



**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF COVID-19 IN
ETHIOPIA:
THE CASE OF ETHIOPIAN TELEVISION AND FANA TELEVISION**

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**MEDIA COVERAGE OF COVID-19 IN ETHIOPIA:
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ETHIOPIAN TELEVISION AND FANA TELEVISION**

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Kasech Mirressa entitled: Media Coverage Of Covid-19 In Ethiopia: Comparative Analysis Of Ethiopian Television And Fana Television and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts Journalism and Communications complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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ABSTRACT

Considering the importance of media coverage in influencing attitude and knowledge of the public, this study assessed news coverage of COVID-19 in Ethiopia, comparing the coverage of ETV 57 and Fana 90. The major purpose of the study was to explore media coverage and its role in controlling the spread of the COVID -19 pandemic in Ethiopia. Media coverage was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative content analysis approach; in terms of time allocation, frequency of coverage of specific news stories and with regard to how news topics were framed in the two media. The content analysis was supported by key informant interviews with selected experts and officials from the two media. For the content analysis, a total of 70 days news videos (5 days per month for 7 months, for each media); that is, in total 3,885 minutes of news stories were analyzed. Major results indicated that the two media provided good coverage of COVID-19, but ETV gave higher proportion of coverage to COVID-19 related news than Fana Television: i.e., 23% of the total 42 minutes of ETV news than 18% of the 70 minutes news of Fana was allocated to COVID-19 related news. Immediately, after the first COVID-19 cases were reported in Ethiopia, both media - Fana and ETV news - gave high attention for the issue and coverage of COVID-19 related news was very high. However, coverage of COVID-19 news started to decline through time. The focus of the two media shifted from COVID-19 news to other emergencies due to political instabilities and conflicts. Furthermore, analysing the type of frames employed by the media, it is found that news stories of the two media were dominated by constructive framing which accounted for about 64% of the total time allocated for COVID-19 related news, while fear framing accounted only for about 28% the news stories. Constructive framing in total was reported by 111 news stories which is where Fana reported many news stories using constructive frame (57) as compared to ETV (54). The two media contributed in informing and creating awareness towards the pandemic and the public to follow recommended preventive measures. However, the decline in the media coverage through time by both media can also contribute to a declining attention by the public and government towards the disease. Hence, this study, indicating a close relationship between media coverage and the contribution they can play in controlling the spread of the disease, recommends a regular media coverage with well researched understanding of the possible spread and effects of the pandemic.

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ACRONYMS

CDC	Central Disease Control
COVID-19	Corona virus disease
EBC	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation
ETV	Ethiopian Television
FBC	Fana Broadcasting Corporate S.C
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome;
U.K	United Kingdom
U.S.A	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

COVID-19 which causes an acute respiratory illness has been claimed to start in Wuhan city, China in December 2019 and spread throughout the world. On 30th January 2020, following the recommendations of the emergency committee, the WHO Director-General declared that the outbreak constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (WHO, 2020).

After the first case was announced in Wuhan city in China and once it becomes a public health concern, the disease spread fast to other countries including Canada, America, Europe (Italy, Spain, France and Britain). Immediately, not more than two months after the first case, WHO reported that 7, 818 total confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide with the majority in China, and 82 cases reported in 18 countries outside China (WHO 2020). The number of cases in the world increased in an alarming rate, and countries such as Italy, Spain, France, UK and USA have started implementing strict measures to close schools, limit gatherings and restrict people movements in some towns. Many countries latter followed the strict measures (including lockdowns) different times during the last one year. As of May, 2021, over 222 countries reported COVID positive cases, and in total 158 million cases confirmed worldwide; 3.3 million people have died of the disease (Worldometers, May 08, 2021). This figure almost doubled within six months when (by November 2020) COVID cases were 63.4 million, and reported death was 1.47 million people (Worldometers, November 2020).

Ethiopia confirmed its first case of COVID-19 on the 13th of March 2020. The first case was a 48 years old Japanese man who arrived in Ethiopia from Burkina Faso, and the second report was three cases, two Japanese and one Ethiopian, who had contact with the first Japanese person, according to Ministry of Health report (13th of March). By May 2021, a total of 262,217 people have tested positive, 3,871 people died, 208,314 people have recovered from the disease (Worldometers, May 08, 2021). Reported COVID cases and deaths doubled as compared to what was before six months ago: In November 2020, a total of 110,074 COVID cases reported, 1,706 have died, and 73,808 people have recovered from the COVID illness (Ministry of Health Daily report May 2021,Worldometers, May 08, 2021).The Ethiopian government has taken different measures to control early spread of the disease: declared a five-month national state of

emergency, limited public gatherings, closed school, encouraged people to work from home, closed borders, suspended flights to 120 countries and restricted mass transports. On top of that, the government officially postponed Election 2020 (Mohammed et al, 2020). Currently, the country has greatly improved its capacity of testing, its capacity to treat patients, and can be able to reach and aware wider public which encouraged many people, particularly in Addis Ababa, to wear masks in public areas.

Effective government policies and interventions to control and prevent the spread of the pandemic require integrated actions from different actors, while communication between the actors and to the public plays a crucial role. In public health, communication is key to disseminating information about the disease, its prevention mechanisms and any required actions to control its spread. Media is known as one the most important means of communication, in this era, and particularly when pandemic happened, mass media informs and aware the people about its cause, preventive actions, treatment and with other relevant information (Ogbonna, 2016).

With increasing reach and influencing of media today, they became one of most important parts of society in crisis. Media help to bring information to managers, policymakers and citizens, and urgent actions are facilitated with the help of which information are collected, accumulated and supplied. In pandemic crisis, public opinion is badly affected. In such cases, media could control emotions of the public and their opinion with processed information, sharing facts and showing practices that promote positivity which is helpful to manage crisis (Janicke, 2016). Media workers have huge responsibility to collect information only from credible sources in order to stop the spread of confusing or contradicting facts. Media have the power to calm the people as well as encourage people for positive action, and vice versa, terrorize people and make chaos.

This study aims to analyze the role of media and coverage of COVID -19 pandemic in making people aware of the crisis, and above all in controlling the spread of the pandemic. In Ethiopia the role of television and radio is very crucial, as most of the other medium like social media are not accessible to the wider public. Mainstream media are loaded with responsibilities of providing audiences with relevant and genuine data, while entertaining them. In this pandemic time, media can be used as the source of information as they play a valuable role in everyone's life. The initial role of media in such critical time of pandemic is to educate, inform and entertain their audiences. And here credibility takes the stage; things should be told with facts to avoid

further conflict or confusion. It works as bridge between government and general public. Mainstream media has robust power to make how people see the world since it is flexible and that could influence the people in a large extent. In the lockdown period the mainstream media (television and radio) has come out to be one of the important sources of information about the status and spread of the pandemic.

Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) is the pioneer in the radio and TV service across Ethiopia. Ethiopia Television (ETV) is the oldest public service broadcaster channel in the country which serves under Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation. The station serves the country's information and entertainment needs over seven decades. The media house changed its name and institutional structure several times. The Ethiopian Television were introduced to Ethiopia 1963 and since then the station has been trying to redesign their organizational structure in order to accommodate new technology and provide quality services. Among this change the recent institutional arrangement of the media from Ethiopian radio and television agency into Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation is noticeable (Sibhat, 2019).

Fana Broadcasting Corporate S.Co. (FBC) is the first commercial national broadcaster and multilingual radio and television station in the country established in 1994. Whereas, the Fana Television was launched in 2017. The television channel is based in Ethiopia and broadcasts programs and news in Amharic and other different local and international languages (Fana, 2021)

1.2. Statement of the problem

One of the recommendations to control and lower the spread of the Corona virus is to distance oneself from a crowd (including to stay at home) which makes people to become more dependent on media to be informed and updated on the spread of the pandemic, and any required preventive measures. The role of media in such pandemic is crucial as people may not have various sources of information since they do not interact with friends and colleagues as they used to do.

To acquire information related to spread, cause and prevention of diseases, people often seek health information from non-medical sources, such as the mass media (Ophir, 2018). Information may reach audiences after being processed and framed by the media. Media may access large

number of sources, regardless of whether they were official spokespersons for public health organizations or not, which suggests that actual coverage of pandemics in the media may not reflect the amount or types of communications recommended (Ophir, 2018). Nevertheless, Galtung and Ruge in their study in 1965 (as cited by Ophir, 2018) stated that the prominence of media coverage depends in large part on newsworthiness of events and situations.

On top of the above standards, media need to be better prepared to deal with perception and attitudes of people during any pandemic situation since any news and information can be taken out of context depending on current political, social and economic situation prevailing during the time of the pandemic. For instance, in Ethiopia, at some point during the pandemic some people have started questioning the actual threat of the pandemic arguing that the diseases as well as most of the measures advised by the government were politically driven (particularly after Election 2020 was postponed). Similarly, during the outbreak of the pandemic in the world, international journalists faced a problem in convincing people about COVID-19. Although conventional media in United Kingdom were the primary source of information on the pandemic, journalists were the least-trusted source for information regarding the pandemic in the UK (Edelman, 2020).

How the media frame coverage of the pandemic, and how they contributed to any behavioural changes of the public towards the pandemic is important research area. Therefore, it is high time to assess media coverage with comparative analysis of different media in order to draw lessons to redirect efforts for future actions.

After the first COVID-19 case reported in Ethiopia, almost all the media (including social media) directed their efforts in disseminating information related to the cause, effect, trend and possible mitigations measures that should be taken to control the spread of the disease. Information during such outbreaks can have significant effect in changing people behaviors and can influence the spread of the disease. Media coverage in the country can show different pictures depending on the number of registered COVID cases in the country. For instance, few COVID cases reported in Ethiopia during the first two months which then showed an increasing trend (from 70-150 cases per day), then cases started to increase at alarming rate (almost over 900 people per day) at later periods, and cases showed a declining trend from the peak and again increased at a

high rate (Daily reports/Updates of the Ministry of Health Report, 2020 & 2021). In all these pandemic conditions, the media in Ethiopia respectively have arranged their coverage's accordingly. However, very little is known whether the media coverage of the pandemic during the last twelve months has resulted in the decline or increasing trend of the COVID-19 pandemic, and what and how the media contributed in controlling the spread of the disease.

Major roles the media, particularly the major media such as Ethiopian Television and Fana Television, played in controlling the spread of COVID-19 disease is critical research issue, which was not addressed by studies in the country. Thus, this paper attempted to investigate coverage of COVID-19 in the mainstream media and assess its contribution in controlling the spread of the pandemic.

Media can frame reporting of pandemic in different ways. Some media can frame their news stories in such a way that frighten the public through creating a picture of a disease as very dangerous, killer and very quickly spreading. This might have its own effect on controlling of a pandemic. On the other hand, some other media can use relatively relaxed news framing while covering a pandemic. When the COVID-19 disease was first reported as a worldwide pandemic it generally panic many people and governments in the world, particularly in Ethiopia. Media reporting during this time could initiate and use panic and fear of the people, media could also frame their reporting to increase awareness and knowledge of the public towards the pandemic. Differences and similarities of reporting and news story framing by different media may have different effects on changes in awareness and behaviour of audiences to the pandemic.

Mass media has enormous potential to influence health-related behaviors and perceptions. In this regard, Chang et al., 2020, assessed the impact of media coverage on the spread of Covid-19 in China and found out that media coverage played an important role in preventing and controlling infectious diseases through enhancing awareness of prevention that helped to reduce the rate of infection. The study indicated that in order to do a better prevention measures, it is very necessary to maintain the amount of information and implementation rate of media coverage. He also stressed that amount of information is very critical for better awareness and prevention measures.

Media have big role in improving awareness on the spread of the pandemic, required protective measures to control the spread, and update the public on government relevant policies and directions (e.g., movement restrictions, school closures, etc.). Through this, media aim to change behaviours and actions of the public that would help to control spread of a disease. Hence, comparative assessment of different media assessing their coverage can help to draw lessons on how news can be framed, and pandemic coverage can contribute to controlling the pandemic. On top of that it is necessary to investigate and analyze the trend of coverage of news stories and the changes in the behaviour of the public using the cautionary measures given by both health professionals and journalists.

Studies (e.g., Wang et al., 2013, Weike et al., 2020) investigated the influence of media coverage on disease transmission and found that the media coverage reduces the transmission rate and the study indicated the influence of media on the control of infectious diseases. Additionally, Weike et al., 2020 assessed the effectiveness of media reporting on COVID-19 and found out that media coverage can be considered as an effective way to mitigate the disease spreading during the initial stage of an outbreak. On the other hand, Basch et al., 2020, investigated the news coverage of COVID-19 and indicated that critically important information about the prevention of COVID-19 spread received little attention. Some studies (e.g., Fatima 2020) assessed media frames of COVID-19 and showed that the coverage of the COVID-19 crisis by New York Times was overall constructive. Very few studies were done in Ethiopia assessing media coverage of pandemic. For example Yeshambe and Bayable, 2016 showed the difference and the extent of media coverage and framing types using the case of some selected newspapers. All in all although there are quite many studies which showed role and contribution of media coverage in controlling the spread of a pandemic , there is huge knowledge gap particularly in the case of Ethiopia that shows media coverage and roles in controlling the spread of a pandemic specifically COVID-19.

1.3. Objectives of the study

The major objective of this study is to assess media coverage of COVID -19 pandemic comparing the two major media in Ethiopia.

