



**Addis Ababa University**

**School of Journalism and Communication**

**Assessment on the media framing of the 2021 Ethiopian Election:  
The case of Addis Zemen and Reporter Newspapers**

**By**

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**Advisor**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa  
University in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of Masters of Arts in  
Multimedia Journalism**

**February 2024**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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## **School of Graduate Studies**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Mahlet Haftu entitled Assessment on the media coverage of the 2021 Ethiopian Election: The case of Addis Zemen and Reporter Newspapers and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Multimedia Journalism complies with the regulation of the university and accepted standard with the respect to originality and quality.

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## ***Abstract***

*This study focused on assessing the coverage of the Ethiopian election of 2021 by Addis Zemen and the reporter newspapers. Addis Zemen newspaper is a government owned daily newspaper and the reporter is a private owned biweekly newspaper. Qualitative methodology was employed predominantly and purposive sampling was used to take samples from the newspapers. The newspapers issues which were published and circulated during the last two months before polling day and the next two months after polling day. A total of 32 issues were reviewed and 179 election-related news stories and editorials were identified. The units of analysis were news stories, editorials and feature articles from the two newspapers. The sample size was 32, 16 stories which were published before polling and 16 after polling day. As the findings showed, the selected newspapers gave enough coverage for the election. The attribution of responsibility frame was the most dominantly used frame in the two selected newspapers. Human interest frame was the second dominant frame in Addis Zemen newspaper whereas conflict frame is the second dominantly used frame in the Reporter newspaper. Civic society was the dominant source used in the two newspapers. The reporter used international organization as a source of news but Addis Zemen newspaper was not used international organization as a news source. The two newspapers were positively framed and presented the ruling and the opposition political parties.*

***Key words:*** *Framing, Election, Newspapers, Political parties*

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## **List of Acronyms**

**EPRDF:** Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary and Democratic Front

**NEBE:** National Election Board of Ethiopia

**UDHR:** Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**ERTA:** Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency

**MorF:** Morality Frame

**EconF:** Economic frame

# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **1.1. Background of the study**

The media play an indispensable role in the process of democratic elections. In a world where information is power, it is impossible to conduct a free and fair election without the use of the media. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the media to serve the public with adequate information. It should provide information about the candidates, political parties, and their policies, and the general process of the election so that voters can make well-informed and wise decisions. As a crucial element of elections, the media should supply society with accurate, balanced, and fair information about the election and related issues (Walgrave and Aelst, 2004:31-47).

Media is present in all political contexts where democracy is prioritized, such as before, during, and after national elections in emerging nations like Ethiopia. Building the media's capacity is necessary to enable the public to engage fully in all national events without bias as the nation works to realize development, democracy, and peace as current goals. Government-owned media cannot adequately guarantee this on its own; both government and private media must actively participate. Because media and democracy go hand in hand, media organizations must handle the public's and governments' interests equitably in order to uphold their social obligation (Ketema,2015).

Media has the ability to persuade its audience, and the results are seen on various levels. The first is a shift in attitude following prolonged exposure to a particular media message. Over time, this causes changes in conduct, which at a later stage leads to the development of a behavior that endures over time. People's decisions on what to buy, how to vote, what to wish and achieve, and how to live their daily lives are all influenced by communication (Sparks, 2000). Companies spend millions of dollars promoting their goods, which shows that the messages are reaching the audience and generating sales.

An informed society not only has knowledge and a deeper understanding of what an election is, what its purpose is, how to vote, what they want to vote for or a good awareness of the election in general. But they also participate in public debates, ask critical questions, and express their opinions and expectations. The media should not only get engaged in reporting the election, introducing the policies of political parties, candidates and the entire process before and after the election, but also educate the public on how to exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities during elections (Berger, 2002).

Politics and the media are deeply intertwined with human movement as a whole and cannot be separated from it. Given that politics is a way of life and that the media affects how people live, both are mutually beneficial and support one another. Politicians require the media to advertise their activities, particularly during an election, whereas the media relies on public officials to preserve its influence and provide the public with high newsworthy materials. Public authorities and the media, specifically, have a symbiotic connection. For instance, the media needs information from officials to develop a product that is available, while officials depend on the media to spread their views to the constituency (Ashenafi, 2012).

Free and open communication promotes democracy. And elections are one of the ways democracy is exercised. Democracy also grants citizens the right to access information, freedom of expression and press freedom. As mass communication is the most important and determinant type of communication for effective political and election communication, even for setting political agendas, the media must be free from political interference and should be granted its independence to exercise as a neutral, free and impartial institution (Howard, 2004:8-16). Besides, since a large number of the public depend on the media for election-related information, it is much more necessary for the media to maintain a high standard of professionalism and non-partisanship in its election coverage. Therefore, it is contradictory to hold democratic, free, and participatory elections with restricted or no media and press freedom.

Additionally, by framing events and issues in a particular way, the media attempts to hold the public's interest so that they can make informed decisions. People nowadays obtain a wealth of knowledge about a subject from several sources. People choose the information that is in line with their beliefs or principles when they are presented with many points of view on a subject.

Unfortunately, it is not unusual to hear the media complaining about being neglected to access information about the election, and even on some occasions, journalists are not allowed to attend election sites and are forced to leave election areas. This is a threat to democracy, and it is impossible to say the election is free and fair. So, in order to use the media for a smooth flow of information and to ensure the indispensable role of the media in elections, journalists and media houses should be allowed full access to information as the majority of the public depends on them for information. Therefore, the media coverage and framing of the Ethiopian General Election on a government newspaper and private-owned newspapers are about to be examined if the media has given non-partisan and unfavorable media coverage to the ruling party and the challengers.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

The media during the (EPRDF) was unable to function as an independent and free institution. Most of the main stream media were under the control of the government, financially dependent, and politics used to drive the media. Hence, it was impossible for the government media to cover elections freely while the media itself was not free. Not only the government media but also the private media were in trouble for freely covering election issues. During elections, it was common for the ruling party to take advantage of its administrative and incumbent role to get more coverage in the national and international broadcast and print media (Yosef, 2008). The other political parties received less airtime in the media, and the media was usually biased in its election coverage and story framing during the previous election.

