



Addis Ababa University

School of Journalism and Communication

Department of Public Relations and Strategic Communication

Final Thesis

**The practice of media regulation by EMA to tackle misinformation and
disinformation**

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September, 2022

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JORNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

The practice of media regulation by EMA to tackle misinformation and disinformation

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A Research Submitted to School of Journalism and Communication Presented

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in

Public Relation and Strategic Communication

September, 2022

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JORNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

DECLARATION

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This thesis, prepared by Sisay Sahlu, titled "The Practice of Media Regulation by EMA to Tackle misinformation and disinformation," is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communication. This research is my original work and has not been presented by any other researcher to any university. I declare that all source materials used in this research have been properly recognized and acknowledged.

.

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Chair of Department of Graduate Program coordinator

Acknowledgements

This program was a surprise blessing, and I appreciate God first and foremost for enabling me to be a part of it and finish this thesis with my sanity intact. I also want to thank my adviser, Agaredechi Jemaneh (Dr.), for her unwavering patience with me and for her words of encouragement when I was feeling down. Her thorough and rational approach was really appreciated, and I thoroughly valued working with her.

This thesis would not have been achievable without the participation of Ethiopian Media Authority, journalists and media entities in my interview. Despite the rigorous demands of their jobs, they made time out of their day to not only participate, but to put thought and care into their reaction to the study's content. They have my heartfelt thanks. My family and friend also helped make this thesis possible by pulling me back from the brink.

My next thanks go to the Editors of the reporter newspaper who have been behind me throughout the effort that I have made.

Abstract

Unless it is managed through strategic and systematic mechanisms, the flow of misinformation and disinformation plays a very destructive role in the socio-economic and political establishment, especially in countries like Ethiopia, which is passing through and struggling with a polarized political system. In the last few years, misinformation and disinformation have thrived in the Ethiopian media ecosystem.

To that end, this work researched the regulatory approaches and strategies used by EMA to combat the phenomenon of misinformation and disinformation in the Ethiopian media landscape. This specific research has focused on the effectiveness of strategies and tools used in regulating misinformation and disinformation, particularly since the outbreak of the northern Ethiopia conflict.

The study was conducted using qualitative research methods through in-depth interviews and document analysis. Participants were purposefully selected from EMA, media practitioners, and media experts. The researcher also reviewed legal and regulatory documents from the EMA and other related media documents. Data collection was performed using an in-depth interview. The findings of the study pointed out that EMA's effort to tackle misinformation and disinformation wasn't through sophisticated and defined mechanisms, and the study also showed a lack of collaborative approaches and technologically supported regulatory practice despite the flow of misinformation and disinformation that poses negative and damaging consequences.

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Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

This study provides an overview of the rapidly evolving phenomenon of misinformation and disinformation and analyzes how government is acting to help respond to it, and looks in to the challenges and opportunities of media monitoring practices.

False information, either intentional or not, has had a myriad of effects in recent years, including reduced trust between government and the public, instead it widen disbelief among two figures, and create politicization of public view.

Disinformation and Misinformation are a very long-term historical problem with human society. The spread of misinformation and disinformation happens often in everyday lives of human being. Globally, trends of organized misinformation and disinformation have a political and/or commercial agenda. In this regard the rapid rise of misinformation and disinformation demands media regulators and communication professionals to go beyond offering counsel and take a strong, consistent stance against the untruthful messages that some members of the public call spin, (Colomina, 2021). It takes a critical exertion to reduce the uncontrolled flow of misinformation and disinformation that intentioned or something else is destabilizing society.

In the growing digital era People can express themselves, share information, and communicate through online platforms using computers, smartphones, tablets and other tools, despite the greater danger of circulation of fake news in these platforms.

The rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation online has emerged as a pressing public issue of the 21st century is affecting all those accessing online networks, as well as those offline.

Mis/disinformation poses serious and unavoidable obstacles. Wrong facts, whether presented with the intent to deceive or not, can influence people's conclusions and decisions in ways that harm their well-being as well as the well-being of others, and the impact can be long-term. Disinformation and misinformation differs in their intent, while disinformation is considered to

be the intentional creation or sharing of false or misleading information, whereas spreading misinformation is considered to be unintentional sharing (Colomina, 2021).

Digital Mis and disinformation can proliferate through people, bots and troll factories – organized groups that wage coordinated Mis and disinformation campaigns – for a range of reasons: to intentionally deceive and harm, to gain political influence, for financial gain, or unwittingly to share information or garner approval and popularity (Howard, 2021).

Though misinformation is shared information that is unintentionally false, disinformation refers to false information which is purposefully shared for a systematic influence as well as for propaganda purposes (Colomina, 2021).

The dissemination of false news, which is made simple by social media, has the potential to skew public opinion and influence policymaking, particularly in democratic democracies Nasu. (2021). Experts from academia, government, civil society, and media agree that disinformation is a problem with social, political, and economic ramifications (Nasu, 2021).

In this regard, the harmful consequences of fake news necessitate effective regulatory responses to reduce or eliminate its adverse impacts on the orderly society or political processes, (Nasu. 2021).

In most circumstances, the intentions and beliefs of diffusers and receivers are unclear; nonetheless, diffusers may try deceit, and receivers may respond by exercising judgment by seeking for signs to credibility and deception.

Though, many more up and downs, recently the media landscape in Ethiopia has been emerging with more professional development and exhibited ethical standards.

However, in tandem with the growth of digital and internet technology, during the period of the Northern Ethiopia conflict, some international mainstream main stream media institutions and some other alternative media platforms have been a security threat to Ethiopian, and common conduit for the significant amount of misinformation and disinformation.

Currently, especially after the eruption of the Northern Ethiopia conflict, dissatisfaction with the content and quality of the information flow is increasing not only at a national level but also at the level of people's everyday lives.

As a result, social media has become a crucial route for disseminating misinformation and disinformation, as well as a tool for influencing socioeconomic and political action.

As Freedom House, (2021) indicated the importance to distinguish between the domestic and foreign levels of information warfare and information security, when analyzing a state's wartime communication strategy, the study focused on the effectiveness of the Ethiopian Media Authority to manage and regulate the flow of misinformation and disinformation both on the mainstream and social media platforms.

Misinformation and disinformation have proliferated in numerous forms during the previous two years, impacting various parts of society. Recently, the flow of misinformation and disinformation through various media platforms has gradually intensified over time and is diffused by diffusers; the dissemination of such information becomes a more complex trend based on emerging techniques of scam and intended purpose (Tsakalidis, 2019).

Both types of information flow jeopardize freedom of opinion, privacy, and democratic involvement, as well as a variety of economic, social, and cultural rights of the general public.

In this context, effective and result-oriented responses to misinformation and deceit are necessary at several levels, including understanding formal legal procedures and controls, business commitments, and charitable society activities.

The media regulator institution formerly known as Ethiopian Broadcast Authority has re-established in 2021 under Proclamation No. 1238/2021 with its new name 'Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA)'.

EMA among many more responsibilities, it is tasked to regulate broadcasting, print and online media outlets to ensure that they are operating by the constitution, other pertinent laws, regulations, and directives.

Therefore, this study assessed and examined the effectiveness of EMA to what extent it has addressed and regulated the flow of misinformation and disinformation on the mainstream media as well as the alternative media landscape in the interests of addressing fake news.

2. Statement of the Problem

Though there is a clear growth of misinformation and disinformation across both mainstream media and social media platforms, effectively regulating online misinformation and disinformation is increasingly harder.

If a healthy democracy demands an informed populace, then citizens must have access to accurate knowledge that allows them to evaluate public policy, which eventually leads to their forming opinions on issues that require their input, (Moore, 2015). In this regard combating misinformation and disinformation campaigns requires systematic interventions, and governments are often seen as having the size and resources to tackle the scale of the problem.

House of people's representatives of Ethiopia referring to the threat of hate speech and disinformation posed to social harmony, political stability, national unity, human dignity, diversity, and equality of the people of Ethiopia, has ratified Proclamation No. 1185 /2020 dubbed as “Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation.”

In this regard, the EMA is tasked to monitor and oversee and enforce regulations regarding information crisis to protect the public interest. The biggest indicator of the credibility of journalism is there is more level of public trust in traditional media; nevertheless, trust in alternative internet media has been steadily declining because of many reasons (Giorgi, 2019).

In recent years, the validity of information has emerged as a persistent issue impacting companies and society, emanating from both printed and digital media channels. Inaccurate or incorrect information has the ability to have real-world consequences for millions of people within minutes. Both misinformation (information that is wrong without the intention to deceive) and disinformation (wrong information that is intentionally wrong or misleading) feed the partisan divide, (Williams, 2021).

In recent years misinformation, disinformation and hate speech have thrived in the Ethiopian media ecosystem, and this trend has exacerbated pre-existing political tensions and contributed to violence and conflict, European institute of peace, (2021). However, there has been little attention paid to halt growing circulation of fake news, misinformation, and hate speech.

Recently, it has become common to hear that many more resident and non-resident international media outlets in Ethiopia, as well as dozens of online media platforms mostly based outside Ethiopia in the diaspora community, have been advocating bogus information on Ethiopia's already polarized political system, which is ultimately producing fragile and fabricated information.

Disinformation is a series of purposeful (sometimes coordinated) attempts to confuse or manipulate individuals by presenting dishonest information to them, whereas misinformation is an attempt to generate or transmit false information without manipulative or malevolent intent (Adjin-Tettey, 2022).

Both sources are indeed problems for society, but the problem which disinformation posed is particularly dangerous because it is frequently organized, well resourced, and reinforced by automated technology. A particularly dangerous consequence that has arisen from the spread of disinformation is an increasing belief in conspiracy theories which can have dangerous real-world consequences, (Williams, 2021).

As misinformation and disinformation are both present and persistent on an important topic of public policy, government, and social wellbeing, the issue needs concrete strategic and joint effort of stakeholders. The phenomenon of misinformation and disinformation in Ethiopia has been broadly studied in the last few years. However, the change of news media consumption habits brought by the internet and by social media networks allowed fake news dissemination to grow on an unprecedented scale (Giorgi, 2019).

For instance, a vulnerability assessment on fake news misinformation and hate speech in Ethiopia studied by European institute of peace (2021) examined about the approach and framework to improve the understanding of fake news, misinformation, and hate speech in Ethiopia, and so as to develop a more nuanced and tailored approach to addressing a real national

chilling, the study doesn't collect the data from the necessary authorities and stakeholders to identify efforts and strategies applied to tackle the burgeoning impact of the issue .

Despite, an increased regulatory and societal attention towards the impact of disinformation, there is no adequate and appropriate research study, indicating the effectiveness of the regulatory body enactment to halt the problem and a clear indication of the socio-economic impact of such information on the livelihood of Ethiopians.

During the northern Ethiopia conflict alone, millions of disgruntled Ethiopians protested over the unremitting flow of misinformation and disinformation by several international media outlets and some local media institutions well as social media platforms.

A vulnerability assessment study conducted by European institute of peace, (2021), illustrated the level, techniques engagement, categories, and impact of hate speech, misinformation, and fake news; however, this study missed to identify the role played by the regulator body's and fail to recommend tackling mechanisms, the problem and challenges with related to monitoring efforts.

Experts urge that a plan to minimize the spread of and suffering caused by this broader information disorder include proper reactions to potentially dangerous false information in circulation. Researchers, educators, and even social media companies and government entities have sought solutions to this growing misinformation and disinformation plague.

Afro-barometer, (2021) conducted a study that indicated the spread of "fake news" or false information of all kinds, including misinformation and disinformation, indicated the advent of misinformation and disinformation and the serious problem it poses, particularly since the arrival of digital media platforms in Ethiopia, however, the study pays no attention to the sources of this information and fails to outline the regulatory body's effort to tackle the issue.

In this regard, it crucial to conduct s research which aims at finding to what extent the regulatory body (EMA) is effectively addressing the problem, to this end the main focus of this research is identifying the key challenges in the area of monitoring and regulating misinformation and

disinformation and assessing the effectiveness of the effort played by the authority to monitor and handle the situation in order to provide insight and a basis for further study.

3. Objectives of the Study

3.1 General Objective

As the flow of misinformation and disinformation intensifies, the main purpose of this study is exploring magnitude of the flow of misinformation and disinformation and to examine the effectiveness of exploited strategies by EMA and to assess, analyze the source of the problem, and monitor and regulate the issue properly in legal frameworks.

3.2 Specific Objectives

To identify and explore the key monitoring and controlling mechanisms of EMA to tackle the growing misinformation and disinformation flow and to look into Authority's perspective and perception on Misinformation and disinformation flow in Ethiopia.

Analyzing the scope and probable motivations for misinformation and disinformation spread

To identify the roadblocks impeding EMA's ability to effectively regulate the problem

To assess and show the extent of the impact and risk of misinformation and disinformation in the absence of effective regulatory mechanisms

Analyze the challenges EMA's effort in regulating misinformation and disinformation practices.

To find out a possible practical and scientific recommendation on regulating and minimizing the possible risk posed to the country.