Specifically;

- To explore media coverage (in terms of framing, time allocation and content distribution) of COVID-19 in Ethiopia, with a comparative analysis of Ethiopian Television and Fana Television.
- To assess how media coverage of the pandemic related to the spread and/or control of the pandemic in the country.
- To show the difference and similarities of media coverage of COVID-19 between the two media ETV and Fana television.

1.4. Research questions

1. How did the two TV stations (ETV 57 and Fana 90) frame the COVID-19 pandemic news?
2. How did the media coverage of the pandemic during the last thirteen months directly or indirectly related to the spread and/or control of the pandemic in the country.
3. What differences and similarities were there in the media coverage of COVID19 between ETV and Fana Television?

1.5. Significance of the study

Very few, if any, relevant studies have been done in Ethiopia regarding the role of mass media on controlling the spread of a pandemic, and specifically the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, this study through assessing the coverage and respective contents of major media in the country attempted to analyze the role and contribution media can play to control the spread of the disease. Lessons that could be drawn from this study have an importance to show media coverage of pandemic particularly COVID-19 in Ethiopia that helps to contribute for improved health communication and reporting in the country.

1.6. Scope of the study

This study focused on COVID -19 media coverage from March 2020 to March 2021 specifically taking the case of the two major media, i.e., the Ethiopian Television (ETV) and Fana Television. Both Televisions broadcast news and programs in different local and foreign languages. However, the study focused only on the news broadcasted in Amharic languages especially on that of the night time news (ETV at 8PM and Fana 90) from March 2020 to March

2021. Assuming that most of the COVID-19 coverage focused on both local and international news, the study analyzed both stories of the international and local COVID-19 related news stories. The study utilized quantitative and qualitative approach of content analysis of news stories of the two media in terms of time allocated, frequency of coverage, and framing of news stories.

1.7. Limitations of the study

This study focused on media coverage of COVID-19 in Ethiopia: Comparative Analysis of Ethiopian Television and Fana Television by taking News channel departments and the night prime time news coverage only. Even though ETV and Fana Television broadcast news and programs in variety of local and foreign languages the study focused only on Amharic News believing that most of COVID-19 reports got coverage on these departments and because of time limitations to conduct this research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter attempted to cover relevant theoretical and empirical discussions and findings through reviewing important literatures in the area pertaining to this study. Major topics covered in this section included general discussion regarding health communication and role of mass media in covering pandemics. Furthermore, this section highlighted theoretical framework of the study (specifically, agenda setting theory and framing theory), and reviewed major empirical studies relevant to the study.

2.1. Health communication

Health communication is an important subject that needs to be discussed to help understand role of media coverage in promoting good health of the community and public health issues. Different scholars have tried to define the term in different ways and perspectives.

Health communication is the use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decision that enhance health; that primarily include health promotion, health protection, disease prevention and treatment, which are critical to the overall achievement of public health measures (Sixsmith et al., 2014). Similarly, Guttman and Salmon (2004), agree that health communication helps in raising awareness of risk from chronic diseases and new infections and helps with the promotion of recommended treatments, while Oyama and Okpara (2017) explained the term as it promotes positive changes in attitudes and behaviors, and health communication is related to social marketing that involves the development of interventions designed to positively change behaviors.

Health communication and education helps the general public to learn about appropriate health measures that will serve as guides to their health behavior. Health behaviour of people is largely dependent on information available to them (Gever and Ezeah, 2020). On the other hand, He et al (2016) stressed that information is vital because poor knowledge about public health issues could have corresponding negative implications on health behavior. Renata (2007) also emphasized health communication, as;

A multidisciplinary approach to reach different audiences and share health-related information with the goal of influencing, engaging, and supporting individuals,

communities, health professionals, policymakers and the public to introduce, adopt, or sustain a behavior, practice, or policy that ultimately improve health outcomes. (p. 7)

Some researchers (e.g., Keshvari et al., 2018) described health communication as a means of sharing of health news, medical research, and health policies, and they further, stated the huge role and influence mass media could play in disseminating health news, affecting the knowledge and health beliefs of the public and eventually promoting public health. Health communication is critical to addressing important social and health needs as well as improving lives of the people. Promoting public health and preventing the spread of dangerous health risks has become very critical function of communication. People need information on healthy life style practices, and diseases, and government healthcare programs (Ogbonna, 2016).

2.1.1 Objectives of health communication

Major objectives of health communication *is* “to educate the general public about health issues; the media need to first monitor the environment and identify potential life-threatening health issues and provide adequate information that will enlighten the masses on the issues” (Gever and Ezeah, 2020, p. 2). The Health Communication Unit (2007) has identified three major objectives of health communication: cognitive, affective and behavioral objectives.

- *Cognitive objective - Informing people:* People are informed and become aware of health problems, about different diseases, their cause and this helps in preventing disease and promoting health.
- *Affective objective - Motivating people:* Following proper health information, it is necessary to motivate people to alter their lifestyles so that it becomes favorable to promoting health and preventing disease. Ratzan et al., (1994) understood health communication as motivating individuals: “The art and technique of informing and motivating public about important health issues; like disease prevention, health promotion, health care policy, as well as enhancement of the quality of life and health of individuals within the community” (p. 361).
- *Behavioral Objective - Guiding into action:* It is concerned with the development of skills and action a person will take after obtaining health information and be motivated to change his behavior and lifestyle.

2.1.2. Mass media and health communication

Mass media is one of the major means in which people acquire information about health, diseases, preventive measures and government policy and actions towards diseases and pandemics. Hence, mass media primarily make people aware and educate to prevent the spread of various diseases and pandemics. All in all, the mass media help in creating awareness, accelerating information flow and mobilizing the populace towards attainment of national goals and aspirations to ensure prevention and protection from diseases and pandemics (Ogbonna, 2016). Furthermore, mass media has become a key data source to observe and monitor health (Gozzi et al. 2020, p. 2).

Role of Mass media: Media has different roles in health issues like broadcasting health related programs such as health talk and news; inform and explain to people new government policies on health; collaborate with health organizations to assist people in solving health related problems; report epidemics before it spread, report the findings of health researchers to help in health decision making (Ogbonna (2016) citing Adelakun et al, 2013, p.2).

Oyama and Okpara (2017) identified three major roles the mass media plays:

It is the duty and responsibility of the media to gather information from the environment (Surveillance function), interpret this information (Correlation function), and mobilize the people (Mobilization function) against an issue, situation or a movement and even entertain them (Entertainment function). (2017, p. 3)

On the other hand, Flora et al, (1989), has described four roles that the media can play in health intervention to include media as: educator, supporter, program promoter, and supplement.

Media as an educator is defined as;

The media have to educate the masses about public health issues. When using media as lifestyle supporter, media can reinforce old messages, support health changes, encourage maintenance of change, or keep health issues on the public agenda. The role of the media as promoter takes place when the media are used to promote existing programs, and encourage the audience to call, write, or participate in programs. Media

as a supplementary role by being integrated into a program that includes face-to-face or other forms of intervention. (Flora et al, 1989, pp. 184, 185)

Explaining role of media within the context of COVID-19, the media have a responsibility to examine the spread of COVID-19 and coordinate both government and the public on how best to respond to the global health crisis (Gever and Eziah, 2020, p.3).

2.1.3. Effective health communication

Health communication to be effective it has to provide people with adequate information that is needed to help raise awareness about health issues and preventive measures, provide the inspiration that is required to lessen health hazards, provide them with support especially for those in related predicaments, and also emphasize a habit, a behavioral change or a reorientation (Oyama and Okpara ,2017).

Effective health communication strategies include use of research-based strategies to shape intended messages and information, and to select the channels that deliver them to the intended audience. Furthermore, it also requires understanding of conventional wisdom, concepts, language, and priorities for different cultures considering health literacy, cultures of the target populations (Arkin and Doner, 2004).

For health communication to be effective, it is highly dependents on journalists' skills, commitment, motivations and depth of knowledge. Usually Journalists are not interested or motivated to cover health researches due to professional skill, time, budget and technical problems (Oyama and Okpara, 2017). According to the findings of a study conducted by Keshvari et al (2018) among 34 journalists majority of them (65%) had no specialized training on health reporting, 35% of journalists were not able to understand the health issues, and the knowledge of medical terminology in 59% of them was moderate to low. The most important required skill for reporters was the ability to interpret medical research reports (88%), 97% were eager to participate in specialized health education. Additionally Keshvari et al. 2018 found out that health journalists lacked knowledge and specialized training for dissemination of health news.

There are several methods in which health communication can be effectively practiced or deployed. These methods include: media literacy, media advocacy, public relations, advertising, education entertainment, individual and group instruction, as well as partnership Development. (Arkin and Doner, 2004).

Oyama and Okpare, 2017, described effective health communication as:

A cyclical process of campaigns which involves planning and strategy development, developing and pretesting concepts, messages and materials, implementing the program and assessing effectiveness, and making refinements. Each stage and step is very integral to the execution and implementation of the health communication campaign. Since it is a cyclical process, it is continuously revolving and the success of the next stage is dependent on the completion of the previous stage. (2017, p. 4)

2.2. Health communication in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia media coverage of health issues is poor due to the weak link between journalists and health researchers, and lack of capacity for reporting these issues etc. In Ethiopia public radio and TV station health programs are not based on research and have no specific communication strategy (Asferi, 2016).

There are significant barriers to increasing quality of health and medical reporting in general, and some also specifically apply in Ethiopia. Leask et al. (2010) listed these general barriers as follows; lack of technical training for journalists, the time constraints of news production, and the commercial imperatives that drive story selection and headlines. On the other hand, there are also good practices from journalists. Research on reporters' attitudes and practices shows that their concerns and aspirations are often much like those of health and medical professionals, and sometimes place them in some conflict with editors and producers (Leask et al, 2010).

There are different challenges which the journalists listed as a challenge to report a health issue. According to Veloudaki et al. study in 2014 listed the most important obstacles to reporting health news as: "low willingness on the part of health authorities to render health information or to meet the press, red tape and little cooperation of health authorities, limitation of time, absence of latest statistics, problems of statistical interpretation, and lack of medical training in general" (Veloudaki et al. 2014, p.2). Keshvari et al.(2018), furthermore, stated the obstacles as follows:

Competition for reporting first-hand news, special terms and expressions used by experts, identification and application of reliable sources, authorities' and experts' unwillingness for interviews and communicating the news, absence of honesty in health authorities specially in emergencies, untimely accountability, authorities' speaking in broad generalities and using nontransparent language, medical doctors' denials, lack of reliable health statistics and information, political, economic, cultural, and security concerns over communicating health news. (p. 3)

2.3. Media coverage of health issues and COVID -19

2.3.1. Media Coverage of Health Issues:

Media plays very important role through increasing awareness about the disease and to also prevent the spread of diseases and pandemic. Mass media have the power to direct people's attention to certain issues and this is evident in the agenda setting function of the mass media. People need adequate information and knowledge on health matters, on healthy life style practices, and diseases, and government healthcare programs. The mass media help in creating awareness, accelerating information flow and mobilizing the populace towards attainment of national goals and aspirations to ensure a total transformation (Ogbonna, 2016).

Media coverage of health issues and how such coverage impact on behavior has been examined over the years (Gever and Ezias, 2020). "Health behaviour is any action that a person engages in that has an implication on his or her health" (Conner, 2002). Gever and Ezias (2020) stated that health behaviour has two perspectives; positive and negative health behaviour. Positive health behavior within the context of COVID-19 may include regular hand washing, social distancing, avoiding touching one's face with unwashed hands, staying at home, among others. On the other hand, there are health behaviours that are dangerous to a person's health, examples include going to crowded places, shaking hands indiscriminately, among others.

Media coverage of health issues, in addition to encouraging positive health behaviours, attempts to influence changes in policies, strategies and programs of government or the introduction of new ones. Government is at the forefront of improving the health sector through budgetary provision and other interventions that will make the health sector viable (Gever and Ezias, 2020).

Media is the primary source of health information and is the primary channel through which society gains awareness about health issues. As Duru (2016) stated by citing Dolan et al. (2004), for instance, found that a significant number of patients indicated that they rely on news media more than other sources for general health information. Mainstream media are often the first sources from which people, including health experts, learn about advances in modern medicine. For instance, in a survey by Harvard people were asked where they get information about avian flu and 80% of them revealed they got information regarding avian flu from the television (Nisbet, 2006). Consequently, individuals are able to make social level risk judgments and informed decisions concerning their health from information which they gather from the media, showing media coverage has far reaching consequences (Duru 2016).

A study by Oyama and Okpara (2017) highlighted the importance of health communication and emphasized the role the media must play in promoting health messages. They stated that health communication should aim at changing the behaviours of individuals and communities about a certain habit, idea or disease. The media provides the platform through which health messages and campaigns are promoted. In their view, the media are critical players in educating the general public about health issues.

The fundamental way through which the media can educate the general public on public health issues is through coverage. This can take place through strategies like frequently reporting public health issues, recommending appropriate health behavior and suggesting policies that will assist in combating the public health issues reported. pinpointed that within the context of Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19), local media did not need to wait until there is a confirm case of the virus in their country before educating the general public but its symptoms, prevention and recommend action for the government to take. (Gever and Eziah, 2020, p. 2)

Media coverage can play a critical role in disseminating information when pandemics occur, and advocating public policies and information on the pandemic, and try securing the public's attention, support and compliance (Liu et al., 2020). Additional to providing up to date information regarding the pandemic, media can also provide emotional support to the community

through entertainment and with different aspects of important life advices (Shalvee & Saurabh , 2020).

