promoting ethical, responsible and independent reporting?
4. How do you explain government officials' intervention in the media activity on the issues of freedom of expression and the press?
5. How do you evaluate the limits on freedom of expression and press freedom for the sake of national security and public safety in Ethiopia?
6. How would the political orientation of editors and media managers influence media independence and the professional practice of freedom of expression?
7. How accessible are government offices to provide journalists with required information?
8. What can you say about the futurity of media independence, professional practice and press freedom in this country?

Appendix IV

Questions for focus group discussion participants (FGD2)-English Version

- 1 Why do you listen to Debub FM 100.9 radio?
- 2 How do you evaluate the relaxing/entertaining, educating and informing level of Debub FM 100.9 radio?
- 3 What kind of programs do you identify that were broadcasted in debub FM 100.9 radio?
- 4 How would you explain the perception of the programs that you mentioned in question no.3?
- 5 What are the limits of the media in attracting your interest?
- 6 Do you think the media gives priority in mobilizing your effort in participating and contributing in country's growth?
- 7 How do you evaluate the program production and presentation capacity of journalists in Debub FM 100.9 radio?
- 8 Do you think that the media is responsible to gratify your need on variety of issues?

Appendix V

In- depth interview questions for key informants-Amharic version

1. በኢትዮጵያ ብዙን መገናኛ የመናገርና የመጻፍ ነጻነትን ለመተግበር የሚያስችሉ ምቹ ሁኔታዎች ምንድን ናቸው?
2. ጋዜጠኛው በህዝብ ብዙን መገናኛ ስር ሆኖ የመናገር ነጻነትን በመተግበር ሂደት ሚናው ምን መስፈርት አለበት?
3. ለሀገሪቱ ህቅታዊ ጉዳዮች የአየር ሽፍን በመስጠት የጋዜጠኛውን ህጋዊ ተግባር ከመገናኛ ብድኑ ነጻነት አዋጅ ጋር በማዛመድ እንዲመልከት/መፍትሽ ይቻላል?
4. በግዴታ ምክንያት ዝግጅትና ስርጭት ህቅታዊ የጋዜጠኛው በመገናኛ ብድኑ ባለቤቶች ፍላጎት ላይ መንጠልጠል በአድማጭ ፍላጎት ላይ የሚያሳርፎውን ተፅዕኖ እንዲያይታል?
5. በዳክሎ ስፍራ 100.9 ፊደላት ለአየር የበቁ ማህበራዊ ግንኙነቶች ምን ያህል ህጋዊ ስነምግባርን ያከበሩ ናቸው ብለው ያምናሉ?
6. በዳክሎ ስፍራ 100.9 ፊደላት የተለያዩ ማህበራዊ ጉዳዮች የመገናኛ ብድኑ ሽፍን በሚሰጡበት ጊዜ በመገናኛ ብድኑ ገለልተኛነት፣ በመናገር ነጻነትና በህጋዊ ተግባር ላይ የጋዜጠኛው የግል ፍላጎት ምን ስያሜ ይችላል?
7. የዳክሎ ስፍራ 100.9 ፊደላት ጣይ ጋዜጠኞች መገናኛ ብድኑን ከመንግስት ጣቢያ ጋር እንዲያደግግ ይቻላል?
8. የኢትዮጵያን ህቅታዊ የመገናኛ ብድኑ ነጻነት፣ የመናገርና የመጻፍ ነጻነት እንዲሁም የጋዜጠኞች የህግ ብቻ ለደንበኞች እንዲያስፈልግ ይመለከታል?
9. በመገናኛ ብድኑ ተቋማት ጋዜጠኞች በነጻነት የመናገርና የመጻፍ መብትን በሚተገብሩበት ህቅታዊ የሚገጥሟቸው ማንኛውም ተግባራት ምንድን ናቸው?
10. ለተጠቃሚው ተግባራት እንዲሁም የሚጠቅሱት ነገር ካለ በዚህ ደረጃ?