Political parties and candidates have been complaining about the media coverage of their campaigns, policies, and even the way their stories were framed in many elections around the world. Biases in media coverage and publishing more favorable stories to the incumbent than unfavorable stories to other opponents are common, particularly in developing countries where the media's independence and freedom are violated by politicians (Yared, 2016).

The previous elections that took place in Ethiopia showed that there were differences and imbalances in the coverage of the electoral process and the amount and tone of coverage that addressed the political parties. The media plays a considerable role in the overall electoral process during elections, but the media in Ethiopia used to be biased and treat both political

parties and the ruling party in an unequal way. The 2005 Ethiopian election was one of the competitive elections, and despite the conflict, the government media and newspapers in Ethiopia were more favorable to the ruling party and against opposition parties (Simret, 2005). Even in the following elections, in 2010 and 2015, the media was in favor of one political party and against the other. The private media used to give more focus, positive framing, and more coverage to opposition media, whereas the government media used to cover more issues for the ruling party and vice-versa (Ashenafi, 2012).

Some studies were conducted regarding media framing, coverage and elections. One of the studies conducted by Mesfin (2005) deals with Comparative Analysis of the Coverage of NEBE in Addis Zemen and Reporter Newspapers. Mesfin's study focused on the 2005 Ethiopian election. Another study conducted by Yared deals with Radio Fana's coverage of the 2015 national election of Ethiopia on FM 98.1 (2015). His studies focused on broadcast media.

Yosef one of the researchers who conducted a study about the press and elections in Ethiopia: An Analysis of the Extent and Bias of the Press on the Coverage of the 2005 Ethiopian Election (2005). All of the above mentioned studies focused on the election, which was criticized as biased, undemocratic, and full of challenges. The time gap, the change in democratic circumstances and other related issues make this study different from the above studies. All of the above-mentioned studies serve as a foundation for conducting this study. Following the 2018 political reformation in Ethiopia, the media coverage of the 2021 election is expected to be better than in past elections, since the media coverage is the most important and most influential factor in the entire election and poll results. Therefore, the researcher aimed to comparatively analyze the coverage of the government-owned Addis Zemen newspaper and the privately owned Reporter newspaper.

### **1.3. Objective of the study**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective of the study**

The general objective of the study is to assess the coverage of 2021 Ethiopian Election on Addis Zemen and Reporter Newspaper.

### **1.3.2. Specific objectives of the study**

- To assess the election coverage level of the selected newspapers.
- To assess how the selected newspapers represented the political parties.
- To identify what types of frames were dominantly used to address the election

### **1.4. Research questions**

- ✓ To what extent did the selected newspapers covered the election?
- ✓ How the selected newspapers represented the political parties?
- ✓ What kinds of frames were dominantly used to address the election issues?

### **1.5. Significance of the study**

This study may benefit the media institutions, the political parties, the national election board of Ethiopia, and other researchers. First, media institutions may benefit from the findings of this study. It will show them what problems were observed and what needs to be improved in the next election. Based on this, they can improve their credibility and fairness. Next, the national election board of Ethiopia will benefit. As it is known, the board closely works with the media during an election. Therefore, based on this finding, the board will improve its relations with the media institutions. Furthermore, the political parties will benefit from this research as well. It will show them the focus areas of the media institutions, and based on this, they will manage the situations of the media institutions. Finally, it will serve as a reference for other researchers who want to conduct further studies in the future.

### **1.6. Scope of the Study**

The study focuses on examining the coverage of the 2021 Ethiopian general election. One from the government-owned, which was Addis Zemen, and one from the private-owned, which was reporter newspapers, was selected. It is known that election issues are very vast and the media give coverage for a long period of time. For this study case, the researcher decided to analyze the two newspapers which were published and circulated 15 days before and 15 days after Election Day. Therefore, 30 newspapers will be analyzed.

## **Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature**

This chapter presents various related literatures which strengthen the study. Previously published researches on the issue under study are reviewed and broader information about election coverage and framing and the theoretical frame works are discussed under this chapter.

### **2.1 Ethiopia's Print Media History**

There are some historical hints that Ethiopian newspapers first appeared in the late 19th century. The nation's first newspaper was originally published about this time (Shimelis, 2000). The first Amharic newspaper was published in 1895 and was titled "Aemro" ( "Intelligence"). It was published in Addis Abeba, the country's then-relatively new capital (Fackler, 2012). The handwritten document published by Blatta Gebre Egziabhere around 1900 may have been the first Amharic "newspaper" in the nation because historical evidence reveals that it predates both *Le Semeurd' Ethiopia* and *Aimero* (Pankrust, 1992). *Le Semeurd'Ethiopie*, a multilingual weekly (1905–1911), and *Aimero* (1902–1903) are commonly regarded as the nation's first newspapers, according to Mekuria (2006).

In spite of various inconsistencies, the establishment of French-language weekly and monthly journals by missionaries and trade agents at the end of the 19th century was impressive.

The Ethiopian Weekly, *Le Semained' Ethiopie*, first printed in 1905. (Ellen, Mesfin and Alemayehu, 2003).

Shimeles (2000), citing several sources, said that the publication's initial edition published around 1901, was written by hand, and had a distribution at initially of 24 copies before increasing to 200 copies with the importation of a copying machine. Due to financial issues, a lack of newsprint, and Italian aggressiveness, *A'emro* experienced phases of brief stoppage and rebirth.

The founding of *Berihanena Selam* Printing Enterprise in the year 1921 serves as the baseline for Ethiopian print media. Ras (prince) Tafari Mekonnen himself founded the Amharic weekly *Berhanena Selam*, which got things started (Haile Silase I). This is the time when Ethiopia's long-standing journalism heritage was established, and it was also a time when fidelity to the Emperor was rewarded (Skjerdal, 2011 as cited in Tesfaye, 2013).