The mass media have an unparalleled reach as a communication mechanism. Public health professionals have always been sensitive to the persuasive power of the mass media. Public health has often had the challenging task of both using the media to influence health practices while countering this same influence where it encourages unhealthy choices. (Leask et al., 2010, p. 1)

During pandemic crises such as the current COVID-19 pandemic health professionals, public relation experts and journalists may need to join hands to advocate rapidly and effectively provide reliable information for the public to adopt basic preventive measures, like hand washing, wearing masks, social distancing, and others.

2.3.2. Effects of media coverage on pandemics

Different studies (e.g., Wang et al., 2013, Chang et al. 2020, Collinson et al., 2015) assessed the influence of media on the spread of diseases. For instance, Wang et al. (2013) investigated the influence of media coverage on disease transmission and found that the media coverage reduces the transmission rate between susceptible and infected individuals. It was found that media coverage plays an important role in reducing the contact rate of infectious diseases and effectively reduces the transmission rate of infectious diseases. The study indicated the influence of media on the control of infectious diseases by promoting the awareness of infectious disease prevention through media. Assessing effect of media reports on disease spread and public measures, Collinson et al., 2015, argued that mass media reports on pandemics can provide important information to the public which can in turn induce positive health behaviour practices (e.g., hand washing, social distancing) that can reduce the spread of the disease. Furthermore, a similar study by Misra et al., 2011 (cited in Change et al., 2020) indicated that the spread of an infectious disease can be controlled by using awareness programs. A series of similar studies with different emphasis explored the role of media coverage improving awareness of infectious disease prevention (Chang et al., 2020).

Some studies (e.g., Leask et al., 2010), however, argued “that the mass media is in many ways a poor vehicle for the communication of scientifically accurate information about health and

medicine, prone to sensationalism, sins of omission, and sheer inaccuracy”. Although Collinson et al., 2015, reported that media on pandemics can induce positive health behaviours, mass media fatigue can have a negative effect. They indicated that the more the media reports about the pandemic that would lead to individuals to relax their healthy behaviours (media fatigue) that greatly affect the variability in important public health preventive measures.

A study by Leask et al. (2010), based on interview of 16 journalists from major Australian print, radio and television media organizations reporting on avian influenza and pandemic planning, indicated that Journalists perceived the most trusted sources on health issues to be independent doctors. Specialist health and medical reporters had a more sound technical knowledge, channels to appropriate sources, power within their organizations, and ability to advocate for better quality coverage. They suggested that awareness of how to work with the media is essential for health communicators which include understanding journalists’ daily routines, being available, providing resources, and building relationships with specialist health reporters.

2.3.3. Media coverage and COVID-19

Media reporting and coverage about COVID-19 can have huge influence on how the public perceive about the disease, and would also enhance awareness of important measures to follow. A study by Weike et al. (2020) investigating the effectiveness of media reporting on mitigating the spread of COVID-19, suggested that besides improving the medical provision, media coverage can be considered as an effective way to mitigate the disease spreading during the initial stage of an outbreak.

Similar study by Basch et al. (2020) assessing the news coverage of COVID-19 using the Google Videos identified from January and February, 2020, showed that it is important for public health practitioners be aware of mass media coverage on emerging health threats such as COVID-19. Analyzing the content of the media coverage, the study indicated that the most common topic mentioned across all videos was death and the death rate (43.6%) and many connoted anxieties surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak (37.4%). Critically important information about the prevention of COVID-19 spread received little attention. For example, only 3.0% of videos discussed coughing into or blowing one’s nose into a tissue and throwing the tissue away, 6.2% talked about wearing a facemask when caring for the ill, and 8.8% covered disinfecting highly

touched objects and surfaces. Their study concluded that the majority of video messages missed an opportunity to reframe messages to encourage/promote coping strategies and health sustaining behaviors.

Fatima (2020) studying the construction of media frames of COVID-19 by the New York Times, analyzed eight constructive and seven negative frames published during the period. The study indicated that the coverage of the COVID-19 crisis by New York Times is overall constructive but with focus on few dominant constructive and negative frames. Among constructive frames the most dominant frames is 'solution-oriented', and among negative frames the most dominant frames are 'blame attribution', frame of 'consequences' and 'conflict' (Fatima, 2020).

Amount of information is also critical for better awareness and prevention measures. Studying the impact of media coverage on spread of COVID-19, Chang et al., 2020, based on the epidemic situation in Hubei province, China, showed that if media coverage was reduced, the number of confirmed cases would have increased significantly. For better prevention measures, the study suggested to maintain the amount of information and better media coverage that also helps to accelerate research to develop vaccines and drugs (Chang et al., 2020).

It is also very necessary for media to play a broader role to resolve the pandemic as well as to encourage individual's survival both psychologically and physically (Danang et al., 2020). Their research, (Tandyonomanu et al., 2020), aiming at exploring the top priorities of media mitigation on COVID-19, found media as a reliable source of updated information and public communication campaign on healthier life suggesting a broader role of media both to resolve the pandemic as well as to encourage individual's survival.

2.4. Theoretical frameworks

Media have a significant influence on the focus of public attention. Evidences indicated the influence of the mass media on the contents of the public agenda, especially the agenda of key issues facing a community (Escobar et al., 1998). Media coverage and priorities given in the coverage forces attention to certain issues, and influences the priorities of the public as well. Ample media coverage to an issue has an effect on how the public perceive the issue and consider it as important one (McCombs and Shaw, 1972).

2.4.1. Agenda-setting theory

Agenda setting is one of the prominent theories of mass communication while covering important social aspects like health issues. Ogbonna (2016) reviewing various researches, indicated that agenda-setting theory of mass communication shows the ability of the mass media to select and emphasize certain issues and forces the public to perceive it as important. By doing this, media influences community thinking by taking a lead in the debate of important issues in the society. The way an issue or object on the agenda is framed can have measurable behavioral consequences, and the attributes of an issue emphasized in the media coverage can directly influence the direction of public opinion (McCombs and Shaw, 1972).

The agenda-setting theory was first initiated by Walter Lippmann in his seminal work “Public Opinion” in 1922, in which he argued that the media is the window through which we view the world. “In this world we depend on the media to create a pseudo impression of this world, so we can have pictures in our head” (Lippmann, 1922, p.4). Lippmann’s theory of the world outside and the pictures in our head evolved to become what we now know as media effects (Lippmann, 1922). Following Lippmann’s work, other studies (e.g., McCombs and Shaw, 1972) further elaborated the subject and also generated evidence of agenda-setting and its effects.

A clear postulation of the agenda setting theory was done by McCombs and Shaw after a 1972 (Gever and Ezeah, 2020.p.5). McCombs and Shaw (1972) investigated the agenda-setting capacity of the mass media in the 1968 presidential campaign, using 100 undecided voters and compared key issues of the campaign with the actual content of the mass media. Their result showed a significant correlation between media content and issue agenda. Their study concluded that choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. The public could learn how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position (Gever and Ezeah, 2020, p.5). “The media can set agenda or ascribe importance to an issue through the quality and frequency of reporting, prominence given to the report, the degree of interest generated in the reports and cumulative media –specific effects over time” (Ogbonna, 2016, p. 3).

Using a comparative assessment of public and private media, Gever (2015) tested that the media are effective in setting agenda for the general public. The study showed that public broadcast had

higher effect in setting agenda to the public than the private one; indicating that the public media have higher frequency of coverage of the issues (i.e., Boko Haram insurgency) than the private ones, and the public broadcast media contributed more in the fight against the insurgency in Nigeria than their private counterpart.

The media have the ability to set agenda for the general public when COVID-19 was first reported in China. The media could have done this by educating the public to adopt the appropriate health behaviour that will help the public survive the health challenge before the disease spreads to other countries. Also, the media could have drawn the attention of the government on the pending danger by letting them know why it was needed to take preventive measures. (Gever and Ezeah, 2020, p.5)

2.4.2. Framing theory

Media is important sources of information and knowledge about any events including when crisis, like COVID-19 pandemic, are happening. Hence, it is very important to understand how media frame any major events. Although many theoretical as well as empirical researches have been conducted based on framing theory, this study, in this section, attempted to review major literatures that indicated definition and use of framing theory in media.

Framing theory is one of a prominent theory in communication. It refers to how the media packages and presents information to the public. According to the theory, a media present certain events to the audience ‘with in a particular context, called frames’ to influences the choices people make about how to process that information (De Vreese, 2005). Framing refers to the ways that newsmakers cast stories, highlight what is ‘central at how one sees a situation’, and impute meaning and motives (Putnam and Shoemaker, 2007). A number of scholars have defined framing theory from different perspectives. Entman (1993) wrote that frames elevate certain pieces of information to make them more salient, meaning more “noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (p. 53). Chyi and McCombs (2004) stated that news media often frame events by emphasizing different attributes of the event, consciously or unconsciously, in order to keep the story alive and fresh.

The framing theory is related to the agenda-setting theory, sometimes also referred to as second-level agenda setting as framing expands by focusing and emphasizing importance of the essence

of the story than stating a particular topic (De Vreese, 2005). News framing are thought to influence the perception of the news by the audience: they not only tell the audience what to think about (agenda-setting theory), but also how to think about that issue (second level agenda setting, framing theory). Media framing theory and the agenda-setting theory of communication provide an insight to how the media can influence their audience (Hirneisen, 2020). In short, “agenda-setting theory deals with the salience of issues, framing is concerned with the presentation of issues” (De Vreese, 2005, p. 53).

Media framing involves three major processes: frame construction, framing effects, and frame definition (Putnam and Shoemaker, 2007). Frame construction focuses on the way that journalists choose and cast which events to cover and which to ignore; select news stories, especially the formats that they use, newsmakers' intentions and values (which facts, values and perspectives need to be mentioned or given prominence), and the devices that journalists use in their work (Putnam and Shoemaker, 2007). They stated that;

Framing effects, on the other hand, states the outcomes of news framing and the interaction between the media and audiences, and frame definition focuses on the content of news stories that arise from how the media contributes to defining the situation. Thus, the media construct particular views of reality through limiting the range of information, selecting sources strategically, and setting parameters for policy debates. (p 2)

Different kinds of frames could be used in media content analysis researches; these include fear framing (Cannon and Irani, 2011), constructive framing (Fatima, 2020), negative and positive framing (Freyenberger, 2013). Frames are called, fear framing, constructive and negative on the basis of how they were studied in previous studies, and what specific approach they seem to be inclined towards (Fatima, 2020). For instance, Fatima (2020), used eight constructive and seven negative frames while exploring the construction of frames with the coverage of COVID-19 news by the New York Times. On the other hand, Freyenberger, 2013, used negative framing and positive framing while analyzing 500 news content of major world newspapers to assess coverage of a specific news of “The trial of Amanda Knox” in worldwide: one of the major

finding of the study was that mentions of Amanda Knox was more negative in Britain and Ireland than in America.

Anthropologist Gregory Bateson is the first person introducing the theory in 1972. Studies assessing media coverage have used this theory to analyze how the media frames the news and the effect this has on perception (Hirneisen, 2020). Cannon and Irani (2011), using framing explored the use of frames in two daily newspapers, The New York Times and The Guardian, during the outbreaks of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in Britain. The study showed that the primary frame used in articles published during the outbreaks was fear, followed closely by a connection of FMD to mad cow disease) and the potential for human infection.

A study to assess transnational news coverage of HIV/AIDS (Duru, 2016) found that a shift in international news framing of HIV/AIDS, from a “biomedical” narrative that was the focus of coverage in the 1980’s to a narrative driven by socioeconomic, public policy, and human-rights frames. The study suggested that through framing and agenda setting, the media can make an epidemic important enough to warrant a policy. The study emphasized that it is essential to assess the effect of news coverage of epidemics on policy and behavioral outcomes. “Studying frames and its attributes in news coverage of public health crisis using a comparative framework sheds light on the public response to pandemics”. (Duru, 2016, p. 13)

Media coverage, especially by bigger or mainstream media, determines the importance given to health agenda among the public and coverage by other media outlets. Assessing this in news coverage of HIV/AIDS, Brodie et al. (2002) analyzed about 9,000 news stories from major print and broadcast sources in the U.S, which included four national newspapers, three regional papers, and three major network news programs. They found that while there had been a decline in news coverage, this reduction coincided with a new HIV/AIDS narrative in the society. Coverage of the disease (HIV/AIDS) reflected key events that have occurred over the history of the epidemic. In the early period the media coverage was dominated by initial CDC reports that picture the disease negatively as “from certain race and individuals”, then the biggest HIV/AIDS news story was Magic Johnson’s announcement that he was HIV positive, and stories about HIV/AIDS and U.S. immigration. In the subsequent years, different key events and narratives

emerged (that changed people attitude differently) which also highly changed media coverage of the disease which started to decline over time (Brodie et al. 2002).