4. Research Questions

How is the trend of misinformation and disinformation in Ethiopia?

What are the routine and basic strategies EMA practically applies to monitor and regulate the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation, and how do you evaluate the impact of these tools?

To what extent and on which media platforms did disinformation and misinformation appear?

What are the practical challenges EMA faces in regulating misinformation and disinformation practices?

What should be done to combat the flow of misinformation and disinformation??

5. Methodology of the study

As qualitative methods of data collection and analysis are deemed the best options to get opinions and attitudes of respondents the study will adopt qualitative research methodology

In this regard the research method broadly uses qualitative method, to be executed based on interviews and document analysis.

Interview conducted to get participants insight on the issue at hand in-depth-interviews are aimed at exploring EMA officials, Journalists and experts' point of view, experiences, feelings, values and perspectives legal frameworks.

The study applied, agenda setting theory and framing theory to substantiate data and to move beyond descriptions to explanations of phenomena.

A more detailed account of the methodology applied as illustrated in chapter three.

6. Significance of the study

The major importance of this paper is to identify the strength and weaknesses of EMA regulatory frameworks and strategies in effectively administrating the spread of misinformation and disinformation problem in Ethiopia.

The finding of this study may serve as a stepping stone for EMA as well as other organizations as a source of scientific-practical and constructive recommendation and essential tools to deal with and combat similar problems.

Furthermore, the academic staff would get a starting point for more advanced research in a similar area.

7. Scope of the Study

Hence the EMA is the sole regulator body, so the scope of the study is limited to the monitoring department of the authority. Besides, the study has assessed how the authority effectively utilizes its monitoring and controlling strategies during the past two years since the northern Ethiopia conflict outbreak. Furthermore, the study also incorporated media personalities and experts in the sector.

8. Organization of the study

This research presented in five chapters.

The first chapter presents introductory information about the study, which includes short contextual background, problem statement, objective, and significance, scope, organization of the study research questions and its scope.

Literature review and detailed background information about the study area covered in the second chapter. This chapter also presents conceptual and theoretical frameworks of misinformation and disinformation and practical regulating mechanisms.

In third chapter I have discussed the design of the study, i.e. the methodology such as the data gathering techniques and other related things

The fourth chapter also deals with the presentation and discussion of the data collected from EMA and other sources to make an analysis.

Chapter five is all about summary and conclusion, indicating the way forward with brief recommendations. Reference, materials, and other important notes follow this chapter.

Chapter two

Review of related Literature

2.1 Introduction

This section attempted to highlight relevant literature to the study and major theoretical and philosophical foundations that are important to conduct the flow and impact of misinformation and misinformation and to assess the regulatory frameworks and practices of the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA).

Besides the paper also looked into the current status of fake news and challenges it poses to the livelihood of citizens, public coexistence and democratization process of the country.

2.2 An over view of Misinformation and disinformation

The term "false information" refers to misinformation (when false information is shared with no intention of causing harm), disinformation (when false information is shared with the intent of causing harm), and misinformation (when genuine information is shared with the intent of causing harm, often by moving information designed to remain private into the public sphere) (Obrenovic, 2020).).

Certain articles may have fundamental factual facts, but they are presented in aggressive language, omit out important details, or simply provide one side of view. "Fake news" is part of a bigger ecology of misinformation and deception (Citron, 2021).

Misinformation is false or inaccurate information that is mistakenly or inadvertently created or spread; amid yet its intent is not to deceive, whereas disinformation is false information, but it is an information deliberately created and spread "in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth"(<https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/disinformation>).

2.3. Historical background of Misinformation and disinformation

It is legitimate to claim that the setting and circumstances of misinformation and deception are not novel. However, the instruments or procedures used now are different and vary in time and

location. The current abundance and transmission of incorrect and misleading information has never been greater than in 2020.

"In truth, false news has a long history, dating back to ancient Rome's misinformation battles." However, the knowledge has been weaponized on an unprecedented scale in the twenty-first century" (Posetti, 2019). Among many more examples of Misinformation and Disinformation incidents in human history Posetti, (2019), mentioned how Misinformation, disinformation and propaganda were used during the ancient Roman times, when the Roman politician and general Antony met Cleopatra, and how the Roman leader Octavian waged a propaganda campaign against Antony in a way designed to smear his reputation through form of sharp slogans written upon coins in the style of archaic Tweets.

In old times forms of writing inscribed on materials like stone, clay, and papyrus appeared several thousand years ago, during that period the information these writings was usually limited to the leaders of the group (emperors, pharaohs, Incas, religious and military leaders, and alike), <https://journals.ala.org/index.php/ltr/article/view/6497/8636>.

These slogans painted Antony as a womanizer and a drunk, implying he had become Cleopatra's puppet, having been corrupted by his affair with her who ultimately created distrust and division" (Posetti, 2019). In the same way, Posetti (2019) referred the 1947-1991 – Cold War period, and how the international broadcasters were harnessed to influence populations to take sides.

However, in the late twentieth century, the internet has been provided new means for disseminating fake news on a vastly increased scale; according to world economic forum describes a massive digital misinformation as is becoming a pervasive in online social media to the extent as one of the main threats to our society.

A very good example of misinformation incident through the digital platform, cited by Spencer (2020) was a recipe that was circulated on social media stating that the Corona virus can be cured by one bowl of freshly boiled garlic waters, as if a Chinese doctor has proven its efficacy is but later the disseminated information was considered as a fake by World Health Organization saying that one of such medication rumors will treat or cure the virus.

Various scholars mentioned information disorder as a part of historical features of the communications ecology.” It’s been part of the conversation as far back as the birth of the free press” (Mansky, 2018).

Distortion of facts, production of fake information, biased information, advertising, and information intended to denigrate views and ideals have all been part of society in the past, even on traditional platforms (Posetti, 2019).

Disinformation, misinformation, contaminate the information space worldwide and the trend of influencing facts continues to disrupt public communication, distort public confidence and, consequently affects democratic processes in societies, (Obrenovic, 2020).

Similarly the concept of fake news is not a novelty of the media landscape of the 21st century, but it rather emerged with the appearance of the first newspapers, initially serving to entertain and/or perhaps help sell more copies, (Obrenovic, 2020).

In spite of erstwhile Misinformation and disinformation periods, Posetti (2019), described the risks of misinformation has exacerbated starting from the invention of Gutenberg printing press in 1493, and later in the subsequent periods of 20th century especially with the advent of radio and television practices of satirical news and the arrival of internet followed amplified social media presence that dramatically multiplied the risks of misinformation, disinformation, propaganda and hoaxes.

The invention of internet and domesticated technologies in recent years has gave fake news apace to widely accessible, cheap and refined editing and publishing technology has made it easier than ever for anyone to create and distribute fake content.

2.4 Misinformation and disinformation conceptions

According to experts, unprecedented national news events, a severe and occasionally hostile political split, and polarized news streams have created a fertile environment for false information in recent times.

The most frequently used definition of misinformation is information that is erroneous or inaccurate—getting the facts wrong—whereas disinformation is false information that is explicitly designed to mislead—consciously misstating the facts.

Disinformation not only leads to poor judgment and decision-making, but it also has a continuing influence on people's reasoning after it has been rejected, a phenomenon known as the "continued influence effect" (Ecker, 2022). On the other hand, misinformation can frequently continue to impact people's thinking even after they get a correction and accept it as accurate (Ecker, 2022).

The objectives of misinformation and disinformation, according to the White Paper (2020), are to reproduce, influence, or confuse, spreading virally in two ways. The first is through individuals who identify disinformation for what it is, share the disinformers' intentions, and knowingly spread disinformation. The second is misinformation spread by people who believe the claims made in a piece of disinformation are true—a far broader audience.

2.5 Common types of Mis and Disinformation

Despite the expanding good growth of inter-connectivity and positive transformation that the internet has given to the generation for a higher interconnection with a single click, the information ecosystem is now dangerously contaminated and is separating rather than connecting people.

Information disorder and or fake news, is distorting facts, manipulating information, sharing information without understanding the consequences, vilifying others' beliefs and faiths, and running behind propaganda (Wardle, 2019). Staender (2021), and Wardle (2019), describes major types of Mis and Disinformation as follows.

Satire or parody: It refers to the use of humor or exaggeration to criticize or condemn a person, organization, or policy. This is also a method of criticizing society, a certain group of individuals, or using comedy, irony, or scorn. When satire or parody is made with the intention of entertaining the public through fiction or parody, it has the potential to deceive and mislead the audience.

False connection: indicate using of headlines, visuals or captions that doesn't support and articulate the content.

Misleading content: it refers to the application of ambiguous of information to frame an issue when facts/information is consumed and misrepresented or skewed.

False context: When Information spreaders takes an image, a quote or other piece of content and puts it into a new, false context to change its meaning, when a genuine content is shared with false contextual information.

Imposter content: it refers when well-known name, brand or logo to fool people into believing that it is authentic content uses falsely. Meaning genuine source of news outlets or government agencies, are impersonated.

Fabricated content: when entire message compiled information that is 100% false and made-up designed to deceive people as well as do harm.

Manipulated content: when a certain genuine information or imagery is changes through another material either by adding or deleting the first original material intended to manipulate and to deceive through tools of deep fakes or other kinds of manipulation of audio and/or visuals.

2.3.2 Elements misinformation and disinformation

Worldwide experience demonstrates that inquiries into the origins of disinformation and misinformation have been restricted due to the nature of their flow and the desire of persons who seek to deceive others to conceal their identity.

According to Wardle (2017), elements of fake news can be illustrated as agent, message and interpreter.

Agent: Agents can be official, like intelligence services, political parties, and news organizations involved in all information chains of creation, production and distribution with various motivations. They can also be unofficial, like groups of citizens that have become evangelized (Wardle 2017).

Message: Messages can be transmitted in person by agents; they can be gossip or speech in the form of writing, newspaper, video clips, photographs, audio/visual material, or anything else meant to have a quick or long term impact. The message was generally designed to elicit an emotional reaction via the use of a striking visual component and the repetition of a strong story.

Finally at the Interpreter steps, when the message received by someone as encoded by the producer, the receiver decoded by individual audience members in hegemonic acceptance way, negotiated sense or opposition sense, during this time the exact meaning of the message might not be reach to its expected receiver as per the sender intention, (Wardle 2017).

2.6 Driving factors behind fake news

The motive behind fake news/dis/misinformation, according to Allcott (2017), are two key motives, material and ideological motives, while the first motive intended to bring substantial income when users visit certain online pages from online publications on social networks, the second motivation aims at to receive an ideological drive of supporting political candidates, political parties, and their programs get more acceptance.

The financial rewards of fake news must be tempting, since today, it isn't that difficult for even inexperienced people to quickly put out fake news that "in some cases reach as many readers as Fox News, CNN, or the New York Times" (Allcott, 2017).

There is also another motivation as Miriam, (2020), indicates the motivation behind fake news propagators is mainly to act as an opinion leader, or advocates for one's own opinions, socializing, earning social status, sharing experiences with others, and others are all reasons for spreading news.

The other issues which tempts to generate mis- and disinformation according to Lawrie (2017), as news production is a comprehensive and difficult process, due to the skill levels of reporters and writers, the urgency of the story, the efficacy and ethical standards of a news outlet's editorial staff and publisher, and the accuracy of the news sources consulted in the news gathering process are all elements that influence whether mistakes are made.

2.7. Platforms of Misinformation and Disinformation

The internet has transformed how information is generated and distributed. Anyone with an internet connection gets instant access to a wealth of life-changing knowledge that they can search, browse, and discover with a single click. Social media platforms have the potential to be an effective, democratic, and up-to-date source of information.

Albeit Misinformation and disinformation is everywhere notably on the internet, the most common misinformation and disinformation platforms mainly preferred by transmitters can be divided in to three the print media, the broadcast media and the internet media (Gutierrez, 2020).

In recent times the devastating impact of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, via internet apps that allow users to create and share user-generated content has become clearly visible and persistent in the daily life of human being (Chen, 2014).

2.8 Source of Mis- and disinformation

According to Lewandowsky (2012), here are the most common sources of misinformation and disinformation.

Rumors and fiction: Rumors and urban myths are important sources of deception. Social systems have battled the misinformation-spreading effects of rumors for years, if not millennia; what is perhaps less obvious is that works of fiction may give rise to long-lasting misinterpretations of the truth.

Governments and politicians; Governments and lawmakers can be effective sources of deception, whether incidentally or by plan, for example as Lewandowsky (2012), has put it in its article, that there was no weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) were ever found in Iraq and its link to Al-Qaida turned out to be unsubstantiated, “in the lead-up to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, U.S. government officials proclaimed there was no doubt that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and was ready to use them against his enemies”.

Vested interests: Corporate interfacing has a long and well-documented history of attempting to influence open wrangle roughly by pronouncing incorrect data. At the very least, such fruitful battles against the corporate interface must be assisted on several subsequent occasions by nongovernmental interested groups.