Appendix VI

Questions for focus group discussion participants (FGD1)-Amharic Version

1. በምትሰሩበት ብዙሃን መገናኛ ስር የሰለጠናችሁበትን የጋዜጠኝነት ማሞላት ለመተግበር የሚያስችሉ ምቹ ሁኔታዎች አሉ ህይወት ምንድን ናቸው?
2. ባላችሁበት የሙያ ዘርፍ ላይ የመናገርና የመጻፍ ነጻነትን በምትተገብሩበት ሁኔታ የሚገጥሟቸው ማንኛውም ተግዳሮቶች ምንድን ናቸው?
3. እናንተ ጋዜጠኞች በሰለጠናና በሌሎችም አማራጮች ማሞላት አቅማችሁን በማሳደግ የጋዜጠኝነት ስነምግባርን ለማበረታታት ተጠያቂትን ለማስፈን እና ገለልተኛ ሆኖ ሪፖርት ለማድረግ ምን ያህል እየተጋችሁ ነው?
4. በብዙሃን መገናኛ የመናገርና የመጻፍ ነጻነት ውስጥ የመንግስት ባለስልጣናትን ህይወት የብዙሃን መገናኛ ባለቤትን ማህበራዊ እንዲቆይ ትገልጹታላችሁ? የሚያሳድርባቸው ተጨማሪ ምንድን ነው?
5. በኢትዮጵያ የሀገርንና የህዝብን ዲሞክራሲ ከማስጠበቅ አንጻር የመናገርና የመጻፍ ነጻነት መብት ያሉበትን ውስንነቶች እንዲቆይ ትመለከቱታላችሁ?
6. የፖለቲካ አስተሳሰብ ያላቸው ስዊቶች/አርታኪዎች እና የብዙሃን መገናኛ ማናጀቻ በብዙሃን መገናኛ ገለልተኝነትና የመናገር ነጻነት ላይ በምን መልኩ ተጨማሪ ያሳርፋሉ?
7. ለጋዜጠኛው ተገቢውን መረጃ በተገቢው ጊዜ ቦታ በማቅረብ/በመስጠት የመንግስት ተቋማትን ሚና እንዲቆይ ትገልጹታላችሁ?
8. በዚህ ሀገር ስለቀጣይ የብዙሃን መገናኛ ገለልተኝነት ስለማሞላት ማሰባሰብ የመናገርና የመጻፍ ነጻነት ሁኔታ ምን ትላላችሁ?

Appendix VII

Questions for focus group discussion participants (FGD2)-Amharic Version

1. ዳክብ ስፍ ስም 100.9 ፊደሎችን ለምን ታምጧልችሁ?
2. የዳክብ ስፍ ስም 100.9 ፊደሎችን የማዝናናት፣ የማስተማርና መረጃ የመስጠት ሟጃን እንዲቅ ትገመግጧልችሁ?
3. በዳክብ ስፍ ስም 100.9 ፊደሎች ለአየር ከበቁ ዝግጅቶች ምን ሚና ትገጥሟል?
4. በተራ ቁጥር 3 በተዘረዘሩ ዝግጅቶች ያላችሁን ምልክታ እንዲቅ ትገልጧልችሁ?
5. የመገናኛ ብዙሃን የፍላጎታችሁን ያህል በመስጠት በኩል ያሉባቸው እጥረቶች ምንድን ናቸው?
6. በሀገሪቱ የዕድገት ገዢ እንድትሳተፍና አስተዳደር እንድትበረከቱ የመገናኛ ብዙሃን ቅድሚያ ስጥተው ያነሳሱል ብሎችሁ ታምናላችሁ?
7. የዳክብ ስፍ ስም 100.9 ፊደሎችን ጋዜጠኞችን የገጠሙት ዝግጅትና አቀራረብ አቅምን እንዲቅ ትመለከቱላችሁ?
8. የመገናኛ ብዙሃን በልዩ ልዩ ገዳዮች ላይ የናገሩትን ፍላጎት የማሟላት ሀላፊነት አለበት ብሎችሁ ታስባላችሁ?