2.5. Summary of the review

As indicated above in this section researchers studied and stressed the roles and contributions of media in raising awareness and educating the public on pandemics like COVID-19. The studies indicated that health communication, which is critical particularly during periods of crisis, helps the general public to learn about appropriate health measures that guides proper health behavior. Media have a significant influence on changing public health behavior but highly rely on the agenda setting and media framing of specific health issues. Agenda setting and media framing are two prominent theories in mass communication. Agenda setting theory shows the ability of the media to emphasize certain health issues and force the public to perceive it as important. Framing theory, on the other hand, entails how the media packages and presents information to the public. Therefore, media coverage play very crucial role through increasing awareness about the pandemic and also to prevent the spread of the diseases. Many empirical studies (e.g., Chang et al. 2020, Weike et al., 2020, Basch et al., 2020, Collinson et al., 2015) have been done regarding media coverage of pandemics, including COVID-19 pandemic, and through analyzing contents of different media outlet indicated that media coverage is an effective means to effectively mitigate the spread of a disease. Some studies (e.g., Fatima 2020) have assessed the construction of media frames while covering pandemics and stressed its importance in changing behaviour and influence perception and related actions by the public.

Building on the reviewed literatures and existing knowledge in the area, this study assessed media coverage of COVID-19 pandemic, specifically in Ethiopia, comparing two main sources of information and news stories to the public. Content analysis of the media including time allocated and frequency of reporting of each topics related to COVID-19 and the type of media frames used in both media was used to examine how COVID-19 news were covered in the country. In such a way, an attempt was made to see the contribution and role of media coverage in controlling the spread of the disease in the country through promoting preventive measures, and influencing and shaping people attitude.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The main aim of the study is to assess media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ethiopia, with a comparative analysis of two major media in the country; ETV and Fana Television. To measure media coverage in the two media, it was necessary to analyze content of specific news topics in both media. Hence, the study utilized mix of both quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods to explore news coverage of COVID-19 in Ethiopia.

3.2. Research design

To assess the media coverage of COVID-19 in Ethiopia, the study purposefully selected two major media in the country. Content analysis of the news coverage of the two media is compared in terms of time allocated for COVID-19 related news and frequency of reporting of specific news topics. The study has also analyzed how news stories were framed in both media. The quantitative content analysis method is a major approach to measure the extent of media coverage in terms of time allocation and frequency of coverage of specific news topics, and the type of frames that were dominantly used by the two selected media. Whereas, qualitative approach is used to describe and interpret themes, identify and categorize news topics and analyzing information collected through key informant interview. News (videos) stories of the last 13 months have been assessed in terms of time allocated to COVID-19 related news, how the media framed their news stories, frequency of reporting of specific topics related to COVID-19 and distributions of contents across the months. In such away, the study attempted to get clear picture of how COVID-19 news stories were approached or famed, in what way COVID-19 related stories were covered (in terms of proportion of the time allocated and frequency of COVID-19 related news), and finally examined how COVID related news coverage directly or indirectly related to the spread and control of the pandemic in the country.

This study attempted to analyze news video contents starting from assessing issues from framing perspective and interview with selected journalists and officials to examining media coverage of COVID-19 in the case of two major media in Ethiopia: ETV and Fana Television. These two media were selected mainly because they are major sources of information particularly through their news coverage of countrywide issues and they are viewed throughout the country.

The research used the following three tools and instruments:

- i) Content analysis; assessment of already transmitted news stories in terms of time allocated for each news topics, frequency of reporting, content focus and distribution;
- ii) Media news framing; analyzing news stories in terms of framing perspectives; and
- iii) Key informant interviews with selected experts and officials from the two media.

3.3. Sampling method

COVID-19 pandemic has been a major media topic during the last one year starting from March 2020 when first COVID-19 case was confirmed in Ethiopia. Media coverage of COVID-19 for the last 13 months are sampling frame of this study. The study covered from March 2020 (when COVID-19 cases were first reported in Ethiopia) to March 2021. The focus is on two major media in the country: ETV and Fana Television. These two media are selected out of over 56 broadcasting media in the country since they are one of the major sources of news in the country. There are over 26 public (10 radio and 16 television), 30 private media (12 radio and 18 satellite television), and 49 community radio, according to Ethiopian Mass Media Authority Report (2020)¹.

Sampling of Media: This study purposively selected two major media in the country; i.e., i) Ethiopia Television (ETV), and ii) Fana Television (Fana) as these two television stations are major sources of news related to COVID-19 including public actions and government measures during the pandemic. Specifically, this research focuses on assessing COVID-19 news coverage of ETV 57 and Fana 90 news.

Sampling of months and news videos: This study covered the 13 months (March 2020-March 2021) when the pandemic was prevalent in the country which definitely can give ample information on the status and media coverage of the pandemic. Systematic random sampling method was used to select months and specific weeks of the months for analyzing the news coverage. Systematic random sampling is a statistical sampling method where the researcher chooses elements from a target population by selecting a random starting point and selects sample members after a fixed ‘sampling interval’ (Statistics 2020)². Thus, using systematic

¹ Ethiopia Broadcast Authority, website: eba.gov.et

² Statistics How To, 2020: <https://www.statisticshowto.com/systematic-sampling/>

sampling technique and after selecting the first month, which is March 2020, and with an interval of one month, a total of seven months were selected: these are, March, May, July, September and November of 2020, and January and March of 2021. The selection was done with a one month systematic interval making the sample representing the whole 13 months when the pandemic was active in the country. Systematically jumping one month and selecting the other would reduce missing of important occurrences since it can be captured from the other months, and it reduces gaps between months.

News coverage of the last week of each month are systematically selected for the analysis since reporting of a month can be represented and well captured by this week. From each month, news coverage of the last week of the month (i.e., 5 days) were selected to assess the content of the news coverage. The 5 days news coverage can better depict the coverage during the month since news coverage during a specific month do not vary widely between the days with in a month. On top of that, 5 days news stories (which is about 17%) is adequate sample size based on scientific calculation of sample size (Taherdoost, 2017) as there is minimum variance in news coverage between days with in a month.

A total of 14 weeks news coverage (i.e., 7 ETV and 7Fana Television weekly news) were analyzed to see the coverage of news on COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, a total of 70 days news videos examined in terms of time (minutes) allocated for each news topics, frequency of coverage, and content focus and distribution across each day and month. In total, 3,885 minute of news videos of both media were analyzed and assessed in terms of coverage and news framing .The difference and similarities of the coverage between the two media was presented in a way that shows how they framed the stories, time given to specific news related to COVID-19, and content of the stories.

Table 1: Total number of videos used in analysis from each media

Media	Total number of months	Total number of days	Total number of minutes
EBC , ETV 57 news	7	35	1,435
FBC, Fana 90 news	7	35	2,450
Total	14 ³	70	3,885

3.4. Data collection and analysis method

3.4.1. Data Collection

The study used two major sources of data collection to analyze media coverage of COVID-19 in Ethiopia; i) News content (news videos) from the two selected media; ETV and Fana Television, and ii) Key informant interview with journalists and officials.

News content (news videos) from the two selected media: Data (recorded news videos) was collected from the archive of ETV and Fana Television, specifically of news coverage during the pandemic as the selected months noticeably marked the peak of national discourse on the COVID-19 pandemic. Data of news contents was collected from 70 recorded news videos (35 each from the two media). Time allocated for each COVID-19 related news stories and frequency of reporting was categorized in to major news topics such as transmission and daily updates, pandemic preparedness, prevention measures, research, drug and treatment, government actions, voluntary action, and socio economic impact of COVID.

Key informant interview with journalists and officials: checklist of questions was prepared and distributed to selected journalists and officials from the two media, and interview and discussions was conducted with them. Key informant interview with selected relevant people from the respective media helped to understand the approaches the two media used while covering the COVID-19 related news stories, intensity of coverage, how the coverage relate to the control or the spread of diseases and other relevant issues. About 15 key informants selected from ETV and Fana were interviewed using checklist of relevant questions.

³ This sum only indicate a total figure when the number of months covered in each media as summed, but the actual number of months the study sampled are the seven months: i.e., March, May, July, September and November 2020, and January and March 2021.

3.4.2. Data analysis method

The study used simple descriptive statistics (mean, median and sum) analysis method to analyze data collected from the recorded news videos. Analysis of the media coverage was done at five major points during the pandemic: i) At early period, immediately after the first five cases were reports – coverage at last week of March will be taken as a sample; ii) At the time when COVID cases start increasing - May to July as a sample; iii) During the time when the COVID cases are increasing at an increasing rate – August to December; iv) A time when COVID-19 cases were increasing but with a declining rate – December 2020 to March 2021; and v) At a time when cases have been increasing at alarming rate – March to May 2021. At all this period a weekly 2 PM ETV news Fana 90 coverage was closely analyzed to assess level of coverage, news framing and content. Furthermore, news coverage of the media was closely analyzed comparing it with trends of COVID-19 cases and deaths related to COVID-19.

Operational definition: The study used this operational definition to refer to media news of COVID-19: COVID-19 news is any news which is directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, include stories related to description of what COVID-19 is, its spread, transmission, important precautionary measures, related drugs and treatments, government policies and actions related to the pandemic, health official and experts' advice and any stories which are directly related to COVID-19.

Thus, based on the above operational definition, the study identified, selected and included specific news stories in the analysis as news stories related to COVID-19 news. One of the major guiding criteria for selecting news stories as COVID related news was the fact that the news involved or stated words such as “COVID-19”, “Corona”, and “the pandemic”. Therefore, each news with those words made a COVID-19 related news.

Once news related to COVID-19 were identified and included as “COVID-19 news” stories, coding similar news stories together and categorizing then in to major topics was required to facilitate and ease analysis in order to assess how content coverage was distributed across different topics and news stories.

This study has used two major ways to analyze the data collected from the news (video) archives of the two media: a) Content analysis of coverage of major COVID-19 related news topics, and b) Content analysis of coverage based on media framing.

a) Content coverage analysis of major COVID-19 related topics

Content analysis is the most important research technique in social science which is used to systematically analyze data assigning categories to portions of news stories (Fatima, 2020). It can be used as qualitative as well as quantitative approach (Fatima, 2020). Content analysis is one of a prominent and effective technique used in many researches analyzing media framing and coverage of major news and issues including crisis and pandemics like COVID-19 (Freyenberger, 2013, Neuendorf, 2002, Yeshambel & Bayable, 2016). Entman (1993) emphasized that content analysis has the major task of determining meanings and identifying frames in the media.

Content analysis of COVID-19 coverage in the news stories of the two media was conducted mainly using a sample of systematically selected seven months of news coverage; i.e., March, May, July, September and November, 2020, and January and March, 2021. The content analysis has utilized a systematic approach based on the analysis and interpretation of documented sources and news coverage of both media.

The content analysis has focused primarily on the news stories of both local and international news of ETV and Fana which were broadcasted on the night prime time Amharic news session, specifically at 8:00 pm (of ETV news) and Fana 90 (news). Although both media broadcasted their service for 24 hours with different local and international languages, this study mainly selected prime time Amharic news to assess coverage in terms time allocation and content distribution.

Content data, specifically time allocated for each COVID related news stories and frequency of coverage of specific news, sorted, coded and analyzed before compiling them under major selected COVID topics: These are; i) transmission and daily update, ii) pandemic preparedness, iii) prevention measures, iv) government measures, v) research, drugs and treatments, vi) voluntary actions, and vii) socio economic impacts. Selection of major topics was made based on

previous researches in similar area (e.g., Brodie, et al., 2004) but was customized to relevant topics in our case.

The coding process involved watching each selected recorded news stories and followed by transcribing major COVID-19 related news along with the time (minutes) provided to each specific news. After organizing and sorting COVID-19 related news, code sheet was created under major topics listed above. Each COVID-19 related news was coded based on the code sheet which helped to categorize specific news under one of the six identified major topics discussed above.

Analysis was done comparing the news coverage (in terms of time allocation and frequency of reporting) between the two media, ETV and Fana. Comparative assessment of the two media enabled this study to see changes with coverage between the two media, the difference in framing COVID news and content priorities allocated by respective media organizations.

Furthermore, content analysis of the media coverage was supported with different secondary data sources such as daily report of COVID-19 cases from the Ethiopian Ministry of Health for assessing a possible contribution of the news coverage on the decrease or increase of COVID-19 cases across the country. Additionally, discussions and interviews with selected journalists and media experts working in the respective media organization were done to support the content analysis.

b) Content analysis of coverage based on media framing

As media coverage is largely influenced by media frames of news stories and their interpretations, it is very important to analyze media coverage from framing perspective. Cannon (2011) referring Tankard (2003) stated that framing is an important concept to analyze news coverage since it examines issues, news stories and indicates hidden assumptions while reporting crisis such as COVID-19 pandemics. Hertog and McLeod (2003) has also noted that framing analyses have become prominent in media studies as diverse group of researchers used the method along with expanding body of literature and wide array of theoretical approaches to the topic.

Therefore, the study looked at the news coverage of both media (ETV and Fana) from the perspective of framing theory in order to explore what specific news framing the media used.

The study examined number of news videos of the two media assessing news frames used by them, and to what extent (in terms of time and frequency) the news frames appeared and used while covering COVID-19 related news stories.

CHAPTER IV: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section focuses on analysing results of the quantitative and qualitative content analysis as well as information collected through different means including interview with journalists and officials from the two media. Quantitative content analysis is the major approach employed in this study to explore how the media covered COVID related news stories. Media content analysis is a fast-growing technique in assessing media coverage of crisis and pandemics (Freyenberger, 2013). Quantitative content analysis of media coverage of COVID-19 was done at two levels: i) Content analysis of major topics covered by the news media; ii) Content analysis of coverage based on framing perspective. Analysis of media coverage was done in terms of time allocation and frequency of coverage of specific topics, and content distribution across the months.