The development of the Ethiopian press was reportedly halted for roughly five years (1935–1941) due to the country being occupied by Mussolini's troops, according to Ministry Of Information (1966) (quoted in Shimelis, 2000). Freedom fighters began to produce clandestine publications during the Italian occupation, such as the bimonthly Bandirachen (later renamed Sendeq Alamachin) (Shimelis, 2000).

Two Amharic journals, Sendek Alamachin and Addis Zemen, were established in 1941 to chronicle the time of the country's freedom from Italian rule (Mekuria, 2006). Temesgen (2007) emphasized that the print media played a part in glorifying Haile Selassie's administration. Many of the pieces that published in official journals like Addis Zemen, Sendeq alamachin [Our Flag], and Ethiopian Herald after the monarch came from exile in 1941 appeared concerned with reporting and stressing the king's locations as well as his valor, commitment, and dignity (Temesgen,2007).

Weekly publications like Addis Zemen and The Ethiopian Herald, both prominent and enduring, first appeared in 1941 and 1943, consecutively. Following December 1958, both were daily newspapers. Yezareyitu Etyopia was included in the list of newspapers in 1952. (Shimeles, 2000).

The govt had complete control over the news media and the dissemination of information from 1974 to 1991 while there was a military regime in place. Regarding how the press evolved under this administration, it was stated that a climate of media freedom would be established, particularly during the first two or three years. Unfortunately, it was short-lived (Ellene, Mesfin, and Alemayehu, 2003).

The media was heavily focused on socialist ideology throughout the Derg era, primarily promoting socialism in the nation. The government was responsible for ensuring that the press operated (Nigussie, 2014). As a result, the Derg era has unmistakably been depicted as a dark period in Ethiopian media and journalism background (Shimelis, 2000; Skjerdal, 2012;

EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) toppled the Derg dictatorship in 1991. According to Skjerdal (2012a), Ethiopia's media landscape changed substantially after the EPRDF in terms of formal media policies and opportunities for independent media.

A new press law that assures some rights to expression was promulgated on October 21, 1992, following the establishment of a new political structure in Ethiopia in 1991 by the EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front). Article 29 of Ethiopia's 1995 Constitution also guaranteed press freedom (Mekuria, 2006).

The 1994/95 Federal Constitution's article 29 on the freedoms of speech, thought, and expression, which also encompasses the freedom to seek, consume, and disseminate information, is found in the second part of the document's section on the democratic right (Shimelis, 2000 as cited in Tesfaye, 2013). The earliest newspaper in the nation is the renowned government-owned Addis Zemen that continues to publishing today.

## **2.2 Ethiopian democratization**

Democratization is referred to as the change from a less stable or nonexistent political regime to one that is more democratic. It could be the change from a totalitarian government to a democratic one, from a totalitarian political system to a semi-democratic one, or from a semi-authoritarian system of government to a democratic one. Nevertheless, a number of elements, such as historical development, civil society, and economic growth, have an impact. Consequently, the right of the populace to vote and participate in their political process is secured.

Within Ethiopia, democratization is often associated with the ability to carry out one's regular activities without interference from arbitrary government actions, but democratization also refers to the process of empowering the populace to take full control of the political structure of the nation. When the Derg 's regime came to an end in 1991, there was a widespread hope that they would finally have the freedom to determine their own political future, as per Pausewang, Tronvoll, and Aalen (2002: 1). Therefore, the realization of democratization will not be achieved until equitable representation of voters in the political structure is guaranteed.

Regular, transparent, impartial, and reliable elections are the method of approaching the system. Unfortunately, establishing a democracy is a continuous process with risks. It is neither a final goal nor an unattainable ideal. If it isn't maintained active, it can soon degenerate and needs continual improvement. Although it may experience short-term losses, it can always bounce back as soon as the democratic spirit is upheld by timely and ongoing citizen scrutiny (Pausewang, Tronvoll and Aalen, 2002). Many Ethiopian traditions included democratic elements such as councils of elders, mutual aid organizations, age periods for the allocation of limited resources, and procedures for resolving disputes and violence (Pausewang, Tronvoll, and Aalen, 2002). Despite the preceding debate, Yosef (2005) observed that an awakened, trained, and dedicated local media has the ability to boost the democratization process through well-informed and committed news reporting. This type of media can also help to shape and unite public perception. A democratic government is expected to provide for its citizens and to do what is best for them. Nonetheless, democratization entails far more than the usual routine of multiparty elections (Yosef, 2005).

As a democratic federation of ethnic provinces with participation open to all nations and nationalities, Ethiopia had renewed hopes for a bright future in 1991. Mengistu's rule was overthrown, and he fled to Zimbabwe, handing over control of his nation to the successful ethnic resistance forces. Before the 2000 and 2001 elections, there were numerous signs that suggested Ethiopia would not become an established democracy. According to Pausewang, Tronvoll, and Aalen (2002), the current ruling party, EPRDF (Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front), is adamant that its ability to represent the needs of commoners, particularly those who have been oppressed and come from ethnic minorities, is a key factor in how well it can maintain power.

## **2.2 Freedom of Expression**

Studies have evaluated several aspects of freedom of expression based on the universal declaration. Freedom of expression is the unrestricted expression of ideas or views. In order to protect freedom of speech, expression, and information as well as the media's independence from the government, democracy is a must for the mass media (Strömbäck, 2005). In addition to being a crucial component of democracy, press freedom is crucial for the long-term viability of social and economic growth (Senghore, 2012). Without access to the free flow of information, people

cannot make difficult decisions regarding the matters that are put before them. According to Gunther and Mughan (2000), the freedom of information is a cornerstone of democracy and is essential to the healthy operation of that democracy.