The media: Though the media is by definition seeking to expose the truth, it is striking that they are especially prone to spreading deception for systemic reasons worthy of investigation and

exposure. In this regard, new media and the increasing use of the internet and social networks may contribute to and foster the rapid and widespread dissemination of misinformation.

Besides in some cases main stream media are also a source of Mis and disinformation. For example according to an article published by Dzsurdzsa (2019), a research document prepared by a Canadian based Public Policy Forum found that mainstream media outlets in Canada like the CBC, CTV and Huffington Post were one of the causes of misinformation among Canadians. The article cited the public policy forum research indicating that during the research Survey respondents of those who get their news from mainstream outlets are more likely to give incorrect answers to questions about basic governmental policy issues, than those with lower levels of traditional media consumption.

2.9 Consequences and impact misinformation and dsinformation

Many forms of false narratives, including disinformation and misinformation, present a serious threat to the integrity of democratic systems around the world.

Besufikad (2021, P8), “Public opinion studies tell us that trust in news is at historically low levels and that the existence of false news is leading to a bankruptcy of the so-called fourth estate.” In this regard Besufikad suggests that the importance of addressing the issue with notwithstanding diverse situations in different countries.

As information disorder is critical especially in democratic societies, fake news that is easily shared through social media, has the ability to twist public opinion and influence policy-making processes, particularly in democratic societies (Helm, 2021).

Because social media companies openly collaborate with governments, intelligence agencies, and significant vested interests, the dissemination of false news via online media has been cited as an intentional way of foreign interference with democratic processes in a number of countries (Helm, 2021).

Due to an increased automation in today’s world, Socio economic and political polarization, and diminishing public faith in increasingly unstable traditional accountability structures, many varieties of fake news pose a major risk to the human existence and social structure (Levi, 2018).

In polarized contexts, the result of all digitally fuelled disinformation risks eclipsing the role of journalism, as well as an unprecedented global threat ranging from harassment of journalists by state-sanctioned 'troll armies' to election manipulation, damage to public health, and failure to recognize the risks of climate change (Ireton, 2018).

As fact and fiction are intentionally blurred by people who hope to deceive people, unmanageable spread fake news is a serious problem for politics, for science, for journalism, for consumers, and, really, for all of us (Ireton, 2018).

It is important to mention that the impact of misinformation, disinformation, and misinformation varies depending on the level of democracy in a particular state or society.

By misrepresenting the facts, disorganizing information, and manipulating consent, political elites directly imperil democratic values in their community (Obrenovic, 2020). As a result, false news endangers democracy, civic involvement, and effective government. It jeopardizes the people's right to be fully informed and to debate social issues based on trustworthy, high-quality, and accurate information in the public interest, (Obrenovic, 2020).

2.10. Tools and mechanisms to tackle Mis and Disinformation

Communication experts propose a slew of crucial tactics for preventing and combating the spread of false news and its application in political manipulation. In this regard, they also advise that it is necessary to investigate how misinformation and disinformation are ingested, processed, and acted upon.

The development of information and communication technology provided individuals with a wide range of chances to produce and distribute content through a variety of services and platforms. According to Qi Su (2020) current approaches to misinformation detection can be generally divided into three categories: content based, propagation-based methods and Knowledge based.

Propagation-based approaches primarily rely on social settings and social engagements of users, such as the publisher-news connection, news-user ties, user social networks, and user profiles and content-based methods aims to detect fake news by analyzing the content of the article, i.e., either the text or image or both within the news article (Qi Su, 2020).

Knowledge-based approaches utilize fact checking method in which the given claim is compared with the external sources to verify the authenticity of the given claim. The existing fact checking methods can be categorized as manual (using experts or by crowdsourcing) and automatic fact checking (Hangloo, 2021).

The manual fact-checking can be broadly divided into (I) expert-based and (II) crowd-sourced fact-checking. Expert Based: The expert-based methods use expert-oriented approach and rely on human experts working in specific domains for decision making (Hangloo, 2021).

Crowd sourced: In crowd-sourced methodologies, "wisdom of crowd" aids in determining the veracity of news stories. Because manual fact-checking methodologies do not scale well with the massive number of data created by the usage of social media, automatic fact-checking techniques have been implemented to solve this issue (Hangloo, 2021).

The automatic fact-checking process can be divided into two stages: (1) fact extraction which is related to collection of facts and construction of a Knowledge Base and (2) fact-checking which

is used to assess the authenticity of news articles by comparing that with the facts in the knowledge base (Hangloo, 2021).

The author further stated about a Style-based fake news detection which follows the same approach like knowledge-based fake news detection of analyzing the news content. However, instead of evaluating the authenticity of news content this method assesses the intention of writer to mislead the public (Hangloo, 2021)

According to Hangloo (2021), Based on linguistic aspects, this strategy presents an expanded collection of linguistic criteria for distinguishing between false and true news. It distinguishes legitimate from false news articles by using network account features in addition to language factors.

Fact-checking and media literacy are the two basic strategies that Obrenovic (2020) recommends as the most practical tools and instruments. Fact finding is aimed at holding both political leaders and the media accountable.

In some ways, fact-checking has shifted one of the primary functions of the media—verifying information before publishing it—from the media to other actors, in order to monitor the veracity of mass media content before it is made available for public consumption (Obrenovic, 2020).

Similarly, as a media literate person understands the roles and functions of media in society Obrenovic (2020), worth mentioned that the vital role of the public to have an open mind, specific set of skills and competencies, which would ultimately shape the capacity of the society to able to critically evaluate media content and to interact with media, especially online media, in a mindful way.

Media and communication pundits like Tylor (2021) pointed out a solution which lies in empowering individuals with evidence-based tools from psychology and behavioral science aiming at preventing disinformation from going viral in the first place

The harmful consequences of false information necessitate effective regulatory responses to reduce or eliminate its adverse impacts on the orderly society or political processes (Helm, 2021, p 305)”.

Though, under the legal environment that guarantees freedom of expression and information, inaccuracy of information cannot be a legitimate justification for limits, this does not mean that no constraints on the fabrication and transmission of false information are acceptable. To this end national authority must ensure that limits are justified on valid grounds, as specified in the applicable treaty instrument (Helm, 2021).

According to Helm (2021), the most prevalent regulatory responses to information disorder that are commonly applied at the national level can largely be categorized into three categories: information correction; content removal or blocking; and criminal sanction.

Information Correction: least intrusive kind of regulatory mechanism, since it does not directly interfere with inaccurate or misleading information or access to it.

Content Removal or Blocking: To cope with false news, a more invasive type of regulation entails eliminating or restricting fake news information. Typically applied to online content, it may be subject to removal or blockage by a team of content moderators, who manually assess contents marked as unsuitable by internet users, or by automatic content filtering.

Criminal Sanction: As many governments have made the creation and transmission of false news illegal, this tool considered as a promising regulatory option since it may target the manufacture and dissemination of fake news, ensuring that the public is never exposed to connected misinformation and disinformation.

In this context it is recommended that since developing a regulatory solution to combat misinformation and disinformation is challenging, an appropriate balance between combating information flaws and respecting freedom of expression must be reached.

2.11 Global Mis and disinformation experience of countries and their tackling Mechanism

Globally addressing the spread of misinformation on social media and chat apps is going to require a multipronged approach that involves a variety of actors and actions (Tully, 2021). Although no single approach will work in all situations, researchers believe that responses such as improved media literacy, fact-checking, changes in how news is produced and distributed online, government oversight and regulation of platforms, and responses that take local contexts into account have the greatest potential to reduce misinformation spread Tully (2021).

It has been also found that no single approach will work in all contexts, and that effective strategies include media literacy, fact-checking, changes in how news is produced and circulated, government oversight, and regulations, and local responses.

Ethiopia's House of Peoples' Representatives (HoPR), in 2020, has passed a law aimed at combating fake news and curbing hate speech with hefty fines and long jail terms. The law permits a fine of up to 100,000 Ethiopian birr and imprisonment for up to five years for anyone who shares or creates social media posts that are deemed to result in violence referring to Misinformation and disinformation as a formidable challenge to the existence of the society.

In a same way several countries have passed a law in a bid to criminalize misinformation. According to Funke (2018) several countries have incorporated a mechanism in order to tackle

the dissemination of Misinformation and disinformation. In this regard studies shows how governments are taking action against online misinformation. The Australian government In June 2018, four units of the government set up a task force to identify potential cyber-attacks and foreign influence campaigns targeting the then upcoming Australian elections. Likewise another report shows that in February 2019, the Chilean Senate introduction of bill that would punish politicians nationwide for “the dissemination, promotion or financing of false news (Funke, 2018).

According to a report published by the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA)(2022), in Kenya the country has witnessed considerable disinformation campaigns in the 2013 and 2017 elections, a trend that continues unabated in the lead-up to the August 2022 polls.

The report also stated that in Kenya, article 33 of the Constitution provides that "every person has the right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom to seek, receive or impart information or ideas; freedom of artistic creativity; academic freedom; and freedom of scientific research."" However, article 33(2) specifies that the right to freedom of expression does not extend to propaganda for war; incitement to violence; hate speech; or advocacy of hatred that constitutes ethnic incitement, vilification of others, or incitement to cause harm, or is based on any ground of discrimination, according to international ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), (2022).

In Nigeria there are no existing laws that identify disinformation or misleading. Various laws, however, have been utilized to arrest and punish people for publishing "false," "fake," or "defamatory" material. For example, it is an offense under section 59 of Nigeria's Criminal Code Act141 for any person to publish or reproduce any statement, rumor, or report that is likely to cause fear and alarm to the public or disturb public peace, knowing or having reason to believe that such statement, rumor, or report is false, international ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), (2022).

The Malaysian government has tabled a criminal legislation to prevent and punish the publication and spread of fake news (Muthusubbarayan, 2018).

The legislation includes, within its purview, all forms of media and will even punish foreigners outside Malaysia, if the interests of the Malaysian state or its citizens are adversely affected. The

legislation has defined the term 'fake news' as "any news, information, data and reports which is, or are, wholly or partly false whether in the form of features, visuals or audio recordings or in any other form capable of suggesting words or ideas."

Government of Germany has also enacted Network Enforcement Act in 2017, targeting social media platforms and websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (which have more than two million users (Muthusubbarayan, 2018).

Accordingly this law requires the platforms to remove and block fake news, potentially hate-inciting content. and other illegal content prohibited by the Criminal Code, within 24 hours of being notified of the same by a user or the government (in the case of manifestly unlawful content), (Muthusubbarayan, 2018).

2.12 Misinformation and disinformation and the role of ethical journalism

Misinformation and disinformation story material has an influence on both media trust and credibility since it is either purposefully or unintentionally misleading, sensationalized, or purposely untrue. Professional ethics need a significant amount of journalism work.

When writers are not objective bystanders observing a torrential slide of disinformation and deception, they are defenseless, easily suffocated out by the cacophony, and they are controlled by on-screen characters who try to delude or degenerate writers into spreading disinformation and making them a target of lies, rumors, and scams designed to scare and ruin them and their news coverage (Ireton, 2018).

In this regard journalists whatever their political leaning should avoid inadvertently and critically spreading misinformation and disinformation.

Journalists are strongly recommended to follow professional norms and ethics in this respect, to avoid revealing uncontrolled material, and to keep at distance information that may spark the attention of some members of the public but is not in the public's interest.t (Ireton, 2018).

2.13 The need to establish regulatory solution on the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

Regulation refers to the entire process of controlling or guiding media activity through set norms and processes used by governments, political and administrative entities. Regulation can take numerous forms, from provisions in national constitutions and laws to administrative processes and technological specifications, (McQuail, 2010).

In the current digital era, the general agreement appears to be that technology solutions, audience empowerment solutions, and legislative solutions are the most effective approaches to combat misinformation and disinformation,

As the flow of misinformation and disinformation are mutilating legislative issues, sowing perplexity, undermining trust in majority rule education, ruining gracious society, and fueling a state of data clutter, to this end experts like Lampell (2021) urges policymakers to avail legal and regulatory measures to combat disinformation, and empower civil society to advocate for effective regulatory efforts.

States could establish accountability mechanisms to oversee how social media companies create and implement policies relating to whether content is permissible. Specifically, states could establish an independent regulatory agency for this purpose, (Lampell, 2021).

Whatsoever the information or ideas are offensive, shocking or disturbing, under the legal regime where freedom of expression and information is guaranteed and freedom of expression is considered and it is an essential foundation for a democratic society and for its progress, and the falsity of information alone cannot be a legitimate ground for restrictions. Helm (2021) rather suggests national authorities about the importance of restrictions that are justifiable on legitimate grounds as provided in the relevant treaty instrument and recommend the following normative considerations:

The principle of legality: the procedural necessity that any limitation be supplied by legislation that is stated precisely enough to allow both persons to control their behavior properly and those entrusted with enforcing the law to behave in compliance with the law.

Necessity: it indicates that any restriction on flexibility of expression must be fundamental for the true blue reasons specified within the important settlement, such as the security of national security, open order, public wellbeing or ethics.