4.1. Coverage of major topics related to COVID-19

Content analysis of news stories was done using news video archives of both Ethiopian Television ETV (ETV 57 news segment at 8:00 PM) and Fana Television (Fana 90 news segment at 7 PM). Sample videos of the last 5 days of each month – i.e., March, May, July, September and November 2020, and January and March, 2021 – of ETV 57 and Fana 90 news segments were closely examined.

COVID-19 related news stories were identified and coded to enable to categorize them to major topics (i.e., listed under section 3.3.2. (b)) to facilitate and ease analysis. Therefore, since news stories vary widely depending on the reporting approach as well as the news framing of the media, it is very important for this study to specifically use the following operational definition for COVID-19 related news.

Major news topics: Coverage of COVID-19 on the primetime of ETV 57 and Fana 90 news segments were examined categorizing different news stories under major news topics; these are, i) transmission and daily COVID-19 updates, ii) pandemic preparedness, iii) precautionary measures, iv) government measures, v) voluntary efforts, vi) research, drugs, treatment and technology use, and vii) social and economic impact of the pandemic.

“Transmission and daily COVID-19 updates” news include news related to daily updates of new COVID-19 cases, COVID related deaths and number of people recovered from the disease both

at the country level as well as worldwide updates. Furthermore, this major topic also includes COVID-19 related news stories which deals with transmission of the virus from people to people, region to region, and from country to country stating the spread of the COVID-19 virus. For example, a text quotation from transcribed video news from Fana 90 on May 27, 2020 and ETV 57 May 29, 2020, is indicated as follows:

የአለቱ የኮቪድ ሪፖርት: 46 ሰዎች በቫይረሱ የተያዙ ሲሆን 29 ወንድ 17 ሴት ናቸው። የአንድ ሰው ህይወት ሲያልፍ በአጠቃላይ 701 ሰዎች በቫይረሱ ተይዘዋል። COVID-19 update: 46 new COVID-19 cases reported: 29 male and 17 female, one person has died, and so far, in total 701 COVID-19 cases reported in the country. Fana 90 news, May 27, 2020 (*Translation mine*)

በአውሮፓ በኮሮና ቫይረስ ሳቢያ እየጨመረ ያለው የሞት መጠን በዚህ ወቅት ያልተጠበቀ መሆኑን የአለም ጤና ድርጅት ገለፀ። World Health Organization reported that an increasing level of deaths in Europe due to the corona virus is beyond expectation. ETV 57 news, May 29, 2020 (*Translation mine*)

“Pandemic preparedness” major topic, on the other hand, includes news stories directly related to preparedness of the pandemic by individuals as well as at the country level. Such news stories involve news like preparation of COVID-19 quarantine centers, treatment places and hospitals, and supply and storage of different COVID-19 relevant equipment such as hand washing materials soaps, sanitizer, masks, ventilators and medical equipment etc. For instance, ETV 57 news on March 29, 2020 (4 minutes news) elaborated about the preparation of COVID-19 quarantine and treatment center that can serve 176,000 patients. See below for the Amharic version of the news.

በሃገር አቀፍ ደረጃ 176 ሺህ ሰዎችን ማስተናገድ የሚችሉ ተቋማት ለኮቪድ ተዘጋጅተዋል ተባለ። COVID-19 quarantine and treatment centers that has a potential to serve 176,000 people at the country level are prepared. ETV 57 news, March 29, 2020 (*Translation mine*)

COVID-19 related news categorized under the “government measures” major topic includes news related to government actions such as budget allocation, state of emergency, law

enforcement actions, transport and public gathering restrictions, and different policies and measures taken specifically by the government for controlling the spread and effect of the pandemic in the country. Example, a text quotation from transcribed video news from ETV 57 on May 29, 2020, reported about a news that stated government action to increase budget by 48.6 to strengthen research on COVID-19.

ጠ/ሚ/ር አብይ አህመድ በመላው ሃገሪቱ የኮሮና ቫይረስ ምርመራ ተጠናክሮ መቀጠል እንዳለበት ገልፀዋል፡፡ የህዝብ ተወካዮች ምክር ቤት የኮሮና ጫናን ለመቀነስ 48.6 ሚሊዮን ብር ተጨማሪ በጀት አፀደቀ፡፡ Prime Minister Abey Ahmed said that the country's capacity of corona virus testing should be strengthened. Ethiopian parliament has approved additional 48.6 million Birr to reduce possible COVID -19 effect on the country. ETV 57 news, May 29, 2020 (*Translation mine*)

የብልፅግና ፓርቲ ኮሮናን ለመከላከል 100 ሚሊዮን ብር ድጋፍ አደረገ፡፡ Prosperity party has donated 200 million birr in support of preventing the spread of Corona virus. Fana 90 news, March 27, 2020 (*Translation mine*)

News topics related to “precautionary measures” are news that dictates and elaborates measures which should be taken at individual as well as community level to control the spread of the disease. These are mostly news which educates the public about measures that should be taken to protect themselves from COVID-19.

አካላዊ መቀራረብን መቀነስ የኮቪድ በሽታን ለመከላከል ዋነኛው መንገድ ነው በማለት ፕ/ት ሳህለወርቅ ዘውድ የታዘቡትን በትዊተር ገጥሞቻቸው አስቀምጠዋል፡፡ Avoiding physical contact is one of the main prevention method from the COVID-19 pandemic, twitted by H.E President Sahlework Zewde. Fana 90 news, March 26, 2020 (*Translation mine*).

Topics on “voluntary efforts”, on the other hand, mainly include actions taken by individuals and community, voluntarily, organizing different supports and public awareness events to educate and help other actions by the government and health professionals.

የኮቪድ 19 በሽታን መከላከያ የሚያገለግል የቁሳቁስ ድጋፍ በተለያዩ ድርጅቶች ተደረገ። Different COVID-19 protective equipment support have been made by voluntary organizations. Fana 90 news, July 30, 2020, (*Translation mine*).

“Research, drugs, treatment and technology use” major topics relate to any news that states developments in the COVID-19 researches, drugs and treatments. Social and economic impact of the pandemic refers to the effect of the pandemic on the general public as well as at the country level.

የኮቪድ 19 በሽታን ለመቆጣጠር የሚያግዙ የሞባይል መተግበሪያዎች ተሰሩ። Mobile application that serves to follow and control the spread of COVID-19 disease were developed. Fana 90 news, September 27, 2020.

Measurements used: Content analysis require specific measurements to assess coverage of COVID-19 news in the two media. The study attempted to explore the coverage in terms of the following measurements. These are: a) time allocation, b) topics (content) distribution across the different months, and c) frequency of coverage. The analysis is done comparing the two media; ETV and Fana.

a) Time allocation: The two media, on average, allocated about 55.5 minutes to their prime time daily news: i.e., daily average of about 42 minutes of ETV 57 and an average of 70⁴ minutes of Fana 90. Within this news time the media reports any daily major news except sport and business news, both of which have their specific time following major daily updates and news. Assessing and comparing time allocated to COVID-19 related news stories, the study generally found out that both media (ETV and Fana television) provided ample proportion of their news to cover stories related to the pandemic. From the total time provided to their primetime news (which in total 111 minutes (both media)), COVID-19 related news accounted for about 20% of the total (which is about 22.3 minutes). Although coverage between the two media during the last 4 months of the study did not show a significant difference, the total average indicated that ETV 57 gave higher proportion (23%)

4 For consistency purpose, and to be able to compare it with ETV news, Fana News was maintained at 70 minutes, after deducting 30 minutes of sport news and advertisement from the daily average of 100 minutes of Fana 90 news.

of its news coverage to COVID-19 related news as compared to Fana 90 which is 18% of the total.

See the Table below for details of time allocated for COVID-19 related news per major topics categorized based on similarities and frequency of reporting.

Table 2: ETV coverage of COVID related major topics, by daily average time allocation

Major News Stories	March 2020	May 2020	July 2020	Sept. 2020	Nov. 2020	January 2021	March 2021	Average
Average daily news, in minutes	36	42	48	38	44	44	39	42
COVID related news, daily average, in minutes	25.5	20	5	10	1	1.5	4.75	9.6
Percent of COVID related News	71%	48%	10%	26%	2%	3.4%	12%	23%
Transmission and daily COVID-19 update	12%	7.5%	20%	10%	100%	33.3%	32%	14 %
Pandemic Preparedness	27%	15%	-	-	-	-	-	15%
Precautionary measures	15.7%	25%	20%	60%	-	-	-	22%
Research, drugs, vaccine, treatment and technology	-	7.5 %	-	-	-	33.3%	26%	5%
Government actions and measures	23.5%	20%	0	30%	-	33.3%	42%	23%
Voluntary efforts	-	10%	40%	-	-	-	-	5%
Social and economic impact of the pandemic	21.5%	-	-	-	-	-	-	6%
Other	-	15%	20%	-	-	-	-	7%

Source: Survey data (news videos) from Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation

Note that blank (-) months indicate that there was no news related to the topic or subject during that month

Table (3) below indicates details of time allocated by Fana Television for COVID-19 related news per major topics categorized based on similarities and frequency of reporting.

Table 3: Fana coverage of COVID related major topics, by daily average time allocation

Major News Stories	March 2020	May 2020	July 2020	Sept. 2020	Nov. 2020	January 2021	March 2021	Average
Total news minutes	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
COVID related news, daily average in minutes	36	13.5	3.5	14	0.7	10	11	12.7
Percent of COVID related News	51%	19%	5%	20%	1%	14%	16%	18%
Transmission and daily COVID-19 update	17%	11.5%	43%	7%	100%	10%	36%	18%
Pandemic Preparedness	14%	15%	43%	-	-	-	-	8%
Precautionary measures	31%	11.5%	14%	18%	-	20%	28%	24%
Research, drugs, vaccine, treatment and technology	4%	7%	-	-	-	10%	-	4%
Government measures	20%	-	-	57%	-	40%	36%	26%
Voluntary efforts	9%	-	-	-	-	10%	-	5%
Social and economic impact of the pandemic	5%	55%	-	18%	-	10%	-	15%

Source: Survey data (news videos) from Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation

Note that blank (-) months indicate that there was no news related to the topic or subject during that month

Almost all the news in Ethiopia were dominated by COVID related news, particularly during the first few days and months immediately after COVID become a pandemic in the world. The first three months, March, April and May 2020, specifically after COVID-19 cases were emerged in Ethiopia, both Fana and ETV news showed high concern for the issue and the coverage indicated significant proportion of COVID related news than other news. For instance, only in March 2020, ETV prime-time news allocated 71% of its time to report the transmission, precautionary measures, pandemic preparedness and different government measures related to COVID-19. Similarly, Fana television on its Fana 90 prime time news allocated 51% of its total news time to COVID-19 related news stories, which was the highest as compared to news coverage in other months. This shows the initial news framing and agenda setting both media utilized to the pandemic as a newly emerging health threat and global emergency (see details and analysis based on framing perspective next part of this section).

Furthermore, the study attempted to discuss the coverage of COVID-19 news with selected journalists and experts in the two media to gather their opinion and perspective in such issues. Hence, journalists, editors and other experts from the two media stressed that news coverage and reporting of COVID related news was very high (“aggressive”) during the first few months. Particularly, at early period, immediately after the first case, March to June 2020, the reporting was frequent, and;

“a high attention was given from Monday to Sunday to create awareness, promote preventive measures, and stressed its social, economical and political effects”, according to key informants.

The transmission, particularly at ETV news stressed mechanisms of preventing the transmission on a daily basis on prime time news; with live transmission, prime time coverage, and inviting health professionals, government officials and other experts.

During the five months, between July to November 2020, proportion of COVID related news stories has shown a significant drop as compared to the first three months (March to May 2020). The drop was, on average, by over 60%. The decline in COVID-19 media coverage during these months (July to December 2020) was related to political instability and related conflict mainly after the death of the prominent Afaan Oromo singer Hachalu Hundesa. Surprisingly, in November 2020, both media failed to give emphasis to COVID-19 related news stories, hence, the least COVID-19 related news coverage was shown during this month as compared to the other months.

In November, almost all new coverage has turned attention to covering the war in the Northern part of Ethiopia, as a result, time allocated for COVID was almost zero except very minor daily updates. On top of the pandemic, the country was confronted with another critical emergency; the war in the northern part of the country which completely diverted government as well as media attention away from COVID related issues. Key informants interviewed in this study also indicated that as COVID-19 cases were started increasing during this time the coverage was somehow decreasing and “on and off”, and by the middle of September 2020 due to ease and relaxed COVID-19 measures and protocols, coverage and airtime started decreasing and less emphasis was given to COVID-19 stories. Whereas, some

of the interviewed journalists indicated that “the public was already informed about that pandemic; preventive measures were followed and use of masks were high during this time.” On the contrary, some of them stressed that “the topic (COVID-19 stories) was a major news worth focus by the media, and government and the public should not have showed negligence towards that”.