In general, freedom of expression is stated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which states clearly that it is a person's right to express ideas without unjustified interference from the government. Speaking on stage or engaging in political speech are only a small part of freedom of expression (Robertson and Nicol, 2002). In light of these affirmations, the country's commitment to free speech is reflected in the international media. Media criticism of government policies and progress is still not tolerated in developing countries, where the governments lack a strong economic and political foundation (Graber, 2002).

Ethiopia adopted the tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenants on Human Rights, as stated in Article 13/2 of its Constitution. Access to information and freedom of speech are protected by various laws in Ethiopia. especially the 1992 Freedom Bill, which made it possible for the private media (which was confined to print media) to thrive. The government remained to own and manage all broadcasting and some print media even though the media was largely freed up from direct censorship, according to Mekasha (2005), cited in Bethelhem (2006).

By analyzing the political scene, serving as watchdogs of political actors, offering forums for political debate, articulating public opinion, and shaping policy objectives, the press, it is said, aids in democracy and good governance (Keane, 1991).

### **2.3 Election and Democracy**

Human rights include the right to equality, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of assembly. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, as stated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948). Additionally, it encompasses the freedom to look for, receive, and send information and ideas across international boundaries.

Democracy and elections are intertwined. Elections have three main purposes, according to Teshome (2009), citing Reilly (2003): First, they allow people to select their representatives. Choosing their representatives for legislative or executive offices could use this. They also serve as a tool for selecting governments and give political regimes credibility.

Democracy places a strong emphasis on the worth of every person and the universal respect for human rights. Citizens in a democratic political system have an equal voice in decisions that impact them, and opposition to policies that are in effect at the time are always valid (Shapiro, 2001, p.210-221). Three basic features of a democratic regime are listed by McNair (2011). First and foremost, there is a need for constitutionality, which calls for agreed-upon procedures and rules governing elections, the conduct of candidates, and the legal activities of dissenters; second, participation: A significant portion of the population must engage in the democratic process; third, rational choice: There must be options available from which citizens can make a reasoned decision. In this sense, for democracy to prosper.

Democracy demands that these elected people be selected and ousted peacefully in a fair and open election process. First, according to researcher Kadirgamar (2005), there must be a legal framework that permits free and fair elections. Second, the media, the government's law enforcement agencies, and the election officials must all be unbiased and have neutral principles at the core of their operations. Thirdly, all of the political forces in the nation must be amenable to and prepared to allow for a competitive electoral process that includes them all.

Regulatory frameworks should support and encourage the expression of diverse viewpoints during election campaigns and should stipulate that election campaigns must be covered in a fair, unbiased, and balanced manner. When people are free to express their opinions without fear, i.e., when freedom of expression, freedom of speech, assembly, and association are realized, and the actual exercise of these freedoms could be best served in the presence of democratic institutions, a democratic order in which political parties compete for the votes of citizens exists in practice (Dahl, 1989).

In western nations, democratization entails a political conflict between and within the governing class and various sociopolitical movements. In the developing world, democratization also involves the trans-culturalization of democracy (Chan, 2002). According to deliberative democracy, political discourse is centered on various interpretations of the public good; as a result, a more pluralistic system—where individuals, parties, and groups pursue specific agendas—is inappropriate (Cohen, 1997). Elections are covered by a wide range of content platforms and providers in today's complex and more fragmented media landscape, reinforcing and challenging traditional journalistic rules and routines while disseminating news about issues, candidates, and the campaign (Graber and Dunaway, 2018).

To maintain and safeguard democratic institutions and the principles that underpin them, governments, civic society, and the general public must collaborate. According to Kadirgamar (2005), both organized and unorganized groups, the current government, political parties, the armed forces, police, and election adjudicating bodies, as well as civil society, must accept and support the process rather than undermining it through violence, intimidation, or any other illegal means.

## **2.4 Media and Democracy**

The media may have a big impact on how democracy develops and is an essential instrument for democracy to work in any community, whether in a positive or negative way. Media and society are connected and fused together in ways that make it difficult to picture them ever being separated, claim Croteau and Hoynes (2019, p. 5).

During the campaign season, the media are a crucial player in the battle to influence the public agenda (Walgrave and Aelst, 2004, p.31-47). The media has a part to play in raising public understanding of democracy and the electoral process. The media facilitates information sharing and access for nation's residents. Voters typically obtain the data they need before considering it while making decisions. Voters are impacted by political communications, presuming they are aware of and receptive to the information (Zaller, 1992, p.21).

Civic engagement is a crucial component for effective political sector reforms and successful transitions. People and groups still have the freedom to have various cultures, personalities, languages, and religious convictions in democracies. When they believe their choices are superior to others, people frequently adapt to their choices (Baron, Vandello, & Brunzman, 1996, p.915–927).

Participation by citizens can take many different forms, including as running for office, casting a ballot, learning about problems, participating in debates, attending civic or community meetings, joining private nonprofit groups, or even protesting. This status emphasizes that the mass media are significant not just as vital information sources but also for interpretation, linkage, entrenchment of beliefs, affiliation, and expression in the political realm based on the ideals of freedom and participation, which underpin democracy (Dominick, 2011).

A nation's path to democracy can be explored through candidate debates in which their beliefs, ideas, and knowledge are explained in a way that makes it easier. Media representation significantly affects how civilizations form their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and actions. The news media may employ a variety of particular frames, consciously or unconsciously, to convey news to viewers (Steimel, 2010).

According to Howard (2004, p. 8–16), the media is typically the most significant source of information for people to learn about elections and political options. In order for the public to understand the distinctions between political parties, the media must be permitted to report objectively on all of their campaigns. An independent press fulfills educational functions, ensures diversity in the public sphere, and, more importantly, weaves together various threads of a multicultural, multiparty society and links members of that community ideologically and politically, fostering popular culture that shapes the public's worldview (Robertson, 2015).

## **2.5 Media and Society**

Media can play a significant role in the development of democracy and it is vital tool for the functioning of democracy in the right or other direction in any society. According to Croteau and Hoynes (2019) media and society are intertwined and fused together in ways that make it difficult to imagine them ever being separated.