Proportionality: aims at to regulate the extent to which freedom of expression may be restricted on legitimate grounds.

In this case, it recommends that since developing regulatory solutions to combat misinformation and disinformation is challenging, regulation must effectively combat its adverse effects, while also respecting freedom of expression considering normative principles and empirical realities. However, there is a need to avoid rigid solutions that would amount to censorship. Command and control regulation cannot achieve meaningful results in this field.

Gaur (2021), recommends the need to understand highly localized and contextual nature of misinformation to create a stronger impetus to work with users and communities and develop responsive policies, further adding that these platforms can initiate “bottom-up” approaches to developing community standards by involving citizens, experts, and civil society.

For issue-specific misinformation challenges, platforms might also create cross-platform initiatives in collaboration with civil society and industry bodies to oversee the development of community standards and their enforcement (Gaur, 2021).

2.14 An overview of recent Misinformation and disinformation in Ethiopia

According to Wade (2021), the spread of misinformation and disinformation have thrived in the Ethiopian media ecosystem, particularly in online. The report resonate that the issue proliferate due to the official and reputable news sources do not supply adequate information to the public and which ultimately forced citizens to look elsewhere to meet their information thirst and demand, turning to less reputable sources of social media information. This effectively creates alternative channel which facilitates misinformation and disinformation in to the information ecosystem of Ethiopia.

When eruption of the northern Ethiopia conflict began in November 2020, though government has recognized the risks of misinformation and disinformation, and launched a State of

Emergency (SOE), fact check social media account, the effort to tackle misinformation and disinformation went much unsuccessful to avert the pressure coming from the other side.

During the conflict though experts has been warning that inflammatory messages and online campaigns have fed into an already explosive situation in a country with a history of ethnic polarization, digital activists have been engaged in a fierce battle to discredit their opponents (AFP, 2021).

"Inflammatory messages have worsened the situation in Ethiopia by sowing fear and confusion and further igniting tensions" (AFP, 2021).

According to the vulnerability assessment made by European institute Ute of peace, (2021), Ethiopia's media ecosystem's weaknesses have made it vulnerable to fake news, misinformation, and hate speech. "Some of the driving factors are undoubtedly historical, including the weak state of private media in Ethiopia, the critical role of the Ethiopian diaspora in media ownership, and the proliferation and wild rise in popularity of entertainment-news page services Facebook and Twitter (Wade, 2021).

The most popular websites in Ethiopia's information ecosystem aren't always created in Ethiopia. Instead, they are frequently owned and operated by Ethiopian diaspora members, many of whom are more politically polarized than their Ethiopian counterparts and lack the same conventional and established editorial controls and quality assurance procedures (Wade, 2021).

2.15. Misinformation and disinformation incidents in Ethiopia

Due to the continuous spreading of unsubstantiated information by United States government about security conditions in Ethiopia, in November 2021, government of Ethiopia asked the United States to stop spreading information what it considers falsehoods against the country," (TRT World, 2021).

A statement released by state minster of communication Kebede Desisa "Previously they (US) disseminated the information that Addis Ababa is surrounded [by rebels], and now they are saying this false information that a terror attack will be conducted in the capital,"(TRT World, 2021).

Similarly in November, 2021, officials said that major international news sources have speeded information that has sown seeds of enmity among the Ethiopian public which jeopardized the country's sovereignty, and government issued a warning letters to four international media houses, CNN, BBC, Reuters and Associated Press (CGTN, 2021).

Hence, based on information gathered from the media websites, these five media outlets have reported a total of 72 articles on the existing situation in within few days from November 3 to November 7 2021, which authorities labeled a contents aimed at intensifying the unjust pressure on the government of Ethiopia (Abera, 2021).

According to Getahun, (2018) Propaganda and phony media outlets intended at indoctrination and 'truth washing' are not uncommon in Ethiopian media. These entities are increasingly utilizing social media and digital platforms where they have a large audience and adherents.

The other sort of false news prevalent on Ethiopian social media is the creation of phony profiles in the names of prominent persons in order to influence their supporters with wicked and deceptive aims. Such fraudulent reports quickly propagate among an audience with little time or interest to verify their legitimacy beyond going to a debate on the subject (Getahun, 2018).

Ethiopia's media ecosystem is prone to false news, disinformation, and hate speech due to flaws. Some of the driving elements are undeniably historical, such as Ethiopia's poor status of private media, the vital role of the Ethiopian diaspora in media ownership, and the prevalence and wild surge in popularity of entertainment-news page sites like Facebook and Twitter European institute of peace (2021).

2.16. Disinformation and disinformation as a means of foreign interference

Throughout the conflict period while Ethiopia has been saying Ethiopia's domestic issues should be resolved primarily through the efforts of the Ethiopian government, several foreign countries and actors has been embarked into in internal affairs of Ethiopia.

As media is the driving force of globalization especially Western media dominates global news, spreading Misinformation and disinformation is a long-practiced means and a common form of

disinformation comes from foreign governments and political actors that are working to gain influence in other countries (USAID, 2021).

In this regard Woldemariam (2021), stated the global competition for influence in one of Africa's most economically and militarily significant states of Ethiopia, has become a major barrier to resolving the northern Ethiopia conflict and Western democracies have masked themselves as neutral, but their influence has also been problematic. Witnessing the growing interference of foreign nations Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his visit of Ethiopia on late December 2021 said "Ethiopia needs no foreign interference to resolve its internal conflict".

Africa, as part of the developing world with the least technological and economic potential, is affected by the reports of giant media whose purpose is to sustain western superiority Semahagne (2014), and he further indicated the Western media institutions as contributing to keep the long established western domination over the developing world and focus on the negative side of life in such parts of the world as Ethiopia.

When there is constant misinformation and deception, democratic societies' ability to identify what is in the public interest through free discussion is hampered. These results in a loss of information integrity and, in many circumstances, limits on press freedom, which can destabilize civic society, distort political participation, and aggravate polarization and social fragmentation. (USAID, 2021).

In certain occasions, commentators and officials have been heard to claim that repetitive western media stories about Ethiopia during the northern Ethiopia war gave a space for foreign intervention under Ethiopian domestic affairs in the pretext of humanitarian assistance and other connected matters.

Some of the stories published about Ethiopia and perceived as false by government's current issue digital fact check pages.

Table one

The table indicates the flow of false news and government response based on the information gathered from the government check platform that was established after the November 2020 conflict outbreak in northern Ethiopia.

N o	Internatio nal media name	Publicatio n date	Story headline	Government response to the story
1	AP	August 2, 2021	Human bodies found in in river between Ethiopia's Tigray region and Sudan border.	As a coordinate propaganda ploy, mainstream media pick up the tidbits of information and run with it without confirming the source of the evidence whatsoever.
2	CNN	September 10, 2021	Men are marched out of prison camps. Then corpses float down the river	This is indicated as an agenda-setting report exploited by the authors of the articles to mislead the readers.
3	The New York Times	Nov 2, 2021 —	From Nobel Hero to Driver of War, Ethiopia's Leader Faces	Fundamentally misrepresented fact and subsequent silent update to the article caused further damage to the truth.

2.17 Media environment in Ethiopia

It is a recent history to note that the Ethiopian media industry has been controlled by government until 1992. Amid dozens of challenges and drawbacks the coming of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) into power has been created a positive milestone and historical legal framework for the Ethiopian press.

However, that glimpse of hope for the enhancement media industry witnessed during EPRDF leadership period has also hampered by the continuous arrest of journalists and closure of media

institutions by government, the absence of credible national journalists' association; and financial problems has negatively contributed to the profession's predicament (Dodolla, 2016).

When prime minister Abiy Amhed took power in April 2018, he started an initiative to carry out comprehensive political reforms, aimed at promoting unity in a country, and his actions has improved the media environment in Ethiopia so rapidly that within two year and the country was improved its ranking on the Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index by 51 places. However, this media freedom and space later pave the way for more extremist views to become more dominant and brought out the ethnic divisions (Oluka, 2021).

Oluka (2021) addressed how the public media has succumbed to the same political divisiveness, with most media ownership becoming submissive to ethnic commitment. Pundits have pigeonholed the Ethiopian government's tendencies to close down a couple of media organizations and detain journalists who were using hate words to incite some forms of conflict in the community, as a result of their unethical and unbalanced news story development engagement, which eventually dived the society and created potential anger.

2.18. Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA)

The Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) is a regulatory institution established under Proclamation No. 1238/2021, replacing the former Ethiopian Broadcast Authority, with the goal of creating an enabling environment to fully enforce the rights to freedom of expression and the media guaranteed by the Ethiopian Constitution. It is also entrusted with regulating media institutions to ensure that they are operating in line with the law and providing adequate support to promote media self-regulation.

The authority's powers and tasks were specified in article six, sub article nine of the proclamation. Among its other responsibilities, the authority drafts laws and policy issues in consultation with relevant stakeholders and submits them to the government for approval; enforces these once approved; and monitors and regulates media outlets to ensure that they are operating in accordance with the Constitution.

2.19. Laws and regulations in the media sector

The two main proclamations which directly involved are media are Media Proclamation No. 1238/2021 and proclamation no. 1185 /2020 entitled as hate speech and disinformation prevention and suppression proclamation.

In its preamble, the first proclamation No. 1238/2021, known as the media proclamation, stated that it was enacted to accommodate Ethiopia's social, economic, political, and technological developments, as well as to fully enforce the right to freedom of expression and citizens' freedom of the media, which is guaranteed under the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's Constitution and international human rights instruments.

Similarly, the preamble discusses how the media may assure respect for fundamental rights and freedoms provided by the Constitution, as well as how it plays an essential role in Ethiopia's attempts to develop a democratic society.

However, it has mentioned the need to have a legal framework and system that ensure the media operate responsibly by respecting the public peace, security and competing rights and interests.

The second proclamation no. 1185 /2020 entitled as hate speech and disinformation prevention and suppression proclamation, also describes the threat of hate speech and disinformation it poses to social harmony, political stability, national unity, human dignity, diversity and equality, and explains how it has become necessary to prevent and suppress by law the deliberate dissemination of hate speech and disinformation.

The media policy commissioned in 2020 is also one of the policy documents that the authority uses to control and monitor the sector in a more proper manner and manage mass media in line with objective realities related to social, economic and political activities in the country and help address the public with reliable and quality information (Fana broadcasting corporation, 2020).

According to the Ethiopian herald publication published in February (2020), meticulous efforts have been made to enable the policy create a media that will act as a neutral and objective platform for the free debate of all points of view.

In this sense, the aforementioned regulations set the tone for free expression and publishing while taking into account the country's constitution in order to foster a democratic and civilized society. At the same time, they have emphasized the need of legislative frameworks in ensuring that media organizations follow the law.

The research looked into at heart of the practice of the law by EMA in order to tackle the flow and spread of misinformation and disinformation in align with the proclamations, policies and directives provided, and factors hampered to minimize the spread and effect of fake information.

Chapter three

3. Methodology of the study

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents study design, method of the study, sample and sampling techniques, data collection tools, data collection procedures and method of data analysis.

As stated in the Chapter One, the main purpose of this research is to examine the effectiveness of the Ethiopian Mass Media Authority in regulating misinformation and disinformation in the Ethiopian media landscape.

The qualitative research approach was used to answer the research questions and achieve the study objectives. In-depth interviews and document analysis were conducted to assess the efficiency of the EMA in regulating misinformation and disinformation.

3.2 Reason for the selection of the organization

As a study conducted about the Ethiopian Media Authority, it has focused on past two years' since the outbreak of practices of media northern Ethiopia conflict and the practice regulation with regard to misinformation and disinformation

According to Colomina et al. (2021), there are several ways disinformation can undermine the democratic system, including the use of social media to disseminate disinformation in a coordinated manner to undermine the credibility of certain organizations, and the online platforms' business model pushes content that generates clicks, which has increased polarization, favoring the creation of more homogeneous audiences and undermining tolerance for alternative views.

Very organized online misinformation and disinformation dissemination against racial and ethnic minorities has led to violence in different part of the world and this disinformation speech has been used to attack minorities and human rights defenders around the world (Colomina et.al,

2021). For instance, in the south-eastern nations of Sri Lanka and Malaysia, Muslims have been targeted by disinformation that resulted in an outburst of violence against Muslims; and in Myanmar, the military used Facebook to incite violence against the Rohingya; and rumors about Muslims in India circulating on WhatsApp have resulted in lynching's (Colomina et.al, 2021).

In this regard, by taking an international experience, in order to let the Ethiopian mass media authority be more effective and let the authority be competent in its regulatory capacity of misinformation and disinformation than ever before, undertaking research to examine the effectiveness of the authority has bring key findings and recommendations that could play a crucial role so as to minimize and curb the destructive role of misinformation and disinformation.

Therefore, when the researcher picks EMA as a study area, it means paving a way for the authorities in particular and the national socio-political and economic system at large.