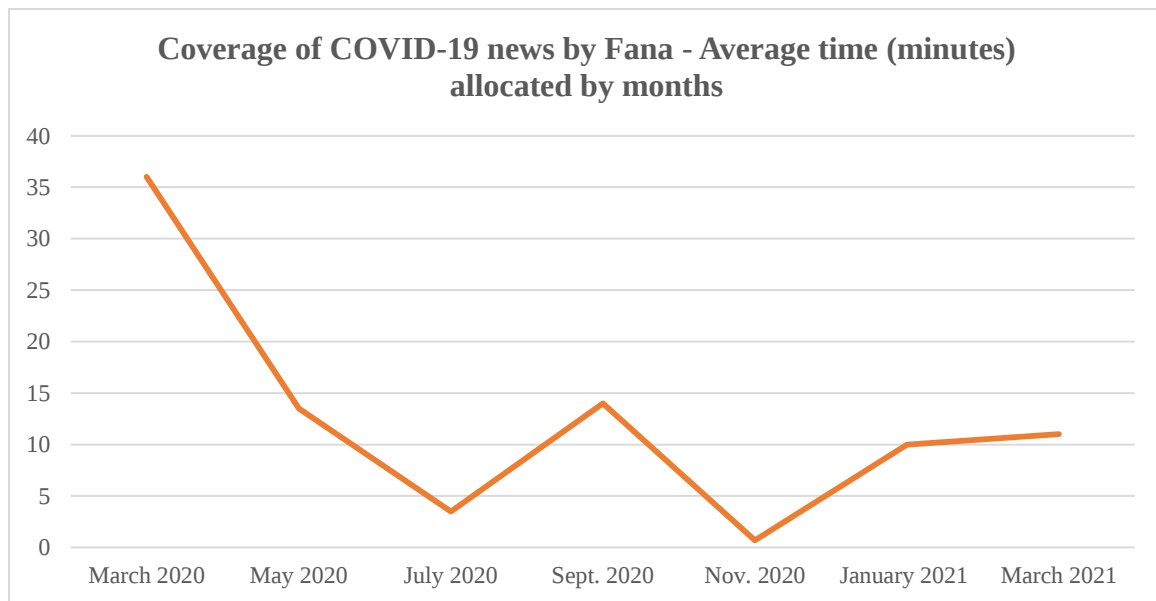


Figure 1. Coverage COVID-19 related news by Fana television: time allocated by month months

Source: Survey data (news videos) from Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation and Fana Broadcasting Corporate

Current coverage of COVID-19, as can be seen in Tables 2 &3, shows improved coverage as compared to the previous months (July to November, 2020). In March 2021, coverage of COVID news accounted about 12% (ETV) and 16% (Fana) is much higher than what was the situation during November 2020 and before. But, considering the ever-increasing threat of COVID-19 during this period, the media coverage is limited as compared to what should have been the case. Additionally, interviewed journalists and officials from both media similarly believed that the COVID news is being somehow ignored, and there were no special treatment except few news on COVID: Some journalists argued that “the COVID news are no more become basic agenda at the media”. They stressed that media focus has changed to reporting related to the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and election 2021.

The Figure below shows proportion of time allocated for COVID related news stories across the sampled months, taking ETV news as a case. As depicted in the figure, in terms of time

allocation, almost 68% of the total coverage of COVID-19 by ETV was done during the first three months. Starting June and July 2020 a sharp decline in time allocation is noticed in the figure.

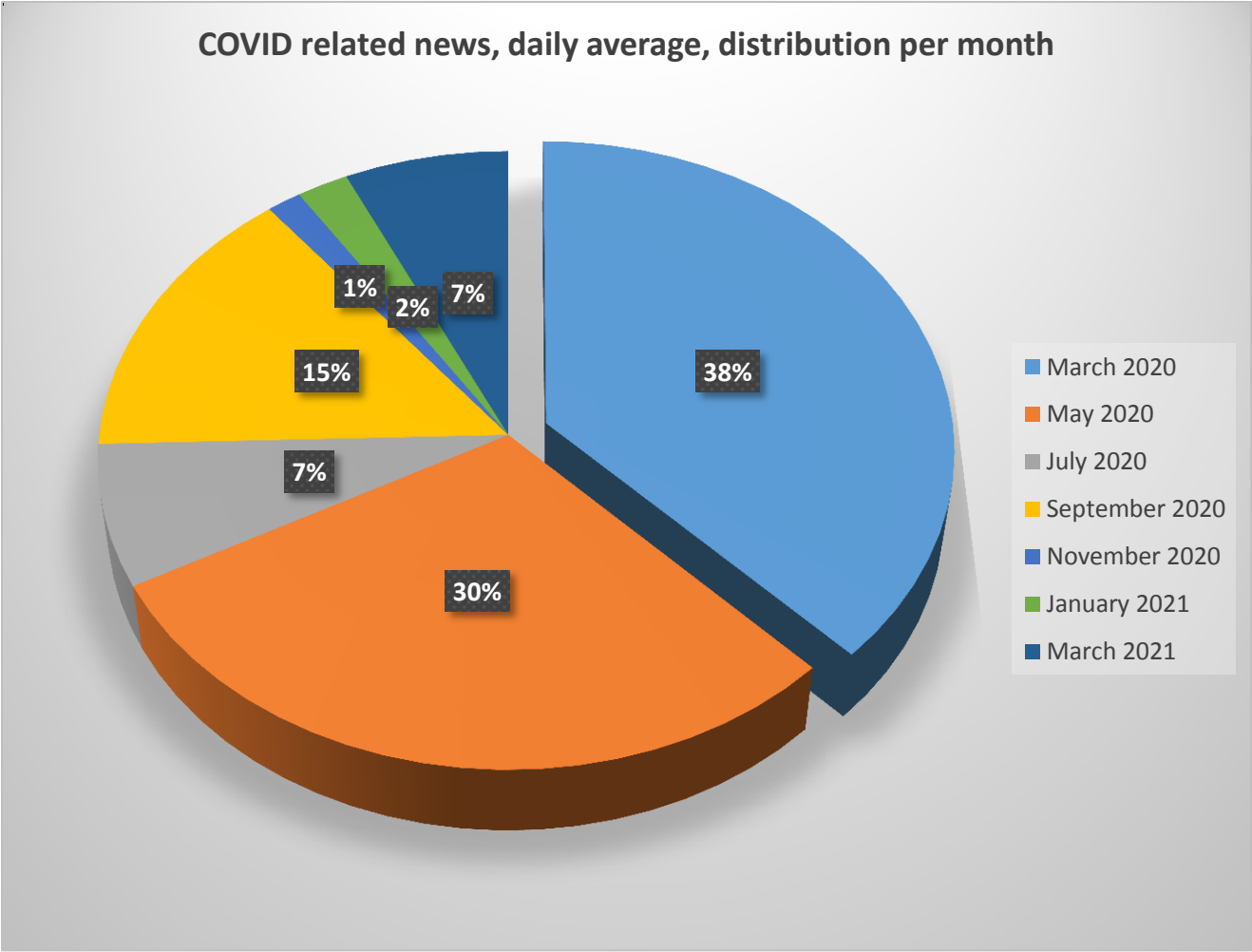


Figure 2: COVID-19 related news of ETV: proportion of coverage across the months

Source: Survey data (news videos) from Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation and Fana Broadcasting Corporate

b) Topics (content) distribution: In terms of major news topics covered in the media ‘Transmission and daily COVID-19 update’ has relatively got a better coverage being reported on a daily basis. However, in terms of minutes allocated, COVID new topics related to ‘government measures’ and ‘precautionary measures’ got higher proportion of news coverage by both media, accounting for, on average, about 25% of the total COVID related news. Despite being reported daily, news topics related to ‘Transmission and daily COVID-19 update’ has got,

on average, about 16% of the total coverage: ETV news allocated 14% while Fana gave 18% of the total time allocated for COVID related news. News topics on ‘pandemic preparedness’ had covered significant proportion (27%) of the ETV 57 news coverage specifically during the first month of the pandemic, while Fana 90 allocated significant proportion of its news coverage in March 2020 to ‘precautionary measures’ which accounted 31% of the total COVID related news. News topics related to ‘socio economic impact of the diseases’ and ‘voluntary efforts’ had got relatively less media coverage, by both media, ETV and Fana news.

Taking ETV news as a case, Table 2 (see above) clearly depicts that good coverage of most of the major COVID-19 related topics was happening from March – May 2020 during which almost all major topics of COVID-19 related news got ample coverage. However, poor coverage of COVID-19 related major news topics was noted specifically during the month of November 2020 and January 2021 where only COVID related topics regarding ‘transmission and daily updates’ got coverage albeit with allocating limited time; i.e., less than 1 minute per day, on average.

C) Frequency of coverage: Media coverage of COVID-19 related news was also assessed in terms of frequency of specific topics reported on a monthly basis. Accordingly, this study focussed on identifying the number of specific story on COVID-19 major topics that appeared in the media within the study period, i.e., during the last 13 months from March 2020 - March 2021. Hence, we counted the number of times a specific story occurred during the specific period of a month, represented by the last 5 days of the month.

This analysis could help us identify focuses, in terms of specific COVID topic, of the media news during a month. Accordingly, the study found out that topics related to ‘Transmission and daily COVID-19 update’ received almost a daily coverage while ‘pandemic preparedness’, except during the first month of the pandemic, got limited coverage in terms of frequency (appearance in each month) of reporting. Similarly, ‘research, drugs and treatment’ and ‘social and economic impact of the pandemic’ got the least coverage in terms of appearing in a daily reporting both being reported only 12 times. It is notable that both media gave high emphasis and provided high coverage to COVID related news regarding government measures and actions; being reported by 31 times by ETV and 26 times by Fana.

Table 4: Media coverage of ETV 57 and Fana 90 in terms of frequency of reporting of major news topics

Major News Topics	March 2020		May 2020		July 2020		September 2020		November 2020		January 2021		March 2021		Total	
	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana
Transmission and daily COVID-19 update	5	8	10	5	5	5	5	1	3	2	3	1	4	3	35	25
Pandemic Preparedness	13	8	6	3		3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	14
Precautionary measures	5	7	8	1	3	3	5	5	-	-	-	3	-	3	21	22
Research, drugs, and treatment	-	1	1	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	2	-	9	5
Government measures	17	10	4	-	-	-	5	5	-	3	-	5	5	3	31	26
Voluntary efforts	5	3	5	1	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	13	10
Social and economic impact of the pandemic	3	-	-	3	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	3	-	-	5	7
Total	48	37	43	16	14	14	16	12	3	5	7	16	10	9	133	109

Source: Survey data (news videos) from Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation and Fana Broadcasting Corporate S.C

Note that blank (-) months indicate that there was no news related to the topic or subject during that month

Comparing the two media, ETV news has given higher coverage (133 news stories) to COVID - 19 related news topics than Fana Television which in total made only 109 COVID-19 related news stories. In terms of emphasis, although both gave almost equal emphasis while reporting news on ‘government measures’, ETV provided higher attention to news related to ‘Transmission and daily COVID-19 updates’ which got daily coverage and reported in total by 35 news stories, whereas Fana gave high emphasis to news related to ‘government measures’ reported, in total, by 26 news stories. According to key informant interview with journalists and officials from the Ethiopian Broad Casting Corporation (EBC) confirmed this finding as almost all informants believed that ETV has been giving enough attention and airtime for covering COVID related news, which was better than the coverage given by other media including Fana Television. On the other hand key informants from Fana television has noted that the media coverage of COVID-19 related news by Fana television showed a declining trend as focus were shifted more to other emergency than the COVID-19 pandemic.

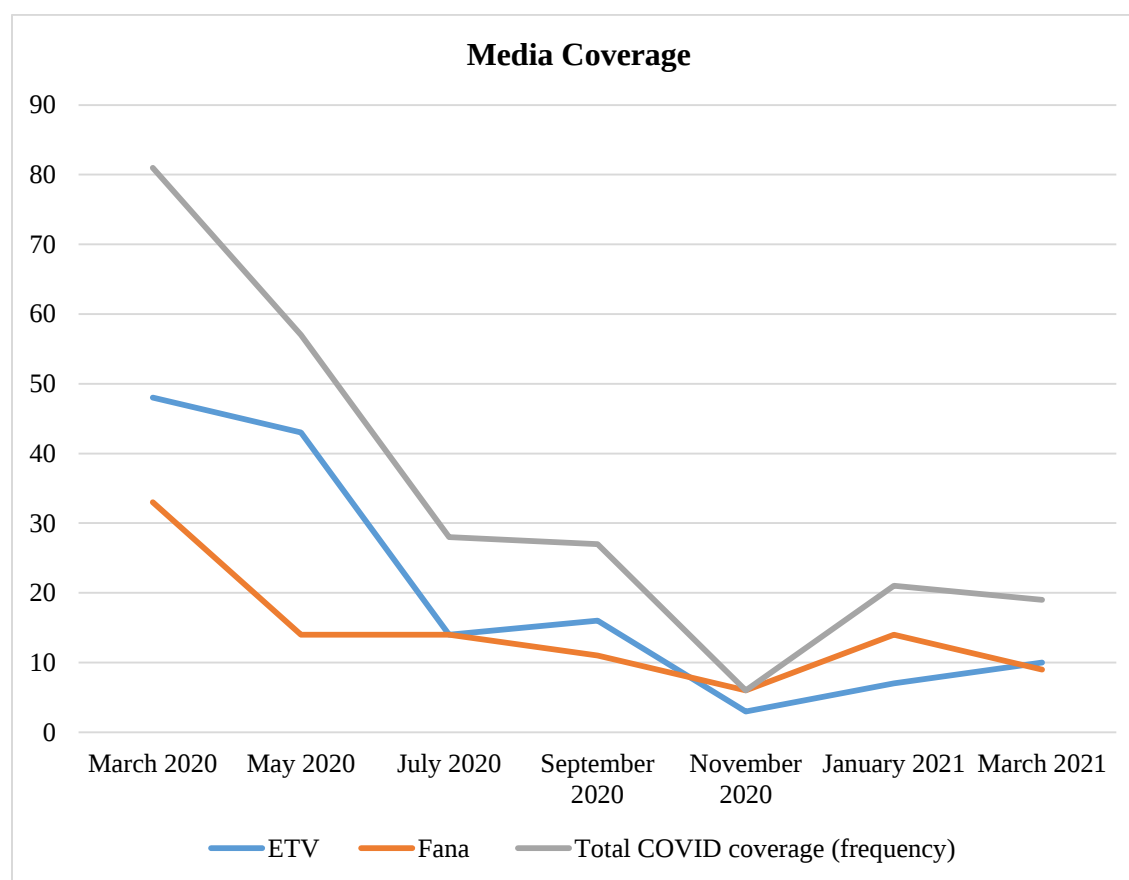


Figure 3: Media Coverage: Frequency of COVID-19 related stories during the last 13 months

Source: Survey data (news videos) from Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation and Fana Broadcasting Corporate

Analysing news coverage across the different periods or months, coverage of COVID related news stories was high during the first three months (March – May 2020) and showed a declining trend afterwards, which is in line with the finding related to time allocation to COVID-19 news coverage, which is elaborated above. All in all, about 71% of the total COVID-19 related news stories were reported mainly during the first three months (March to May) after COVID-19 emerged in the country. The sharp decline in media coverage after May or June 2020 (as can be seen from the figure below) can be explained by some critical attention diverting news following the death of the Singer, Hachalu Hundesa, and its consequential political tensions and chaos and deadly conflicts especially in Shashamene town.