The media play a vital role in the struggle for shaping the public agenda during the campaign period (Walgrave and Aelst, 2004). In creation of awareness to the people about democracy and the election system media helps people or citizens of the country to share, get fair and appropriate information. In the decision-making process, voters tend to gather the necessary information before evaluating the information. Political messages affect voters, assuming they are exposed and open to receive the data (Zaller, 1992).

During the campaign season, the media are a crucial player in the battle to influence the public agenda (Walgrave and Aelst, 2004). Media has a role in educating people about democracy and the electoral process by facilitating information sharing and providing accurate and pertinent information. Voters typically obtain the information they need before assessing it while making decisions. Voters are impacted by political communications, if they are aware of them and receptive to the information (Zaller, 1992).

Civic engagement is a crucial factor in achieving political structural adjustment and successful transitions. People and organizations can still exercise their right to distinct cultures, personalities, languages, and religious views in democracies. When people believe their decisions are better than those of others, they often adapt to those decisions (Baron, Vandello, & Brunsman, 1996).

Civic participation can take many different forms, including as running for office, casting a ballot, learning about problems, participating in debates, attending civic or community gatherings, joining private nonprofit groups, or even demonstrating. This status emphasizes that the mass media are significant not just as critical information providers as well as interpretation, connection, entrenchment of beliefs, affiliation, and participation in the political realm based on the ideals of freedom and involvement, which underpin democracy (Dominick, 2011).

The media further aids in exploring a nation's path to democracy by allowing contenders to debate problems and convey their opinions, ideas, and knowledge. Media representation has a significant impact on how civilizations form their beliefs, attitudes, positions, and behaviors. To convey news to customers, news organizations might, intentionally or unintentionally, employ a range of particular frames (Steimel, 2010).

According to Howard (2004), the media is typically the most significant source of information for people to learn regarding elections and political options. In order for the public to understand the distinctions among political parties, the media must be permitted to report objectively on all of their campaigns. A free media serves as a source of information, assures public discourse diverse, and, most significantly, weaves together the ideological and political strands of a multicultural, multiparty society, generating popular culture that influences the public's perspective (Robertson, 2015).

## 2.6 Media sources

A source is any individual, organization, or other record or document that can assist in gathering reliable information for a report. A fictional, unreliable story is one that hasn't been supported by any sources. In order to draw and hold viewers' interest, sources must contribute personal interest, trustworthiness, color, and other elements.

The content that journalists report to the audience is derived from a variety of sources, primarily via observation, interviews, or documentary sources (Gans, 2004). It is improbable that journalists observe events firsthand in all locations at all times where news may develop. As a result, journalists frequently use other secondary sources (Tiffen, 1989).

In order to produce news, sources are considered in light of their significance in relation to a certain event or problem. In reality, this is frequently, if not always, advised. This is due to the fact that heavy reliance on specific sources raises the likelihood of bias (Pape, Susan and Featherstone, 2005).

So, when producing news, sources are considered in light of their significance in related to a specific subject or situation. The majority of the time, if not always, this is advised. As a result, there is a greater risk of bias when sources are strictly limited (Pape, Susan and Featherstone, 2005).

The news media's doors are frequently shut to allow for universal access in numerous cases likely sources. This backfires according to Manning (2001) because it the establishment of democracy in order to promote a variety of viewpoints gain access but cannot add to democracy. The media, however, Institutions welcome all persons and groups with open arms. possess significant economic or political influence. When journalists deal with topics in highly sensitive

fields like politics, the utilization of sources becomes increasingly crucial. This occurs because everything stated or implied by top authorities has the potential to have an adverse effect on the public's quality of life (Miller & Krosnick, 2000).

According to Manning (2001), government sources include numerous state departments, top members of political groups, institutions of law and security, interest associations, and more. According to the author, journalists are most likely to choose these groups as informants because they are thought to be the most reliable. The sites previously listed are excellent places for reporters to engage when constructing their articles for a variety of reasons.

It is quite challenging to claim that there is information without sources. Sources act as mirrors through which the wider public can view the larger sociopolitical environment (Graber, 2002).

Sources play a major part in the production of news behind the scenes. Therefore, the sources of the news are touched in some way by the study of news. Analyzing the overall tale requires careful consideration of the sources, as well.

Not all sources are cited in news articles. Much like that, not all data provided by sources are included. Several sources are actually recognized as news story sponsors. Hence, this source selection process typically allows for discussion. Why are certain sources respected while others are not? ignored? There have been studies done in the pursuit of source relationships with reporters. The majority of people also came to the conclusion that journalists look for sources that are appropriate for a certain news item McCail (2000).

#### Comparing official and unofficial sources

Sources can be generally divided into official and unofficial sources. According to Fishman (quoted in Allen, 1999), official sources are those sources that are systematically established to be aware of whatever is unfolding.

By nature of their status, these sources end up being important sources for many reporters. This allows powerful individuals to influence the media by broadcasting a large amount of data that might skew the actual situation (Parenti, 1986). Additionally, media organizations must maintain their role as the public's primary information source.

In other words, information coming from high-ranking officials is more likely to be believed to be accurate than information coming from people at lower positions who just have a limited view (Allen, 1999) Unofficial sources make up the remaining categories. These sources are what Pape, Susan, and Featherstone (2005) referred to as "off-diary sources."

These are "sources that provide unforeseen, and unexpected news items," based on the authors (p.137). Media professionals, journalists, members of the public, political parties other than the one in power, victims, witnesses, specialists, and academics are a few examples of unofficial sources. Journalists pay closer attention to unofficial sources during contentious circumstances than they do during other times (with the exception of journalists) (Gans, 2004). This may be due in part to the increased likelihood of participating in such events.

The sources that journalists choose to obtain information from are crucial in determining how the news is presented. Sources that cannot be used to contextualize a certain piece of information would be ignored in favor of the ones that can (Allen, 1999). News reports often rely on their sources. For Allen, the selection of sources and the pursuit of "facts" are mutually determining. Additionally, the sources used have a significant impact on how news is framed and disseminated to the general public.