3.3. Research Methods

Qualitative research encompasses non-quantitative analysis. The gathering, analysis, and interpretation of data based on what individuals do and say is known as qualitative research. Such investigation examines the meanings, definitions, characteristics, symbols, metaphors, and descriptions of situations to better understand them.

Qualitative approach describes a problem or condition from the point of view of those experiencing it and commonly follows subjective assessment of the human side of an issue to analyze behaviors, beliefs, opinions and emotions towards specific issues (Kothary, 2004)

3.4 Qualitative analysis

In contrast to the quantitative technique, a qualitative research strategy is focused with determining the whys and hows of the phenomena under consideration. Because the qualitative technique is more important, it helps the researcher to expand the ability of thorough compression about the issue and obtain better, reliable, genuine, and detailed information. In this study, the qualitative technique was applied.

It is also an appropriate research method to answer what, who, and why questions (Patton and Cochran, 2002). Qualitative research is more appropriate to examine words and ideas rather than counting numbers, and a qualitative interview provides opportunities for both the interviewer and interviewees to discuss some topics in detail.

In this study a contextual assessment of the obstacles and potential of institutionalizing a regulatory framework has been done as a way of utilizing qualitative methodological techniques such as in-depth interviews and document analysis.

3.5 Reliability and Validity (Trust Worthiness of the Study)

In qualitative research, validity refers to the "appropriateness" of instruments, methods, and data. Whether the research question is valid for the desired outcome, whether the methodology selected is appropriate for answering the research question, whether the design is appropriate for the methodology, whether the sampling and data analysis are appropriate, and whether the results and conclusions are valid for the sample and context (Leung, 2015). Thus, ensuring reliability and validity remain to be the most important issue in the research world; despite the fact that it is hard to completely exclude subjectivity in qualitative research. And amid this is not to say that qualitative researchers are not responsible for assuring the legitimacy of their results.

In qualitative research sample selection is based on the ability of the subject to provide data relevant to the research question. To avoid inaccurate or insufficient data, the researcher must use his/her judgment based upon the best available evidence to choose subjects who know enough, can recall enough, and are able to respond precisely to questions asked (Brink, 1993).

To that aim, the researchers spent a significant amount of time during transcribing, looking through the written transcripts, analyzing the data, and eventually reaching a conclusion.

3.6 Sources of Data

In any research design, the method of data collection is considered as the heart of the research. On the basis of the method and sources by which the data is collected, the data is classified into two types: primary and secondary. Primary data is a type of data obtained through direct

communication with the concerned bodies or informants through in-depth interviews and critical observation (Thakur, 202).

Whereas secondary data refers to a data that has already been collected through primary sources and made readily available for researchers to use for their own research. It is a type of data that has already been collected in the past. The secondary data types of research to be gathered are books, journals (articles), laws, directives and policies related to the Media authority, internet resource and other printed materials.

In this context this research applied both primary and secondary data through in-depth interview and document analysis.

3.7 Data Gathering Techniques

During data collection, the researcher has identified the data types, the sources of data, and what methods are being used. Data-collection techniques allow to systematically collecting information about objects of study (people, objects, phenomena) and about the settings in which they occur, this research applies in-depth interview and document analysis techniques’.

3.7.1 Individual in depth Interview

The researcher has applied an individual in-depth interview with four EMA officials and media monitoring team leaders, six media , journalists, editors-in-chiefs, correspondents of international media, and representatives of media professional associations who have shared their view the flow misinformation and disinformation and the practical endeavor of EMA to regulate the issue. The interview was conducted in a bid to examine practice of regulatory institutionalizing mechanisms to control the flow of misinformation and disinformation in the Ethiopian media eco system. The selection of individuals was based on purposive sampling.

The very important consideration during the selection of key informants was based on their position and the experience they have possessed with an intimate knowledge of the research topic on which they were interviewed. The knowledge expected from an interviewee was based on their special social positions, experience, participation in the media sector or any related program, or professional expertise.

According to the sampling techniques, the researcher interviewed six EMA officials and monitoring division department experts and, one journalists from local private media institutions, one journalists from government media institutions, two journalists from international media institutions, one from the Ethiopian Media Council, and one from Ethiopian Mass Media Professionals Associations, a total of ten respondents.

Furthermore, for the purpose of this study, the key informants were picked purposively based on two criteria. The first selection criteria was applied to EMA informants based on their position, especially on the role they hold in monitoring the media institutions; the second criterion was for media stockholders and journalists, purposely based on maximum variation sampling and the researchers' subjective skills to identify key informants based on their experience in the sector.

As in-depth interviews are useful when a researcher wants detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviors or want to explore new issues in depth. Interviews are often used to provide context to other data (such as outcome data), offering a more complete picture of what happened in a certain area and issue and tells why (Boyce, 2006).

In-depth interview is designed to discover underlying motives and desires of the participants of the study. In-depth interview held to explore needs, desires and feelings of respondents. It is an important tool that assists in the elaboration of data concerning respondent's reaction.

By using In-depth interview which has an advantage of getting variety of details from respondent's the researcher interviewed 10 informants.

3.7.2 Document analysis

In this study, media proclamations and regulatory policies, directives, manuals, and documents of the EMA regarding misinformation and other useful documentation of the organization were discussed and reviewed.

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents as witnesses to past events, or documents provide background information as well as historical insight (Bowen, 2019). The researcher has analyzed secondary sources of data including media policy, proclamation and published documents.

According to Bowen, document analysis can suggest some questions that need to be asked and situations that need to be observed as part of the research proceeding.

Document analysis is used by researchers because it is an efficient and effective means of acquiring data since documents are controllable and practical resources. Second, documents are a stable, “non-reactive” data source, which means they may be read and examined several times without being influenced by the researcher or the research process. Obtaining and analyzing papers is frequently significantly less expensive and time-consuming than doing your own study or trials (Bowen, 2019).

3.8 Population and sampling Techniques

In social scientific research, a population is the cluster of people, events, things, or other phenomena that you are most interested in; it is often the "who" or "what" that you want to be able to say something about at the end of your study.

The target population is the specific, conceptually bounded group of potential participants to whom the researcher may have access that represents the nature of the population of interest (Shukla, 2020).

Sampling is the process of selecting observations that will be analyzed for research purposes. A sample is a part of a population that represents it completely and is known as a sample. It means the units, selected from the population as a sample, must represent all kinds of characteristics of different types of units in the population (Shukla, 2020).

Since EMA is a federal entity based in Addis Ababa, most of the interviewees were based in Addis Ababa. In this study, the researcher employs purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques to select key informants for the interview section.

A researcher used snowball sampling, also known as chain-referral sampling, to identify key informants from the Ethiopian mass media professionals' association.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method, and it occurs when "elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher." As data gathering is crucial in research, the data is meant to contribute to a better understanding of a theoretical framework. It

then becomes imperative that selecting the manner of obtaining data and from whom the data will be acquired be done with sound judgment, especially since no amount of analysis can make up for improperly collected data (Etikan, 2016).

In snowball sampling, the researcher usually begins by identifying someone who meets the criteria for inclusion in the study.

3.9 Data Analysis and Interpretation

All the data that were collected from the study units using any form of qualitative data collection techniques are transcribed, and the majority of the data were audio tape recorded. Then, the relevant data were categorized so as to make them convenient for analysis; the categorization was made based on their relevance to the central ideas of the research questions raised in this study. As Wimmer and Dominick (2003) explained, qualitative researchers use an inductive method: data relevant to this research topic is collected and grouped into appropriate and meaningful categories; explanations emerge from the data themselves.

Quantitative research techniques generate a mass of numbers that need to be summarized, described, and analyzed; in this regard, the researcher puts on advanced demonstrating techniques that are eventually used to build sophisticated explanations of how the data addresses the original question (Lacey et al., 2009).

To draw meanings from the qualitative data generated through in-depth interview with key informants, and the secondary data from relevant documents, the researcher used thematic way of analysis and content analysis, respectively.

According to Lacey et.al, (2009) analysis of qualitative data usually goes through some or all of the following stages (though the order may vary):

Familiarization: with the data through review, reading, listening etc.: it is an essential stage in which the researcher will listen to tapes and watching video material, reading and re-reading the data, making memos and summaries before the formal analysis begins. Transcription of tape recorded material: as the data might be gathered in either of tape recorded interviews, focus groups, video recordings, or handwritten field notes it has to be transcribed orderly.

Organization and indexing of data for easy retrieval and identification: it is a process of organizing data into easily retrievable sections. In each interview a number or code, or to break up field notes into sections identified by date, or by context and some of the Interviewees might need to be given pseudonyms with confidentiality or referred to by a code number. Coding (may be called indexing) It is a method of arranging data based on its subject matter, which allows the researcher to begin the process of carefully evaluating it, determining what the data is saying as well as the links and patterns in the study data.

Validate the Data: It helps to guarantee that the data is not defective and that the study will be done by analyzing the correctness of the research design or procedures and the dependability of the research to the extent that the approaches consistently provide accurate data.

Finally, it is a systematic presentation of the data to give a report that can be easily utilized to conclude the analytical process. The researcher's technique is supposed to be stated in the final report.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

When the study about the Ethiopian media authority the researcher has applied great precaution of respondents, the possibility of harm should be minimized to the greatest extent possible (Chala, 2021). In this regard, the researcher has taken greater precautions during the interview to conduct it with consent in order to avoid any type of mishaps or challenges in this research if the participants intend to conceal their identity for fear of receiving negative feedback from other groups. This is because the key informants (interview participants) may be harmed or blamed for what they have shared with the researcher. Thus, the study was conducted based on the norms of the subjects without the use of deception. The dignity, anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy of the subjects were protected based on their consensus.

Chapter four

4. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explicates the major findings of the issue under study based on the data obtained through qualitative methods of data collection instruments.

This chapter is about the presentation, analysis, and discussion of data obtained from in-depth interview respondents and review of secondary data documents. As it was stated before, the study targeted and In-depth interviews with purposefully selected Ethiopian Mass Media Authority Media (EMA) officials and senior media monitoring specialists and media expert who have knowledge of the issue and the way it handled by the authority, selected senior journalism practitioners to detect their perspective and insight about the flow of misinformation and disinformation and how it is handled by EMA and stakeholder from the Ethiopian Media Council to see if there is a collaborative effort to reduce the problem. Finally

As well, the researcher visited EMA's social media and audio-visual documents to collect raw data.

In the fourth chapter of the thesis, a major effort has been made to present and analyze the data collected relating to the theories discussed in the review of related literature in connection with research questions and the objective of the research.

The main purpose of the study was to assess the practice of media monitoring and regulation by the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) to tackle misinformation and disinformation, and the challenges and opportunities of efforts to manage the problem.

To gather the required data for the study, in-depth interview and document analysis methods were employed as major tools and all the personal in-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure that all the details were preserved through the analysis phase. The researcher familiarized with the data by reading the transcriptions and listening to the recordings.

Afterwards, it has created notes and write-ups for all the data separately and then combined all the data in relation to the study objectives and research questions.

Therefore, the researcher identifies common themes, patterns, and expressions and coded them accordingly. As previously stated, the data from the interviews and the document were combined when they were similar and compared when they differed.

4.2 Monitoring Section of EMA

The Ethiopian Mass-Media Authority is a federal institution re-established by proclamation no. 1238/2021 of the Ethiopian media proclamation. The authority has an organizational setup and a division that monitors and regulates media publications.

The Monitoring and Regulation section of the authority has a group of teams divided into four units, namely public broadcasters, digital and foreign media, commercial media, and online YouTube subscribers.

4.3. Document analysis with relation to Media monitoring and regulation

The researcher has obtained from the EMA, the monitoring and capacity building section of the authority is supervised by the deputy director of the institution. The section has 43 staff; 13 staff under public media, community media, and religious media institutions; 15 staff under commercial media; 15 staff under digital and foreign media and five for the advertisement section.

As a legal federal entity, EMA's legal intervention is based on the prescribed laws and policy frameworks. In this regard, the authority to actively deal with the media and media practices applies to the media proclamation, advertisement proclamation, hate speech and disinformation prevention and suppression proclamation, and other directives. Despite the proclamation being uploaded and available online on its website, there is no directive available for information seekers who want to know the law and the regulation with regard to misinformation and disinformation or any related benefits. Similarly, the available documents are published only in Amharic. But there is also a problem of getting available directives to implement the proclamation as the researcher has tried to get from the officials.

Based on its aims, hate speech and disinformation prevention and suppression proclamation, seems to have good intent; these are stated as "protecting free expression while suppressing all forms of hatred and discrimination; promoting tolerance, civil discourse, and dialogue; fostering mutual respect; strengthening democratic governance; and controlling and suppressing the dissemination and proliferation of hate speech, disinformation, and other related false and misleading information."

The mere existence of this law, however, does not guarantee strict adherence to the law unless the EMA considers practical mechanisms to uphold the regulatory frameworks.

In other way the media policy, which was announced in July 2020, explains media freedom, media role, media ownership, media leadership and infrastructure, media access, social media establishment, and other related issues.