4.2. Coverage based on media framing

The study analyzed news videos of the two media, ETV and Fana television, to examine media framing of COVID-19 during the last 13 months – March 2020 to March 2021. A total of 188 videos of news stories (specific news stories identified and coded from the 70 days news video) have been examined to see how the stories were framed. Accordingly, three types of major media frames have been identified: fear, constructive, and social and economic. These media frames were identified based on previous researches that used similar media frames while undertaking research on media coverage of pandemics and other crises like conflicts based on content analysis (e.g., Cannon and Irani, 2011, Fatima, 2020, Freyenberger, 2013). Based on the identified frames from a total of 188 news stories, coding was done based on a code sheet to organize and categorize the news stories into the identified major frames.

The major media frames this study identified after examining over 188 news media stories include;

- i) Fear framing
- ii) Constructive framing, and
- iii) Social and economic impact

Fear framing includes news stories which use fear instigating words such as “frightening”, “horrible”, “devastating”, “dangerous”, “deadly” and video images that instigate fear and panic (see picture below) other words and images including daily reporting of COVID19 cases and death rates which set the public in a panic situation. Examples of some of the direct text

quotations from specific news video are as follows. For instance, Fana Television news on March the 25th, 2020, inviting health professional in a studio and taking the experience of Italy has presented the news in a frightening way:

The death rate due to COVID-19 in Italy is **horrible**, and people negligence to follow precautionary measures has led to a **dreadful** and very high number of **deaths**. Part of Fana 90 news on March 25, 2020 (*Translation mine*)

Similarly, ETV 57 news on March 26, 2020, reported with a headline by quoting the Prime Minister (PM) saying that “የኮሮና ወረርሽኝን ለመከላከል የወጡ የጥንቃቄ መመሪያዎች በማይተገብሩ ግልሰቦች ላይ እርምጃ ይወሰዳል” which can be translated as “Government will take appropriate legal actions on those who will not follow COVID-19 precautionary measures”. However, the content in the news up sound taken from the PM has very frightening message full of words and phrases which ignite fear and panic feeling to the audiences; Example from the news;

This virus (COVID-19) is a **deadly** virus killing many people in other economically strong countries who have a strong foundation to protect the effect of the virus. In our case (Ethiopia) although the virus hasn’t yet killed anyone the in country, we can get into a very serious **devastating (የከፋ ችግር)** problem unless we act soon and take appropriate precautionary measures. ETV 57 news, March 26, 2020

Additional similar example can be observed during a recent Fana 90 news on March 25, 2021 and ETV 57 news March 28, 2021.

የኮቪድ ስርጭት እየጨመረና የፅኑ ህመማን ቁጥር በሳምንት 300 በመጨመር 700 ደርሷል። የሚሊኒየም ፅኑ ህመማን ማገገሚያ ማዕከል ሞልቷል። COVID-19 cases are increasing, and patients in the intensive care unit increased by 300 within a week to reach 700, in total. The Millennium COVID-19 Treatment and Intensive Care Center is fully occupied by patients. Fana 90 news on March 25, 2021 (*Translation mine*).

ህንድ በአንድ ወር ውስጥ በኮሮና ቫይረስ ከፍተኛ የሚባል የሟሾች ቁጥር አስመዘገበች። India has registered a very high COVID-19 deaths with in a month. ETV 57 news March 28, 2021 (*Translation mine*).

COVID-19 video images that was shown, mostly during the first three months (March – May 2020) with a microscopic image that indicates the virus looking different from other similar type of viruses. The video picture of the COVID-19 virus have a spike structure at its outer surface. Frequent usage of this picture by the two media by itself, and along with other fear and panic instigating words and phrases in their news, had created frightening image in people's mind.

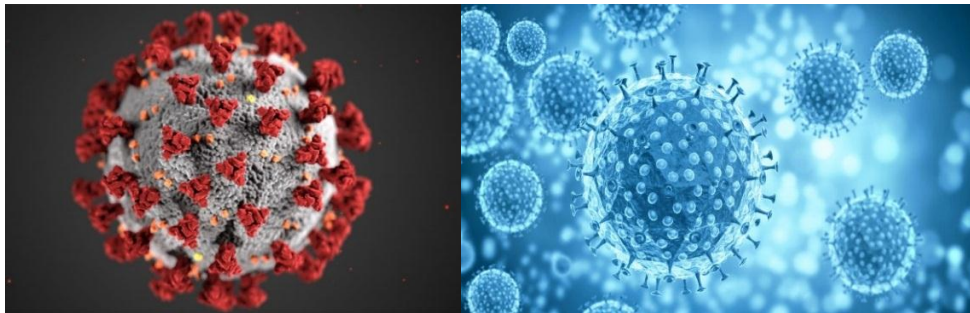


Figure 4. Microscopic image of the corona (COVID-19) virus

Constructive frames, on the other hand, are solution frames, future orientation, empowering people, shows solidarity and concern (Fatima, 2020). Accordingly, this study included under constructive framing positive COVID news topics which have educative tendencies, strengthen institutions for managing the spread and effect of the disease, and other news related to preventive measures, government actions, voluntary efforts, drugs and treatment and other news.

Examples indicating constructive frames can be taken from some of the direct text quotations from specific news video. For instance, ETV 57 news on September 25, 2020, explained measures that should be taken to curb the spread of the disease, particularly during holidays that may require family and public gatherings such as New Year and *Meskel* Holidays, *Irecha* and other Ceremonies.

የኮቪድ 19 በበዓላት ወቅት እና በተለያዩ ስረዐቶች መዘናጋት እንዳይከሰትና አስፈላጊ ጥንቃቄ እንዲደረግ የጤና ባለሙያዎችና የሃይማኖት አባቶች አሳሰቡ፡፡ Heath professionals and Religious leaders warned the public to avoid negligence and take appropriate precautionary measures during public Holidays and Ceremonies. ETV 57 news, September 25, 2021 (*Translation mine*).

Fana 90 news, on its January 31 news, for instance, reported the preparations by schools to use masks, hand cleaning materials including sanitizers to prevent the spread of the disease.

የኮቪድ 19 ዘመቻ በት/ቤቶች ማስከናወን ንፅህና መጠበቂያ በመጠቀም ወረርሽኙን ለመቀነስ እየተሰራ ነው። COVID-19 campaign at schools are underway promoting the use of masks and sanitary material to reduce the spread of the disease. January 31, 2021, Fana (Translation mine).

Social and economic impact frames are mainly related to news stories linked to possible effects of COVID-19 on the country's social and economic development. Example of text transcript from ETV 57 news video is shown as follows:

የቫይረሱ ኢኮኖሚያዊ ተፅእኖ በአለማቀፍ ደረጃ 2 ትሪልዮን ዶላር ጉዳት ያደርሳል ተብሎ ይጠበቃል። The effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the world economy is estimated to be 2 trillion USD. ETV 57, March 25, 2020 (Translation mine).

የኮቪድ 19 ተከትሎ በኔዘርላንድ በተጣለዉ የእንቅስቃሴ ገደብ ምክንያት በከተሞች ውስጥ ረብሻ ተነሥትዋል፤ የእንቅስቃሴ እገዳውን በመቃወም የተለያዩ ጉዳት አድርሰዋል የተባሉ 200 ሰዎች ታስረዋል። There was public unrest in Netherland following the declared restrictions by government on social activities. 200 people who protested the restriction were arrested after they tried to inflict damage on public properties. Fana 90 new, January 25, 2021 (Translation mine).

Table 5: Media framing of ETV 57 and Fana 90 in terms of frequency of reporting of major news topics

Framing	March 2020		May 2020		July 2020		September 2020		November 2020		January 2021		March 2021		Total	
	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana
Fear framing	15	8	13	5	5	5	5	-	1	1	1	-	5	3	45	22
Constructive framing	22	20	11	5	5	8	10	12	-	-	1	7	5	5	54	57
Social and economic effect	2	-	1	3	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	5	5
Total	39	28	25	13	11	13	16	12	1	1	2	9	10	8	104	84

Source: Survey data (news videos) from Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation and Fana Broadcasting Corporate

Note that blank (-) months indicate that there was no news related to the topic or subject during that month

Results of the study, as can be also seen from the above table, indicated that media frames of COVID 19 news in Ethiopia were dominated by constructive framing which in total was reported by 111 news stories which is 59% of the total news videos analyzed. Although not significantly different, Fana television reported slightly as many news stories using constructive frame (57) as did ETV (54).

Fear framing was also significantly appeared in both media despite being next to constructive framing: about 36% of the news stories from both media used fear framing. However, comparing the two media high proportion (43%) of news stories from ETV has used fear framing as compared to Fana (26%). In both media fear and panic was instilled through news stories such as daily death rate, high threat of the disease spreading from other countries to Ethiopia, depicting horror of the disease through lack of treatment and drug, and other horrific stories.

On the other hand, framing of Socio-economic impact has appeared only in 10 news stories, 5 each in Fana and ETV. News stories in both media had specifically focused elaborating on the possible effect of the disease in society's well-being in terms of social and economic impacts.

Table 6 below details media framing of ETV 57 and Fana 90 in terms of time allocation during the sampled seven months of the study which covers the last 13 months when the pandemic was prevalent in the country.

Table 6: Media framing of ETV 57 and Fana 90 in terms of time allocation (in minutes) of news related to COVID-19

Framing	March 2020		May 2020		July 2020		September 2020		November 2020		January 2021		March 2021		Total (average)	
	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana	ETV	Fana
Fear Framing	8.5	8.5	11	1.5	1.5	1.2	2.5	-	1	1	0.5	-	1.5	4	3.8	2.2
Constructive framing	14	22.5	8	5.5	2.5	2.5	6.5	17	-	-	1	8.5	3.3	6	5	8.8
Social and economic effect	3	-	1	7.5	0.5	-	1	-	-	-	-	0.5	-	-	0.8	1
COVID related news, daily average, in minutes	25.5	31	20	13.5	5	3.7	10	17	1	1	1.5	9	4.8	10	9.6	12

Source: Survey data (news videos) from Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation and Fana Broadcasting Corporate

Note that blank (-) months indicate that there was no news related to the topic or subject during that month

Table 6 (above) indicates framing (fear framing, constructive framing and socio-economic impact framing) in terms of time allocated, on average, per day during the last 12 months. As can be seen from the table, constructive framing is the dominant framing used by both ETV and Fana news, allocating, respectively, on average, 5 minutes and 8.8 minutes per day. In total, news stories with constructive frames accounted about 64% of the total time allocated for COVID-19 related news, while fear framing accounts only about 28% the news stories in both media.

Fear framing was significantly used particularly during the first three months as compared to the other months. For instance, in March 2020, both ETV and Fana, on average, allocated 8.5 minutes news stories using fear framing, while after September 2020 time allocation become less than 2 minutes. Exceptionally, in May 2020, ETV news stories were significantly dominated by fear framing: on average, 11 minutes of news stories using fear framing, while 11 minutes using a constructive framing.

4.3. Framing and image use in the news stories

Closely examining videos of the two media, image usage in both media were almost similar in the message they intended to transmit. Almost all COVID-19 related news stories were done by inviting officials, health professionals, relevant and responsible people at studio, vox pops, using graphs and figures, and other. Details in each specific major topics is presented below.

Transmission and daily COVID-19 updates: What comes to many people minds when they think about COVID-19 is the video representation (the prominent picture) of the COVID-19 virus which is a laboratory (microscopic) image of the virus that scrolled on the TV news, mostly during early periods of COVID-19 coverage. This picture, with spikes covering the outer surface of the virus, was mostly frightening to many people. On top of this, COVID news stories of daily updates of COVID cases and deaths were supported with images which shows graphs, daily reports of ministry of health officials, patients at hospital with ventilation support, crowded grave yards (e.g., in Italy, Brazil, Spain, UK, USA, India) and some scary images were also part of the news stories. Most of the video images supported the fear framing that both media utilized, particularly during the first three months after the virus reported in the country. Observation of the news videos along with interview with key informants confirmed this. Interviewed journalist from ETV indicated that;

“Reporting of COVID-19 related news, particularly during the first three months, was aggressive and utilized all means (including frightening images like COVID related deaths and graveyards) to increase awareness and warn the public that the disease is a deadly pandemic which can devastate a country.”