## **2.7 The role of media during election**

Regulatory frameworks should support and encourage the expression of diverse viewpoints during election campaigns and should stipulate that election campaigns must be covered in a fair, unbiased, and balanced manner. According to Berger (2002, p. 2), the media's responsibilities during elections include vetting parties and candidates, uncovering electoral fraud, and encouraging voter turnout in "free and fair elections."

The function of the media as a watchdog in democratization is described by Ansah (1988). Whereas the press is the most suitable medium for gauging and reflecting public opinion, and where the government, which is simply a trustee of the collective will and power of the people, is expected to be constrained by the force of public opinion (Ansah, 1988, p.1-16). The dynamics and results of wars are heavily influenced by the media, which also shapes the chances of conflict parties succeeding (Vladislavljevi, 2015).

From a normative standpoint, the media has three distinct democratic roles to play: preserving the free flow of information, offering a platform for public discussion of various, frequently opposing political ideas, and serving as a watchdog against the misuse of power (Strömbäck, 2005).

The trend to vote for a particular party is connected to favorable media coverage, which has a significant impact on voting intentions (Dewenter, Linder, & Thomas, 2019, p.245-261). The journalist's function can be seen from at least two angles: first, as a change agent who actively engages in, interprets, and analyzes situations; and second, as a disseminator of knowledge who communicates impartially and objectively without bias (Giuliana, 2016).

The media are fundamentally means of communication that convey messages to various audiences. Simply put: "When people can communicate, we say we are free. When the government listens, we have a democracy. The media is the messenger" (Howard 2004, p.2).

Elections involve both old and new media in important ways. The media, first and foremost, performs the role of watchdogs by closely examining the electoral process, evaluating how well institutions and electoral actors have performed, and highlighting achievements and failures to support public accountability. The media also serve as platforms for political campaigns. Candidates and political parties communicate their goals, pledges, and future aspirations through the media. Third, the media offer a stage for public discussion and debate on elections. They provide regular people a voice, enabling them to affect political agendas and other voters. Fourth, the media educate the people (IDEA, 2015, p.9).

Journalists offer helpful analyses of the news, presenting multiple interpretations of events and utterances, in addition to providing material for voter education. People who use these analyses can make well-informed decisions. The roles of the national and foreign media in elections are slightly different. International media are frequently more free to report on the politically sensitive or contentious parts of elections, while local media may find themselves restrained by risky domestic situations. However, the international media has come under fire for favoring some viewpoints or painting a distorted picture of several voting processes (ODI 2014).

Additionally, rather than covering the full election cycle, the international media typically focuses on Election Day. Up until recently, "one-to-many" communication dominated the mass media. In other words, a single author or organization uses a large audience to spread somewhat impersonal messages. Television, radio, and newspapers are some examples of one-to-many mass media.

## **2.7 Influence of Politics on the Media**

The presence of public media is a defining trait of many modern democratic nations.

These are organizations (often radio and television broadcasters) created to carry out the informational duties of the state in relation to socialization, education, and the development of accepted social attitudes. They have a massive character, allowing for rapid remote public communication to a large number of recipients.

The participation of governmental bodies in the organization, management, and supervision of such media depends on their public nature. There are essentially three models for how governments affect public media, however they vary by nation:

1. Minimal - in nations where commercial media content is unregulated and public media funding is relatively low;
2. Task-oriented - where commercial media are required to produce programs serving the identity functions of the state, and public financing of the media is on a moderate level; and
3. Interferential - where interference in the content is supported by the public interest, and public financing is on a high standard. In reality, the functions of the public media and the amount of funding collected from public sources determine the possibilities of political involvement and impact on the message's content.

The escalation of two aspects is mostly related to the political influence of the government on public media. Politics being mediated is the first of them. It is a part of a wider process of mediatization in which the alteration of social communication and the growing influence of mass media are at the core of modern social change. Almost every aspect of social life is being mediatized, making media the main factor shaping how people interact with one another.

This also happens in politics, as media outlets act as a middleman between voters and candidates are rapidly diminishing the value of direct connection. Framing, which is described as a manner of understanding social reality and disseminating to the largest set of receivers feasible, is another issue that significantly impacts the government's need to influence public media. The cognitive viewpoint is narrowed by framing, which emphasizes the qualities that are anticipated to facilitate the intended reception of the messages transmitted. Communication has an impact at three different levels: discursive, cognitive, and interpretative.

On the very first, the information has a cognitive structure that makes it simple for the receiver to absorb. Discursive levels establish ways of understanding occurrences where communication networks of reference play an important part. The impact of an interpretative framework, which gives the message its implications and a framework for comprehending the sender's intentions, is included in the interpretation level. Public media now do not just deliver information during political campaigns due to framing.

Instead, they offer pre-made interpretations that were created to guarantee the rulers' political support. Politicians are more interested in using the public media for their own ends as a result of both the procedures mediatizing politics and the opportunities presented by framing as a tool for conducting electoral campaigns. With the help of strategically chosen material and modes of interpretation, these variables can very readily offer them an advantage in terms of addressing voters and politically socializing them. Political campaigns run by parties without access to the public media must concentrate on alternative forms of communication, which is more challenging and costly than campaigns run by parties with access to public media. The act of manipulating does not always entail ruthless tampering with the information's appearance or content. They can be far more subdued and fit the public media's role, fostering political attitudes that adhere to the existential framework of one political competitor or working to raise social intelligence. The manipulation method in this instance might be fostering attitudes that reflect the fundamental socio-political differences.

Public media influence of the electoral process might potentially be less deceptive. The majority of the time, this is the case when society's degree of political culture permits their usage without consequence or when certain political groups demonstrate a strong degree of resolve to win elections. This happens when politicians are appointed to executive positions in the public

media and to organizations created to regulate them. They are all connected politically or perhaps belong to specific political parties.