The policy document stipulates the absence of a specific law to regulate and monitor social media; instead, this entails the need to build awareness about the problem. However, as the flow of misinformation and disinformation in the Ethiopian media landscape is mostly dominated by social media platforms, it needs a strict regulatory framework so as to manage and tackle the issue. As Tambini, D. (2017) said, the right legislative response should be to promote critical media literacy, platform self-regulation, and focused enforcement in the extremely few circumstances when there is a threat to national security. New penalties and changes in responsibility are unnecessary, and reputable media should be shielded from charges of "fake news."

It is crucial to adopt specific policy frameworks, methods, or toolkits to lead responses to disinformation demands, specifying the strategy and scope of the interventions to be executed in a way that gives clear advice on quantifiable objectives to pursue in the short, medium, and long term.

In this regard, the policy fails to clarify the methods for establishing counted coping mechanisms for the challenges of misinformation and disinformation posed to society. Scholars suggest policy on the digital service which will be imposed on users through guidelines and conditions of

use. Such conditions generally impose a multitude of restrictions and conditions in relation to the content of communications as well as on the use of the service.

Encountering misinformation and disinformation requires a multitude of approaches extending from policy and proclamation to directives and regulations. Nevertheless, the Ethiopian Media Authority doesn't have cleared regulatory and directives specifically targeted to manage and regulate with a prearranged set of guidelines.

he purpose of the study, the researcher has sat and conducted an interview with one senior expert from each of the four media sections who are assigned to monitor and regulate the broadcasters' and publishers' content to make sure that they are functioning as per the law; provide training and capacity building for both media practitioners; and make the general public cognizant and aware of both the institutional credibility and content of broadcasters and publishers.

In this regard, the government must enact protective laws, with each scheme suited to the political, ideological, and religious components of misinformation and disinformation.

Similarly, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with senior journalists, editors-in-chief, correspondents of international media, and representatives of media professional associations and the responses from the interviewees were transcribed and encoded in an appropriate manner. Along with the interview, the researchers has analyzed documents which the obtained from EMA and related media establishment documents and research in the field.

Table: 2: key informant coding

No	Respondents code	Sex	Area of expertise	Current position	Remark
1	Meskrem Gezhagne	Male	EMA	Monitoring Team leader	
2	Ermiaaw	Male	EMA	Monitoring Team leader	
3	Girakinfu Abera	Female	EMA	Monitoring Team leader	
4	Gizaw Tesfaye	Male	EMA	Deputy Director	
5	Gezahegne Bekele	Female	EMA	Monitoring Team leader	
6	Mehamed Seid	Male	EMA	Monitoring Head	
7	Eshetu Geletu	Male	Media professional	Journalist and media expert	

8	Elias Meseret	Male	Media Professional	Journalism & Fact checker	
9	Tamirat Hailu	Male	Media professional	Journalist	
10	Elias GebreSilasse	Male	Media professional	Journalist	
11	Solomon Muiche	Male	Media professional	Journalist	
12	Mersha Tiruneh	Male	Media professional	Journalist	

4.4 Misinformation and disinformation in Ethiopia

Apparent misinformation and disinformation may not influence media choices in identical ways. There are good reasons to assume that perceptions of misinformation and disinformation are strongly associated with reduced media trust. However, in the light of their distinction based on intention, citizens may have more nuanced reasons to trust or distrust the media: Misinformation, while surely undesirable, could be seen as an ‘honest mistake (Michael Hameleers, 2022).

Sensitivity of misinformation and disinformation across the key informants of this research expressed the belief that misinformation is a serious problem, often one that poses a threat to the country. However to some extent noted that misinformation only becomes a problem if it has negative consequences up on individuals, such as ruining one’s reputation, or for communities when it contributes to social and economic unrest.

All the participants from EMA have pointed out that misinformation is produced and disseminated largely by politicians, interest group and other elites for financial gain political ends, antagonist foreign entities and social media activist.

To regulate this Authority has a established monitoring and capacity building section divided in to four segments mainly community and public media, digital and foreign media and commercial media monitoring section. The section has a set of values which aims at seeing independent, result oriented, collaborative and excellence center in monitoring works. Monitoring efforts of the team is limited to Mass media proclamation and hate speech and disinformation law.

Each monitoring sections have their own team tasked with monitoring activities of each media segments 24/7, with a responsibility to track publications and broadcastings of each media

outlets which operates within the territory and jurisdiction of Ethiopia; to make sure that they are operating as per the media proclamation and hate speech and disinformation proclamations.

However, the researcher found that despite the common scholars' definition of misinformation and disinformation, EMA's monitoring team doesn't have an outlined guidelines and specific definition given to misinformation and disinformation in the context of Ethiopia which helps to monitoring experts to identify the type of information and to regulate as per the law.

"If you are asking me about the issue in Ethiopia, misinformation and disinformation spread attempts are mainly either for political and economic gain or something other than this purposefully sponsored disinformation campaign through information agents faking their identity" said Gizaw.

However, despite the minor impact, there are people and media platforms spreading inauthentic content on mainstream and social media platforms, which remains a challenge for us, said Gizaw.

Meskrem, described misinformation and disinformation as a danger which posed a threat to the society; adding that most of the information shared specially in the digital media is designed to derail public attention from certain topic to the other topic proposed by those who hold the agenda-setting power.

"As it stands, it has become a common and critical problem in both mainstream and digital platforms, and I believe that in most cases, it is something that is deliberately disseminated through people with specific interests. So that it needs a shared responsibility to address the spread of misinformation, with various actors having different roles to play throughout the process from creation to distribution to circulation to consumption," said Meskrem.

For Meskrem, most of the misinformation and disinformation texts are things that are interpreted out of context, exposing information for deception purposes and to frame certain agendas.

In our monitoring effort especially misinformation practice is common mostly by mainstream media whereas disinformation is common in digital media platforms which we believe most of them as deliberately intended message” Meskrem added.

Elias G. is a senior correspondent for Chinese Xinhua News Agency, he articulates about the issue for now, I see the problem of misinformation and disinformation in Ethiopia is connected to the governance and societal crisis.

I consider both, governance and societal crises are could be addressed through transparent government system that could information of the daily routine proceedings, otherwise without accessibility of credible official information,” said Elias G.

There is no way to combat the flow of misinformation and disinformation in Ethiopia, further indicating unless there is a transparent ways of information feeding by officials, Elias. G added.

For Elias.G the issue of misinformation and disinformation in Ethiopia has literally become a national survival issue and the public is facing with lack of accurate information.

Government complains about misinformation and disinformation, but also some officials are also a part of it”.

From the respondent illustration the researcher has noted that due to the pathological flow of mis and disinformation advancement, the general public has comes to mistrust the whole media ecosystem, even to believe and take serious stories aired during the very essential public announcements via the conventional media platforms.

Eshetu Geletu is a senior communication expert and Warka radio managing director; he believes the concept of Mis and disinformation as highly politicized, despite an apparent problem it posed. For him the issue has never been get real attention as it has posed a real problem.

The matter of misinformation and disinformation is emanated from the government inability to provide adequate information for the media in particular and the public in general as it is a mandate of officials to

update what is going on in the socio political and economic spheres around government office” Eshetu added.

This in turn has paved and created more space for misinformation and disinformation especially by those who are starved of information, this also ultimately makes the regulatory authority ineffective to address the problem. , said Eshetu.

In this regard, the government's failure to provide adequate information leads to misinformation and disinformation, which ultimately risk eroding civic friendship and endangering Ethiopians' mutual coexistence, even to the point of dismantling the society's established fraternity.

Solomon Muchie, a senior journalist and correspondent for German Voice Radio (DW) and deputy president of Ethiopian mass media professionals association; for him, the Media eco systems in Ethiopia is highly established based on ethnic lines, which he believes that Ethnic based media institutions have been galvanizing the political polarization of the existing system and consequentially created division and suspicious environment between the media products and its consumers. In this context he recommends the authority to laydown effective addressing mechanisms.

The final result of misinforming and misinforming is not something that we should look simply as an information glitch, but there is a negative consequence of breaking apart in the mutual existence of the society”.

Participants also pointed out that a political misinformation which is a problem in Ethiopia right now; because of the unfavorable effects it poses, such as rigged or stolen elections and electoral violence, which are partly attributable to the deliberate spread of false information by political actors and elites as well as the purposeful and unintentional spread of false information by politically engaged voters.

According to Solomon the spread of misinformation in online platform might also be a consequence of political antagonism created by the political elites.

Ermias Gizaw is a senior monitoring and regulating expert of EMA's digital and foreign media section. For him, in his daily task of media monitoring, the flow of political-based misinformation and disinformation hovers largely among educated and politically active citizens, and it is generating a huge impact on the public, reaching up to create political and social chaos.

"I've noticed that the majority of social media disseminators are educated people sitting somewhere spreading uncontrollable fake news, and these people are highly contributing as reagents for existing political commotion." "The presence of a very large number of social media users with minimum knowledge about the problem exacerbates the situation." Ermias indicated.

Most of the respondents shared the existence of diverse political parties and agendas in their rush to build their image with inaccurate and unchecked information intended merely to frame their program via a propagandistic application that has never been cross-checked. In this case, the rush to frame agendas in their affiliated media has surfaced and created an opportunity to misinform the public.

This tells us how politicians and media industry as vital player in framing public issues and making certain aspects appear more important than others and mostly doesn't give the opportunity to choose the appropriate information due to an absence of authoritative information checker.

Most of the respondents also mentioned the need for initiatives that seek to promote media and information literacy in the digital media ecosystem. Considering that the public is a larger consumer of information, EMA has done little to educate the public or build significant skill and capacity in recognizing misinformation and disinformation in this regard.

Gezahagne Mulugeta, a senior expert at the public media section of EMA, said that

"Even if media literacy campaigns and engagement are held via various mechanisms, the trend is not diminished and there are still more works to do."

The approach to media literacy embraces all media and focuses on society as a whole to make every person a competent individual in the information environment. According to the framing theory, the more public awareness grows and the more training people receive, the better equipped they are to understand how certain information is framed, Gezahagne added.

4.5 Strategies employed by EMAs to regulate misinformation and disinformation

The Ethiopian mass media authority establishment proclamation No. 1238/2021 gives the authority a responsibility to ensure the expansion of media services that are accessible and of high quality, which enables the creation of an informed society, which is believed to be a key to accelerating sustainable and holistic political, social, and economic development. According to the proclamation, it is crucial to establish a legal framework and system that ensure the media operate responsibly by respecting public peace, security, and competing rights and interests as per the constitution.

The law allows the authority to monitor media industry and regulate the media to ensure that they are operating in accordance with the law; provide proper support to strengthen media self-regulation.

The proclamation also makes authority entitled to prepare a directive that sets the criteria to determine the competency and technical standards of broadcasting services, formulate laws and policy issues, perform consent-based capacity building activities, including technical and financial support to enhance the medium, regulate broadcasting media to ensure that they are operating in accordance with the Constitution, supervise and provide support to ensure that services rendered meet expected standards, and promote the use of new, up-to-date, and appropriate information and communication technologies in broadcasting.

Correspondingly, the Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation 12339 is a law enacted to prevent and suppress by law the deliberate dissemination of hate speech and disinformation, which the authority is mandated to watch over the implementation of the proclamation.

McQuail (2010) suggests the need for regulatory frameworks establishing rules and procedures to be applied by governments and other political and administrative authorities to all kinds of media activities as a means to combat misinformation and disinformation, especially regulation ranging from clauses in national constitutions and laws to administrative procedures and technical specifications.

According to the interviewees at EMA, the authority doesn't have clear directives, a set of established guidelines, or a formal monitoring system with a detailed set of rules and directives to combat the flow of misinformation and disinformation.

According to Mohammed, the Authority is enacting regulations and taking actions that are coupled with a push to empower individuals and the public at large to develop skills to improve their digital literacy in order to be better prepared when they encounter false information online.

But the practical fight against disinformation requires systematic interventions, despite the fact that EMA is an organization with limited size and resources to address the scale of the problem.

All of the authority's monitoring team stated that their daily monitoring job of spotting misinformation and disinformation is based on their perception and what they believe to be false information based on their personal efforts; otherwise, there is no clear standard or policy tool provided to them to identify misinformation and disinformation in one click, nor is there any technological tool that assists them in spotting fake news.

Since we dont have pre-tracking tool and technological means, we just depend on the public compliant and appeal or accusation of certain media in disinformation and disinformation” said Meskrem.

Similarly, respondents from the EMA stated that, in the absence of identification tools and directives, whenever they received suspicious information that they couldn't identify as false, they had to consult their superiors to label that specific topic as misinformation or disinformation.

Digital and foreign media monitoring and capacity building expert Ermias Gizaw shares a similar concern, saying that as a digital media monitoring expert, technological mechanisms should have been availed of by the authority.

As social media platforms are used as a medium for self-expression that is mostly free of governance;

"We see it as a scheme to entertain political agendas, but in this case there has to be an established set of rules and mechanisms" Ermias added.