Precautionary measures: News stories related to precautionary measures were supported by video images which are mostly showed people washing their hand, using mask and sanitizer, and following other precautionary measures also inviting health professional while advising those precautionary measures. These video pictures were the most prominent images that took place at the beginning of the pandemic’s prevalence period.

Pandemic Preparedness and Government measures: The video images related to this major topic related to material preparations such as masks, sanitizer, hand washing machines and medical equipment images.

Government measures: is usually depicted by government officials including the Prime Minister and Minister of the Ministry of Health elaborating specific actions and measures the government was taking to prevent and control the spread of the disease.

Research, drugs, and treatment: These news stories were showing different laboratory advancing their research for getting vaccine and drugs at different levels.

Voluntary efforts: Video pictures indicating supports from voluntary people, institutions, associations, private companies and others supporting materials, foods, and other equipment such as masks and sanitizers, and providing supports to COVID-19 patients.

Social and economic effect: News was usually supported by video picture showing graphs and other related numbers indicating possible effects of the virus.

4.4. Media coverage versus COVID-19 cases in the country

Looking at the daily updates of the COVID-19 cases in the country (see figure 4), it showed that Ethiopia has initially tried to contain the spread of the disease with intensive media coverage coupled with government attention and public fear (which was also supported with fear framing of stories during the first few months). All these factors including the strict government measures made the public to have minimum mobility with strictly following precautionary measures

towards the pandemic. Nevertheless, it could be easily seen from trend of COVID-19 cases limited media coverage, relaxed government measures and declining attention of the public towards the disease led to a surge in COVID-19 cases in the country. For instance, an average daily COVID-19 cases were less than 10 during the first three months which might have directly or indirectly related to high media coverage (71% ETV, and 40% by Fana), strict government measures (partial lockdown, school closure, transport measures) and public awareness following precautionary measures. Average reported COVID cases started to increase at an alarming rate particularly from June onwards which is also aligned with limited COVID coverage and limited government attention. After the first two months COVID-19 cases started show an increasing trend (from 70-150 cases per day), and with an alarming rate (almost over 900 people per day) at later periods, (see the graph above). Generally, comparing the changes in the reported cases of COVID-19 across the months with the coverage of COVID-19 news by the two media indicated a close relationship indicating the contribution media could play in controlling the spread of the disease in Ethiopia.

Will try to see below a possible effect of limited media attention and coverage on top of other behavioral changes of the public in shaping the spread the pandemic.

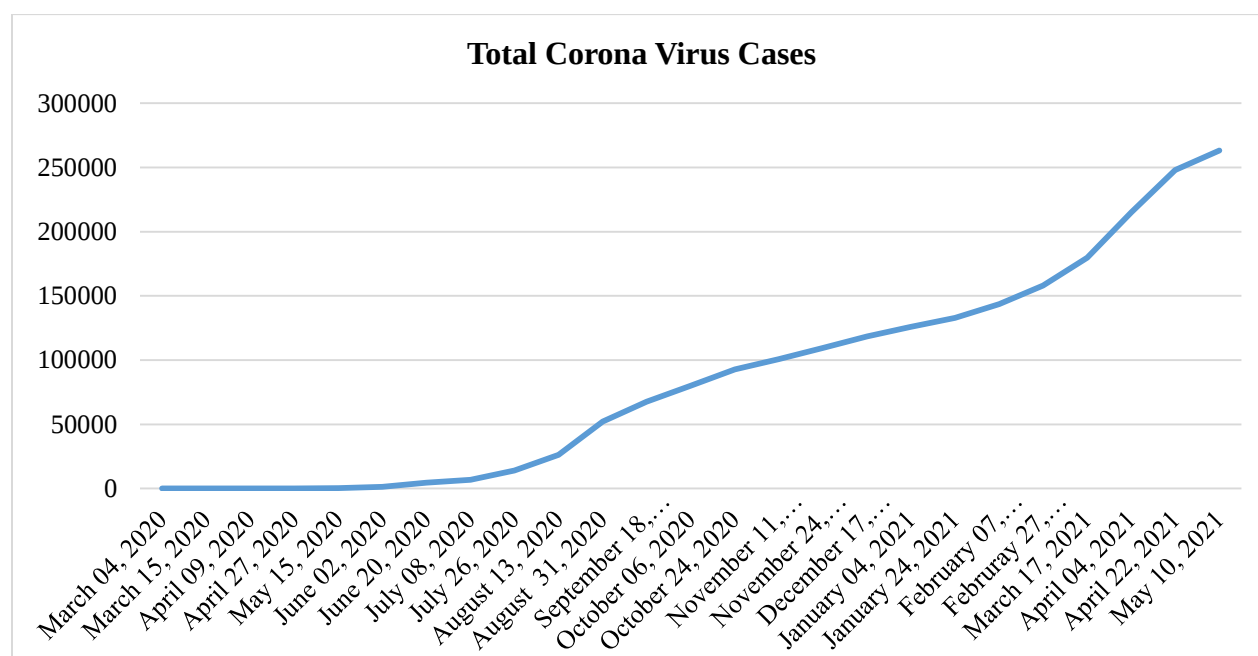


Figure 5: Total COVID-19 Cases in Ethiopia

SOURCE: WORLDOMETER, 2021. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/ethiopia/>

The graph below shows the coverage of COVID-19 by both media. The graph helps to compare the trend of COVID-19 cases in Ethiopia vis-a-vis the coverage of the pandemic by the two media. It generally shows that the media coverage of COVID-19 was relatively good at early period of the pandemic but media coverage declined to reach very low point (at November 2020) and again starts to increase but at a lower rate. Whereas, the above graph shows an increasing trend of COVID-19 cases in Ethiopia that is in contrast to the declining trend of media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country (see figure below).

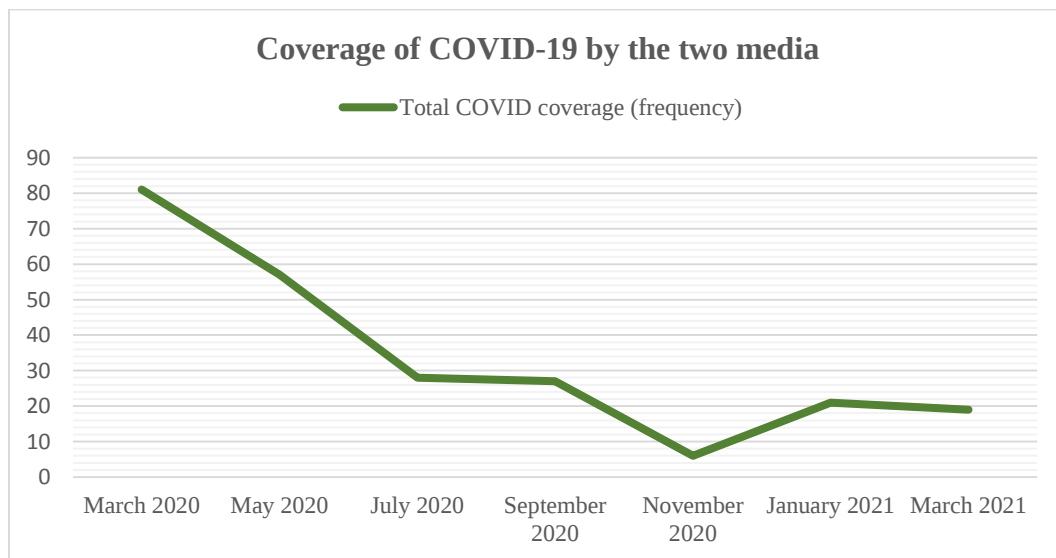


Figure 6. Coverage of COVID-19 by the two media by month

Source: Survey data (news videos) from Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation and Fana Broadcasting Corporate

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1. Summary of findings and Conclusion

This study examined the news coverage of COVID-19 in both ETV 57 and Fana 90 analysing content of the news media in terms of time allocation, frequency of coverage of specific news stories and with regard to how news topics were framed in the two media. The researcher approached this study using both quantitative and qualitative research methods to assess media coverage. Content coverage analysis, media news framing, and key informant interviews with selected experts and officials from the two media were employed. The results from the quantitative and qualitative content analysis indicated that there were differences as well as similarities in how ETV 57 and Fana 90 covered the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there were no significant difference between the two media in terms of topic distribution and providing enough coverage of COVID, all in all ETV gave higher coverage to COVID related news than as Fana did. Particularly, during the first three months, after COVID-19 cases were emerged in Ethiopia, both Fana and ETV news gave high attention for the issue and the coverage of COVID related news was very high as compared to other news and the coverage in the other months. Only in March, ETV prime time news allocated over half of its time to report the transmission, precautionary measures, pandemic preparedness and different government measures related to COVID-19.

This was also confirmed with interviewing journalists from the two media who indicated that the reporting during the first few months was aggressive. The coverage provided to COVID-19 during the first three months contributed in improving awareness and related precautionary measures people follow to decrease spread of the disease. However, coverage of COVID related news stories start to decline after May 2020 that could be to political instability and related conflicts and the war in the northern part of the country which has shifted media attention to covering the war in the Northern part of Ethiopia, and other issues. All these changes in media coverage, that provision of less attention by the media during this period, particularly when COVID-19 cases were started increasing, has contributed in the less focus and attention given by

the public towards the pandemic. All in all, these findings provide evidence that variations found in the two media contributed towards how journalists cover events and the frames they use.

Despite a reduction in coverage of COVID-19 related news across the months, generally news stories of the two media were dominated by constructive framing. Irrespective of the differences in media coverage of different topics of COVID-19 pandemic, both media news stories were dominated by a constructive framing. However, fear framing was used in a significant proportion in both media. In both media, fear and panic was instilled through news stories such as daily death rate, high threat of the disease spreading from other countries to Ethiopia, depicting horror of the disease.

As much as we argue for the positive contribution of both media in terms of creating awareness and increasing public response in following recommended preventive measures, there are also evidences that the decline in the media coverage through the months contributed to a declining focus by the public and government towards the disease that was showed with the ever increasing trend of COVID-19 cases.

Generally, with all limitation of this study, the study indicated a close relationship between media coverage COVID-19 cases, the type of framing they employ, and the positive contribution they can play in controlling the spread of the disease. Therefore, the study recommends a further and close monitoring of media coverage's of public emergencies like COVID-19, and suggest regular and periodic media coverage with good understanding of the possible effect of the pandemic.

5.2. Recommendations

This study recommends the following:

- The two major media covered under this study have demonstrated relatively high media coverage at the early stage of the pandemic but their coverage dramatically declined after about some months. This showed lack of well understanding of the possible spread and effect of the pandemic: they initially overestimated the effect but then failed to reasonably estimate and align their reporting with that. Hence this study recommends that media need to have a good understanding supported by an in-depth assessment or

research of the possible spread and effect of the pandemic to enable them for a regular and periodic media coverage that takes into account the spread and effect of the disease.

- One of the major points this study has noticed was that intensive media coverage during the early period of the COVID-19 pandemic has possibly related to good precautionary measures of by the public along with high government measures and restrictions. The lessons from this calls for an integrated action of government measures with a support from media can contribute to a noticeable change of the public actions (i.e., following recommended precautionary measures) that helps to slow down the spread of the disease.
- Although this study found that constructive framing was generally a dominant framing of both media, fear framing was also dominantly used specially during the early stage of the pandemic. This study recommends the media to use a researched and balanced news framing relevant at different period of the pandemic.
- This study came across very few, if any, studies in Ethiopia analyzing media coverage of emergencies particularly pandemics such as COVID-19. Thus, a need for various studies in this area is critical to improve media reporting of such incidents and that contributes to improved health communication in the country. Accordingly, future research in this area could assess change in public behaviour towards a pandemic vis-à-vis related media coverage of such issues.

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Annex

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

Interview Questions for Key informants

General Information

1.1. Name _____ Organization _____
Position _____ sex _____
Experience _____ Age _____

1. Media Coverage of COVID-19

1.2. How do you describe the coverage of COVID-19 by your organization/media?

- i) At early period, immediately after the first case, (March to June 2020)
- ii) During the time when COVID cases were increasing, (July to November)
- iii) Current status the time when the COVID cases are increasing at alarming rate;
(December 2020 to March 2021)

1.3. What critical measures or changes has the media (that you are currently working) taken immediately when COVID-19 were reported as a public emergency situation?

1.4. How do you describe the framing of the coverage of the COVID pandemic by your media organization?

1.5. Do you think that the media coverage provided by the media contributed to controlling the spread of the disease?

1.5.1. If No? What should have been done by your organization?

1.5.2. IF Yes, how the coverage contributed for controlling the spread of the pandemic?

- 1.6. Do you think the public followed the required precautionary measures as recommended by health professionals?
 - 1.6.1. How do you describe the actions taken by your media in promoting COVID-19 precautionary measures?
 - 1.6.2. How do you describe the actions taken by your media in promoting other actions and measures by the government, such as on the use of transport, public gatherings, etc?
2. What were the challenges in reporting COVID-19 related news?
3. What were the lessons learnt?
4. What do you suggest need to be improved in the future?