## **2.8 Electoral assistance and media support**

It should come as no surprise that electoral assistance can (and frequently does) include support for the media given its power to influence voter opinion and behavior. This assistance is also referred to as "media development," a recognized term that has the following definition:

The term "media development" frequently refers to actions made by organizations, people, and sporadically governments to improve the capacity and standard of the media sector in a particular country or region. There are numerous groups that encourage the development of free and independent media in all countries.

These programs can take many different forms, from funding the establishment of an entirely new media outlet to assisting an existing outlet in building up its professional capacities. Typical initiatives for independent media development include enhancing the legal climate for the media, ensuring the viability of current outlets, promoting media literacy, integrating digital media, developing infrastructure, undertaking monitoring and evaluation activities, and providing journalistic education and training. (IDEA,2015, p.10).

Media for development and media development are closely related, but experts can't agree on which strategy yields the best outcomes. Some people are in favor of the "media development" strategy, which emphasizes skill development. This group thinks that essential abilities like fact-checking, objective reporting, and story framing are crucial prerequisites for the end goal of a free and independent press. Others support the "media for development" strategy and contend that journalists need to be specially trained to deliver tailored and focused messages on topics like healthcare, the environment, poverty alleviation, and good governance.

The two approaches certainly have a lot in common, and abilities can always be transferred to different contexts whether they are learned through broad or topic-specific training. Additionally, some of the biggest media development organizations, like BBC Media Action, provide both types of media aid, implementing initiatives that are specifically geared toward development and, when possible, also involve media capacity building (IDEA,2015, p.10).

According to proponents of the "media development" strategy, "media for development" is too limited since it runs the risk of neglecting the creation of a long-term foundation for autonomous media (CIMA 2008). Additionally, some people caution against placing too much attention on elections. Projects that emphasize elections are typically seen negatively by many civil society organizations, who oppose the premise that democracy is primarily about the election moment (Giraud 2014).

Beneficiaries welcome much more comprehensive, long-term strategies that are anchored in communities (Giraud 2014). The issue of the media's precise place in the larger realm of democracy, government, and elections is related to this discussion. Should it be viewed and treated as a distinct, independent institution or as a vital component of elections programming, much like voter registration, political party formation, and electoral technology?

The solution is intricate and gets to the root of the issue since, despite being "the fourth estate" and a political institution in and of itself, the media is also a crucial component of and participant in the election process. Thus, it is necessary to guarantee that journalists have the specialized expertise and technological know-how to accurately report on elections, which can be politically sensitive, as well as to foster a free and independent press by developing basic journalistic abilities.

## **2.9 Election and Media in Ethiopia**

The Ethiopian media has covered a number of significant historical events. (2012) Ashenafi, p. As soon as the media system was set up under the control of the Imperial Ministry of Information in the 1960s, it was unable to serve as a tool for development or be in "a position to exercise freedom of speech" during that period of absolute monarchy (Brook 2000, p.18 in Jemal 2013, p.3). The media had to adapt to both Soviet communist media theory and Marxist-Leninist political doctrine. In such a regime, pre-broadcast and print censorship of the media were strictly enforced and frequent, and it was forbidden to form a private media.

Until the EPRDF-led government came to power in 1991 and incorporated it into the Constitution, the 1948 United Nations Declarations of Human Rights had no place in Ethiopia for more than 40 years. Thus, press freedom and expression pay homage to the FDRE constitution and other laws passed by the president. Additionally, the present administration has

allowed for the private ownership of all forms of media except television and abolished regulations and organizations that restricted press freedom and publication and made it difficult for the media to operate effectively (Ashenafi 2012).

However, despite the fact that Ethiopia's legal and constitutional frameworks are appropriate for and supportive of the media and journalism, it has frequently been stated that pluralistic perspectives cannot be accommodated since objectivity, fairness, and balance are also in jeopardy (Jemal 2013, p.25, Brook 2000 in Jemal 2013, p.21). Additionally, biased reporting led to the post-election violence in 2005, according to a document created by the educational and training center of the former Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency in 2010 to train 80 journalists of ERTA. It is also acknowledged that "much has to be done on the media industry's human resources side to improve capacity and professionalism."

The research also stated that current efforts to raise journalists' abilities, "particularly in reporting on election problems," had fallen short. Ethiopia's Media Sustainability Index score of 1.25 places it practically in the anti-free press category (2012, p.133)..

The press received harsh criticism during the previous elections. During the elections, Ethiopian media outlets reported the news with a polarized bias (Hailemarkos, 2006, p.48). The majority of the media supported the ruling party and impacted the credibility of the election. Compared to government-run media organizations, privately held media organizations were in some ways more impartial (Ashenafi, 2012, p.67).

The national board of elections, in coordination with other governmental and non-governmental organizations, trained a large number of journalists for the election of 2021. The training's key topics were election reporting, the function of the media, the protection of journalists, and other significant problems. The capacity-building training reportedly boosted the journalists' election reporting abilities and made them neutral and objective during the election, according to the Ethiopian media service and the national electoral board of Ethiopia.

## **2.10 Review of Empirical studies**

Various studies have been conducted about the election and Ethiopian situation. The following studies were selected and reviewed according to the objectives of this study.

Hailemarkos (2006) conducted several studies, one of which examines the reporting bias in the Ethiopian media during the 2005 presidential election. As he noted in his analysis, the Ethiopian press outlets reported on the 2005 elections with a polarized bias. By producing news, the private press on the one hand and the state-owned periodicals on the other served the opposition and the ruling party, respectively.

Another study by Ashenafi (2012) looked at how political parties were framed in the 2010 parliamentary election in Ethiopian print media. According to the study's findings, Addis Zemen appeared to support the EPRDF. The report, meanwhile, was largely in a neutral tone. Newspapers most frequently cited government officials, then opposition parties, with little regard for community members and research.