This indicates the media's ability to influence the amount of importance placed on certain topics or issues on the public agenda, as highly viewed content is prioritized as "relevant" and its circulation is further amplified.

"Despite the fact that there are some who are intentionally spreading misinformation and disinformation, in the digital media monitoring section, when we get something inaccurate, we just give them feedback, then a warning, and finally we might revoke their license; however, when their license is revoked, there is even more back and forth communication with them because there is no specific directive or guidelines that inform or teach them to be cautious of contentious issues except the general process," Ermias explained.

According to Ermias, the monitoring team doesn't have a content-based identification platform and system, and they usually stick with manual tools. He further stated that his monitoring work missed something important that would ease his job.

While scholars advise against assuming information received is correct, the lack of fact-checking mechanisms and tools has forced the EMA's monitoring team to do so, even if it comes from a reliable source (such as a friend or family member). In this case, using a fact-checking site and a scientific approach to combat online misinformation and disinformation is not applied, and the

researcher has noticed that the authority has failed to lay down standards, approaches, and tools that would help the monitoring efforts.

Tamirat Hailu is the vice chairman of the Ethiopian media council and managing editor of Kumneger magazine; he also explained the authority's failure to provide specific regulatory frameworks so as to tackle the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

"As a nation affected by misinformation and disinformation, I haven't seen any findings in which the authority has studied and clearly identified issues with regard to misinformation and disinformation, and this is a manifestation of failure by EMA to put in place uniform working guidelines that are traceable both by the authority itself and to the media" said Tamirat.

Tamirat also questioned the authority's effort to put specific policy tools, directives, and technological means in place, including fact-checking platforms, if EMA is really saying it is working to combat the problem.

Globally, among the most practical tools to track down, minimize, and combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation in the digital era is to practice media literacy. (OBRENOVIC, 2020) emphasized the importance of developing an open-minded society with a specific set of skills that would evaluate media contents and interact with media, particularly online media, in a mindful manner.

Despite the fact that most of the key informants have said that the authority has provided some sort of training for the media professionals to build their capacity, the researcher has looked at EMA's minimum effort and drive to build media literacy among the larger public. The majority of capacity-building trainings were delivered to journalists and officials through routine mechanisms of meetings, while more efforts were expected to be made to disseminate information to the general public through documentary programs, at least on public television.

Elias Mesert is a freelance journalist and fact checker at Inter News; for him, EMA's effort for substantial media literacy has never been given to the public except for some workshops on the subject, which are mostly unimportant.

Another respondent named Mersha Tiruneh who is a deputy editor for Addis Maleda newspaper said;

"We, the media staff, got training either from the authority or other media stakeholders." But the bigger issue with misinformation and disinformation is that the public is not good enough to benefit from awareness programs that would ultimately at least give them the minimum skill to identify credible sources.

The researcher has got incites from most of the respondents about the crucial importance of establishing fact checking platforms by the regulator authority and media stockholders.

"I haven't seen these important tools apart from the occasional social media post as well as self-serving conferences and programs Ethiopia Media Authority (EMA) organizes with sponsored media outlets and government media institutions, the same entities accused of misinformation and disinformation." "I also believe EMA is another promoter of disinformation and misinformation, so it's neither impartial nor competent to comment on it, let alone strategize on it," said Elias G.

In most cases, to increase people's capacity to spot disinformation, the least expensive and most practical mechanism of combating misinformation and disinformation is to improve their critical thinking, boost their understanding of how media companies function, and inform their decision-making.

4.6 Impact of disinformation and misinformation in Ethiopian media platforms?

As the European Institute of Peace (2021) noted, misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech have thrived in Ethiopia's recent media landscape, particularly on online platforms. This has serious, catastrophic real-world consequences, has heightened pre-existing political tensions,

and has resulted in bloodshed and war. The lack of an access to information right proclamation to assist and recognize the right of the media to collect and disseminate information in tandem with the very limited public media landscape has exacerbated the problem of misinformation and disinformation.

According to the federal government, misinformation on social media fueled the northern Ethiopian conflict between the Federal government and the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) after the northern Ethiopia defense command was attacked.

All of the Interviewee respondents from EMA believed that the flow of propagation of misinformation and disinformation is considered as infodemic which in most time very challenging to detect the genuine information in their monitoring effort.

To summarize four of the respondents at EMA observation the issue during the northern Ethiopia war in in one paragraph;

- During the war, the information, especially on the internet, was massive and mixed with various content, including religious, identity-based, and, in some cases, sexual, and very complicated topics, and these fake claims and viral information on the internet have created lawlessness, hatred, and chaos. People were even coming to express divergent views on the national flag and the political system, and many opposing ideas are floating around.

According to Tamirat, the fundamental reason for the explosion of misinformation and disinformation was the lack of a proper official channel that could provide up-to-date and timely information over the northern Ethiopian conflict, which ultimately paved the way for the fabrication of fake news. As described below, he expressed the current media environment.

"As journalists, we always seek information for news purposes; however, officials are becoming reluctant to provide the necessary information asked for by journalists and have failed to respond to their calls, always closing their doors," said Tamirat.

An Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation senior editor spoke with anonymity and noted how difficult it is for his private media journalists to obtain quotes from sources.

"Sometimes, my friends asked me for the contact information of government officials to validate a problem that had gone popular on social media, but when we chatted later, they stated no one was prepared to provide those comments on that specific subject."
"However, that item will go viral on social media and generate confusion, and officials will come out and try to dispute that topic after the public has already been deceived and confused."

A study conducted by the Ethiopian Media Authority in early 2022 regarding the global media coverage of the Ethiopian Tigray Conflict has depicted that the framing of news media reports has played a crucial role in determining their political impact.

The report went on to explain how international media outlets construct narratives through deliberate selection and omission, both of which are common practices in most international media outlets. Including In most international media outlets, more bold conclusions and accusations have been made on the unjustified claim of genocide occurring in the region. The study blamed the international media report as totally deviating from the principles of positive journalism that minimize harm and hatred in the speculative characterization of events purely as genocide.

However, all of the key informants of journalists have blamed the government for being unresponsive and closed to journalists who were aspiring to get official sources and make credible reports. In this regard, they believed both the international media and digital media platforms were spreading misinformation and disinformation through their own source, whether that was genuine or not.

“We define "misinformation" as information containing inaccuracies, regardless of whether people disseminating it seek to misinform others. It has produced societal disturbance; some were involved in the continuation of mis and disinformation processes that are important to the operation of society” said Mohammed.

Eshetu explained how misinformation and disinformation have had a significant impact on the public's daily lives, saying,

"If you see most cases of fake incidents, it is because accesses to information proclamations are not enacted." Adding thatl

If the law was approved, we would have the chance to request as per the law. Proclamation No. 590/2008, which was enacted to provide for freedom of the mass media and access to information, is currently under revision

Respondents from the media have also expressed how the scales of misinformation and disinformation have risen across the country in the last two years, which could manifest as rampant conflicts and killings exacerbated by unmanaged false and inaccurate information. Most of them were disseminated by both local and international mainstream media outlets, mostly due to a lack of genuine information from concerned officials.

4.7 Challenges disinformation and disinformation regulating practices by the EMA

As the authority tasked with monitoring and regulating media institutions, it is expected to have a detailed plan and strategic tools in place to combat misinformation and disinformation. However, as per the key informants both from the authority and from the media institution, the authority is challenged by technological limitations, key and specific manuals and policy frameworks, directives, guidelines, and collective and coordinated efforts with necessary stakeholders to address the overlaying problem in the media industry.

Epstein (2020) suggests four standards for effective disinformation: regulation must be directed at the negative effects of disinformation while consciously minimizing any additional harm caused by the regulation itself; regulation must be proportional to the harm caused; effective regulation must be able to adapt to changes in technology and disinformation strategies; and regulators must be as independent of political and corporate leadership as possible.

However, according to four key informants of EMA, the authority doesn't have any technologically supported monitoring and regulating mechanism, the proclamation is implemented as it is without directives and specific frameworks, they don't have fact-checking platforms, and the monitoring team is tasked with just scrolling down the mainstream media and social media pages without any specific content-based guidelines or tools.

"We don't have content-based analysis and identification for any type of information that comes either from word-of-mouth rumor, memes, manipulated videos, speeches, doctored photos, group text messages, or news/opinion programming," said a key informant named Serkam .

She further indicated that her daily monitoring experience is solely based on their personal experience.

For Seraklem a preferred there is an automated means of tracking down misinformation except the common manual based monitoring scheme that would make her effort less effective, she requested a formulation of a dictionary of words that would allow her to easily identify which are prone to misinformation and disinformation.

Of the four EMA's monitoring experts, three of them also called for collective and collaborative action towards the problem. Emphasize the need for multiple institutional hand-to-hand engagements, especially between the communication authority, the communication service, the intelligence and security agencies, the police, the media institution and media council, and the media associations.

As Gezahgne, for the monitoring and regulating efforts, policymakers, civil society organizations, and technology companies should participate so as to build strong awareness among the public.

In this context, Tamirat blamed the fact that EMA has never been asked by the council to work closely, either in fact-checking or related fake news combating mechanisms. However, the media, as a coalition of media institutions, still plans to work with the authority.

"As key EMA stakeholders, we have never received a call from EMA; rather, the authority deals with the problem as it is, and the problem persists," said Tamirat.

Elias shared the concern rose by Tamirat and noted the need a collaborative approach if there is indeed genuine commitment to address the problem.

The other challenge, according to EMA's respondents, is the power of the social media platforms and the government's move to address international media with proper and specified guidelines. They recommend that government communicate clearly with social media companies and media institutions about working within the law of the country and avoiding harmful terms, with officials' commitment and readiness, not close their doors to journalists and providing them with the necessary information.

Considering government's conception of closing doors for information seekers and its bad consequences, a key informant and Elias G stated;

"I believe that currently in Ethiopia there is little opportunity to monitor misinformation and disinformation, because, in fact, the state is trying to use both methods to rule the country as well as manage the system without providing adequate and important information to the public."

In this regard, he suggests that "officials' unresponsive and unwelcoming nature or tendency toward information seekers and journalists has created a better platform for misinformation and disinformation disseminators."

According to Mersha, establishing very credible and reliable media outlets is a very essential and crucial mechanism to build a society that is dependent on credible sites whenever it faces an information crisis and receives unreliable information.

He further explained said that"

"In my journalism experience I have seen dozens of government and party affiliated media institutions; though the presence of these media could be considered as an opportunity to inform and disseminate up-to-date information needed by the public via through languages and outlets, they are becoming an ethnic based and ethnic oriented ideology together with their tremendous loyalty to officials to a s a

mouth piece instead of becoming investigative and better and selective means of information source for the society”.

Scholars suggest strategies that could include the creation of mobile applications that encourage the public to evaluate the trustworthiness of information and make it easier to cross-check information against credible sources. In this regard, all of EMA’s monitoring experts emphasized the limitations of the regulator's ability to invest in social media platforms that could promptly counter the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

As the authority lacked full-fledged policy and strategic mechanisms, the researcher noted the EMA's inability to coordinate with local and international organizations, the lack of a proactive communication plan, a lack of relationships with credible information sources, the inability to target the source and content of disinformation with pre-established tools, the failure to identify and differentiate disinformation content creators, and the failure to identify and differentiate disinformation content creators.

With regard to having good opportunities, Elias mentioned the presence of a huge appetite by media-related institutions to engage in fact-checking; if there is a supporting institutional framework. Adding the presence of technological companies too, if there is a policy that allows them to operate in Ethiopia.

According to deputy director Gizaw, disinformation is a problem not only because of its content, but also because of how it is spread, and promoted on social media. Because misinformation is characterized by its aim to hurt or profit, it is often accompanied by plans and procedures to maximize its effect. It is impossible for an authority with limited resources to deal with all of the underlying concerns.

4.8 Mechanisms to Combat Misinformation and Disinformation Flow

Experts claim that immunizing the public against misinformation may be accomplished by well-planned communication, mitigation methods, and that both technological corporations and media outlets must play a role in controlling the flow of information.

All of the key informants on the EMA monitoring team suggested encouraging critical thinking and important online media literacy skills among populations that may be difficult to reach by collaborating with social media influencers.

Gezahgne mentioned the existence of giant social media influencers who are dedicated most of their time to the internet, and he believes stakeholders' engagement and participation, including technology companies, should form a task force with the entitlement of creating awareness and tech-supported private fact checkers.

"As a monitoring and regulatory institution, we haven't seen prominent social media actors approach us, and the reverse is true."

"In this case, if there is a collaborative approach, there is a chance to minimize the flow and dissemination of misinformation and disinformation," said Gezahgne.

To combat inaccurate information, a number of professional media organizations operate fact-checking websites with the goal of informing the public in an accurate and impartial manner, he added.

Given recent trends of new technology uncertainty, key informants from the media and communication industries have also emphasized the importance of proactive and up-to-date discussions with the public and social media owners in order to identify timely solutions and build sustainable solutions in due time.

In this regard, Serkalem believed that as new forms of media platforms are approaching, active engagement with owners of the media would ease the problem and give more chances for further discussion before the problem was triggered.

Similarly, routine arrangements and collaborative efforts with public and private media institutions, both international and local, to create a positive media environment are suggested by the informants.

Further tackling mechanism according to Helm (2021) are categorized into three categories: information correction; content removal or blocking; and criminal sanction.

However, according to Eshetu, the Ethiopian Media Authority, before starting to take legal and institutional measurements, the authority itself needs to be independent and free of any political motive when thinking to punish or take action that is against the law. Furthermore, if the regulatory authority has any intention other than the core values and principles of guiding and managing media institutions, there will always be an unintended consequence; rather than addressing misinformation and disinformation, it may exacerbate the problem.

Of the four key informants on EMA's monitoring team, three of them believed that the legal actions being taken by the authority are not clearly taken as per predetermined and exactly stipulated policy and strategic tools, but rather are mostly based on the commonly available tools, including manual monitoring and manual actions without clear prescriptions and a code of conduct.

Scholarly articles show that to address the growing influence of misinformation and disinformation, the US government used direct legal action on social media and internet platforms, sparking political arguments over where to draw the line between preserving democracy and rejecting its very origins.

Noting the role of the government in combating misinformation and diversionary news as crucial, based on opinions gathered from key informants both from EMA's monitoring team and media experts, the researcher has understood that the need to formulate standardized policy frameworks and guidelines for mainstream media, both for local and international outlets, and to have discussion and agreement with social media platform owners, which are operating in the land of Ethiopia, is a very crucial mechanism to easily manage and combat the flow of misinformation and disinformation.

A study conducted by Johns Hopkins University (2021), expressed the need to create a national nonpartisan commission to give unbiased, evidence-based guidance and suggestions to enhance the communication environment by limiting misleading information and ensuring responsibility for the identification of sources of misleading information.

In view of this, the researcher has noted that the Ethiopian Media Authority's insignificant role is to play its part as a non-partisan and independent institution free of political interference.

Eshetu mentioned that;

"EMA could not be fully independent to combat politically motivated misinformation while it has politically inclined directors to supervise it."

On the other hand Meskrem noted that

"Since there are highly contentious terms and different people use different definitions we don't really have a glossary of terms of defining disinformation, fake news, et cetera"

Speaking about the role of information literacy in the fight against misinformation and disinformation, the EMA monitoring team highly recommends ensuring multi-sector collaboration in the development of a national strategy to combat misinformation and disinformation to reinforce digital literacy, information selection and consumption, ways of fact checking, increased coordination among government stakeholders, and a cross-government analysis of efforts and responsibilities to streamline and organize efforts.

"We strongly believe the first strategy is to educate people in digital media literacy, which is the foundation of many anti-disinformation initiatives" said Mohammed.

However, in the circumstances of Ethiopia, particularly in the last two years, the country has been facing various threats, both physically and ideologically, making the authority unable to manage the problem equally and proportionally, proactively. Currently, EMA is planning to use all possible methods to stem the flow of disinformation he added.

Chapter five

5. Conclusion and recommendation

5.1 Introduction

In the preceding Chapters, an effort has been made to go through basic matters in relation to the practice of media monitoring and regulation to tackle misinformation and disinformation, challenges and opportunities of the Ethiopian mass media authority. To this end, a qualitative research design was used as the main research method of the Study & the research questions were answered via the collected data from the in-depth interview and document analysis. This Chapter deals with a brief conclusions and recommendations of the research topic.

5.2 Conclusion

The study looked at the Ethiopian Media Authority's role and efforts to effectively regulate the spread of misinformation, as well as the consequences and or impacts of the unregulated flow of misinformation and disinformation, as the authority is a responsible regulatory institution and accountable to the House of People's Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

As per the regulatory institution, the government is becoming increasingly worried about false news, disinformation, and the manipulation of the public realm and the unprecedented threat it poses, reaching up to dismantling societal value and affecting the political system and democratic process of the country.

Accordingly, EMA is tasked, among other responsibilities, creating an enabling environment to fully enforce the rights to freedom of expression and of the media, which are guaranteed under the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia as well as international human rights instruments that are binding on Ethiopia. More importantly, it is tasked with regulating media institutions to ensure they are operating in accordance with the law and providing proper support to strengthen media self-regulation.

This research, considering the recent proliferation of misinformation and disinformation in Ethiopia's media landscape, has undergone a critical assessment of how the authority is regulating the flow and impact of the growing infodemics.

In order to monitor and regulate misinformation and disinformation, the authority applies two basic proclamations: Proclamation No. 1238/2021 of Media Proclamation and Proclamation No. 12339 of Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression.

However, based on the research assessment, the authorities haven't enacted specific implementing directives and regulations for both proclamations in a way that could help capitalizing efforts. In this regard, the monitoring experts are challenged by the absence of detail, specified, regulated, prescribed manual to easily trace any type of information that could be considered either misinformation or disinformation.

Recent developments and the spread of misinformation and disinformation in Ethiopia, which primarily go through social media and international media versions, have polarized political views and caused uncertainty among certain communities based on religious, ethnic, and personal views and opinions.

Nevertheless, based on the researcher's finding, most incidents of misinformation and disinformation occur due to the closure of government offices and the authorities' reluctance to provide up-to-date and timely necessary information to the public; which ultimately gives space for those who have dedicated their time either on social media or mainstream media to feed information to the information-starved community by framing an agenda.

Experts suggest accurate messages should also be communicated in a timely fashion and as clearly as possible to manage the proliferation of fake news. Despite the fact that the Ethiopian media proclamation emphasizes the intention of creating an informed society, key informants blamed officials for appointing politically oriented communication officers in most offices, which in this regard has made obtaining information difficult. This law will not be able to be implemented unless government officials cooperate.

The researcher discovered that in a country with sharp political polarizations and multiple ethnic groups speaking different languages and holding different cultural values, media regulators must establish distinct language glossary features to monitor and manage extremely disinformation campaigns one another. However, according to key informants EMA, there is no content-based monitoring practice due to the absence of a language glossary.

Since the challenge of misinformation has been a global trend, the necessity of collaboration with internet providers, social media, and international media outlet owners is unquestionable, key informants suggested. In this regard, the Ethiopian Media Authority, beside issuing a license to international media who are approaching, has no substantial and collaborative discussion on matters of engagement and topics that need greater caution and attentiveness on sensitive ethnic, religious, or historical agendas.

The most popular web platforms for misinformation operations are social media platforms that allow users to post and discuss their thoughts and ideas. To that end, the Ethiopian mass media authority has focused on institutional ordinary tools as solution makers, such as receiving complaints from politicians or individuals via hotlines, rather than technological mechanisms.

The researcher indicated the scholar's suggestion of applying up-to-date technological tools to identify and mark posts that are spreading disinformation by pointing them out and providing the real facts. In other cases, by conducting active discussions with social media platform owners, accounts that regularly spread false information are banned from the platform by a group of experts authorized to perform while being mindful of press freedom.

As participant has mentioned the Ethiopian Media Authority has made a very limited effort to raise public awareness on how to select and consume news, as well as the application and utilization of technological tools. In this case researcher has understood the authority's failure to go beyond office and hotel workshops and to forge strong partnerships with the Ethiopian media council, journalist association, tech and fact-check institutions, and other concerned stakeholders in order to manage and combat the greater risk of misinformation and disinformation that poses a threat to some livelihood of of the community.

Recent media coverage, particularly by Ethiopians, has been viewed by officials as evidence of countries interfering in the domestic affairs of other governments. Informants urged a forceful diplomatic dialogue with the countries hosting the media institutions.

Similarly, the researcher has understood politicians' rhetoric and their advertisements to be regulated based on prescribed principles in a transparent and responsible manner.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are forwarded based on the findings of the research in order to strengthen the monitoring efforts and Ethiopian Mass Media Authority.

1. As EMA participant are facing specified directives of monitoring, the authority shall develop specified and illustrated proclamation implementation directives, laws, and legislative frameworks suitable and applicable to the Ethiopian media environment as its monitoring section is challenged by the absence of it.
2. Given the media's difficulty in obtaining information from government officials and public offices, EMA should work to expedite the approval and implementation of the draft proclamation, titled "a proclamation to provide for freedom of the mass media and access to information intended to guarantee mass media access to information."
3. Since getting official sources is critical to the media industry, the government should implement the promises it made a few years ago to open up and publicize every proceeding of government activities, including party meetings. There is a critical problem that media houses and journalists continuously infer about the closure of government office doors when seeking information and while journalists seek to investigate cases or publish stories. In this context, the EMA should engage in comprehensive and continuous conversations with government officials in order to address journalists' recurring worries about government offices and their officials' growing reticence to release critical public information. Most cases of information restriction are echoed by media institutions because most corporate communications people are often under-trained, inexperienced,

and unskilled, employed as public relations but working as protectors of their boss, an incumbent political party, or a specific institution.

4. As some media institutions are founded on ethnic and political lines, the regulatory authorities should advocate for the establishment of an independent media and journalistic regulatory regime that strives for ethical and professional values protects and preserves the public's right to obtain information from its source, and combats false and misleading news as well as unprofessional media behavior instead of advocating politically motivated divisive information.
5. As Ethiopia continues to recover from previous media repression, authorities should implement long-term plans and policies to assist individuals to become more knowledgeable about how the online public sphere is constituted and to promote media literacy.
6. Since it is believed to be crucial to form a joint effort to address the problem, forging strong cooperation and providing adequate institutional and technical support for media institutions is necessary so as to establish and promote strong media institutions dedicated to investigative and credible information, which the public can always rely on whenever they need information.
7. Journalists' informant noticed government's cloudy vision of monitoring and regulating processes as well as its enforcement mechanisms, showing a lack of a consistent and established framework. To avoid this situation, EMA must draft a robust and suitable policy that governs local, foreign media outlets and social media giants in a way that accommodates the country's interests and societal values.
8. As seen by worldwide experience, digital technology has already resulted in technologies to counteract misinformation and deception. However, EMA's present situation in using these technologies has created roadblocks for its monitoring taskforce/team. In this respect, the authorities should use and deploy powerful computer vision and technology tools, as well as skilled professionals, to build cutting-edge monitoring strategies and tactics for combatting misinformation and disinformation.

9. The international experience shows that fact-checking platforms have a tremendous role in combating misinformation and disinformation. Since there is the very slightest effort in Ethiopia. To promote more fact-checking sites, EMA should incentivize and support the establishment of fact-checking institutions and companies.
10. Ethiopia embraces over 85 ethnic groups, speaking several languages. However, EMA's monitoring team has fewer than 40 members tasked with monitoring the whole information flow in the Ethiopian media landscape. In this regard, the authorities should increase the monitoring section experts' number and their capacity with very good communication skills in a multilingual team so as to track and trace timely information glitches.
11. Some countries have created their own social media platforms to combat misinformation and disinformation, and studies show that it has a positive impact on reducing the problem. In this regard, EMA should engage in the proliferation of locally developed counter-alternative social media platforms to substitute another platform prone to misinformation and disinformation.
12. Building strong public awareness and confidence is a crucial way to make them cognizant of information. As a result of the low level of public awareness; the public is unable to detect genuine sources of information platforms. This tells the researcher the need to identify and announce potential journalists and positive influencers for media outreach.
13. The researcher has found that the authority doesn't have timely and periodical reviews and research about the impact of misinformation and disinformation. This entails EMA to conduct a periodical review of the level of misinformation, its impact, and the magnitude it poses to society.
14. As the researcher noted from EMA's monitoring team respondents, most incidents of people falling victim to misinformation and disinformation are attributable to the low level of public awareness about the information disseminators and the types of information sources. This refers to the need for authorities to develop strategies to equip

society with the necessary information, including by producing strong documentary videos that would boost the level of public awareness and increase their capacity to monitor story sources. Most importantly, people must educate themselves through multiple sources in order to avoid falling victim to online falsehoods. Simple steps like not visiting dodgy, illegal websites, checking messages and postings before sharing them, and so on, may put a halt to disinformation.

15. In most cases, Ethiopian media institutions have been blamed for their lack of independence and instead focused their activities on promoting government agendas. In this regard, the EMA should work to establish independent, diverse, credible, and reliable media outlets that can help society become less reliant on untrustworthy sources.
16. Both the incumbent and opposition political parties have been accused of using unsolicited rhetoric and propaganda to divide the public by providing insufficient and unsubstantiated information. This political party's toing and froing suggests the significance of working closely with political parties to avoid politically motivated misinformation and advertisements that dismantle ethnic coexistence and engage in greater transparency on how they are using citizen data.
17. Building fact checking platform is essential, in this context, aside from its daily monitoring efforts, EMA lacks a platform that would assist society in cross-checking fake information. In this regard the authority should establish its own fact-checking platforms alongside its monitoring efforts.
18. EMA should dedicate itself as an institution aspiring to ensure media plurality, maintain freedom of speech and people's access to information, and, ultimately, protect information quality.

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