The privately owned publications depended on sources from the opposition parties, while the government-run newspaper relied on sources from government officials. The conflict frame was the most frequently used frame across all publications, despite disparities in the frequency of the frames utilized. In Addis Zemen and Reporter, the human interest frame was the least frequently utilized, and in Awramba Times, the economic consequence frame. Generally speaking, the conflict frame predominated over the attribution of blame and economic consequence frames. The selected newspapers used the morality and human interest frames the least frequently.

Markos (2006) Fairness and Balance in Election Campaign News Stories During the May 2005 Ethiopian Elections, according to An examination of the newspapers "Addis Zemen" and "Reporter" The coverage of the May 2005 election in Ethiopia by the two newspapers (Addis Zemen and the Reporter) was notably unfair and unbalanced in the amount of time, prominence, and visibility given to candidates and political parties vying for seats in the government, according to this study of fairness and balance in election stories. According to the metrics used in the study, it was also discovered that the stories reporting the 2005 Ethiopian election in these media were much more unbalanced than balanced in both political and structural dimensions.

Consequently, the CUD coalition party and its candidates received significantly more attention than their counterparts in the Reporter daily, even though the proportion of stories in the Addis Zemen newspaper promoting EPRDF candidates was noticeably larger than that of other contenders. Additionally, individual pieces in the two example newspapers are crafted to give

one candidate and/or political party significantly more attention than rivals (in terms of space, prominence, and visibility). As a result, about identical percentages of the stories in both newspapers—83% in Addis Zemen and 85% in the Reporter—are unbalanced by one to four component measures.

Another researcher, Yared, examined how Radio Fana covered the 2015 Ethiopian National Election on FM 98.1. (2016). Analysis of the study's quantitative material was used. The research revealed that Fana F.M. organized a three-month long special debate and discussion program for the weekly "Mogach" talk show in order to cover the election. Political messages that inform and educate voters were broadcast in both the news and the show.

Political parties received additional media access on top of their direct free air time access, with erratic frequency and length of broadcast time. Although the press coverage of the election and the special program of discussion and debate were important for educating voters, the amount of time allotted for public participation was small and constrained.

## **2.11 Theoretical Framework**

The purpose of this study is to analysis if the ruling party and the opponent were fairly treated in terms of coverage during the sixth Ethiopian election. Hence, agenda setting theory and framing theory selected as a theoretical framework for the study.

### **2.11.1 Framing theory**

Given that news can influence how the public perceives an issue, framing theory offers one approach to examining how news is portrayed. According to this idea, the structuring of stories and the language used to contextualize and explain subject matter can have a framing effect, leading viewers to accept a particular interpretation of events (Uribe, 2020, p. 89-98). A group of ideas and theoretical viewpoints on how people organize, interpret, and communicate about reality are referred to as framing. The concept of framing refers to theoretical viewpoints on how readers acknowledge, identify, and consider the reality (Entman, 1993, p.51-58).

Studies showed media coverage selecting patterns. Through context formation and interpretation, the selection pattern is made visible. The presentation of a story that appears in two different publications will not be the same. Different ways are used to tell stories. This is not without

cause, but rather because diverse newspapers employ multiple perspectives or frames, claim Gibbs and Warhover (2002).

Coleman (2010, p. 315–327) claims that studies looking at visuals in news media frequently disregard the framing theory, despite the fact that it is crucial to comprehend how frames are incorporated into news visuals and how that framing affects audience thought. The goal of framing is to draw attention to and make a choice. This is done to build arguments around issues, conclusions, and/or solutions (Entman, 1993, p.51-58).

Reese, Gandy, and Grant (2001), on the other hand, expand on this idea by highlighting the unique qualities of images, including their syntactic implicitness, iconicity, and indexicality, which make them highly powerful instruments for framing and conveying ideological statements. Framing could emerge in a variety of ways, and the outcome might have an impact on society (Scheufele, 1999, p. 103-122).

If frames are successful, they can change the target audience's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009, p.17-33). Media framing refers to the manner in which journalists and other communicators portray news and other information to the general public. Thus, how news readers interpret events can be systematically impacted by the framing and presentation of news and events in the mass media (Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1995). According to the framing theory, how an issue is presented to the public depends on the various frames that are used to convey to the public which case is more significant than the other case (Goffman, 1974).

### **2..11.2 Characteristics of Framing**

According to Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) media frames characterized as conflict, human interest, attribution of responsibility, morality and economic consequences.

#### **A. Conflict Frames**

Conflict frames frequently highlight divergent and contradictory points of view held by individuals, organizations, or institutions when interpreting particular problems or subjects. It makes an effort to capture arguments between parties, people, or groups. When internal disputes arise, it frequently depicts many viewpoints on a subject and discusses winners and losers

(Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). (An & Gower, 2009). It doesn't have any obvious connections to either a thematic or episodic approach of framing an event (An & Gower, 2009). The conflict frame is the one that media outlets most frequently use when reporting upon conflicts and contentious topics (Gibbs and Warhover, 2002).

The media game interpretation of politics as an ongoing series of competitions, each with a different winner and loser, aligns well with dispute framing (Neuman, Just, and Crigler, 1992 pp.64). There are many examples showing how the media frames reality in terms of conflict.

A conflict frame, according to scholars, is more likely to show incompatibility, disagreement, or conflicting tension between an individual, a group, and an institution (Putnam and Shoemaker 2000). Furthermore, conflict news narratives can polarize audiences by encouraging them to support one of the opposing sides or by strengthening their views of social identity (Han & Federico, 2018).

### **B. Human Interest Frames**

A personal and emotional viewpoint is inserted into a presentation of an event, topic, or issue using human interest frames. It emphasizes drama and provides an emotional perspective by inspiring pity or sympathy. Because of this, news is becoming a product (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). As a result, the journalists' interpretations are given more room, personalizing the approach. The frame is consistent with episodic news, rarely used in urgent situations, but more frequently used when the issue might have been avoided and the manager was at fault (An & Gower, 2009).

The human impact frame is one that media professionals use to identify individuals and groups that are most likely to be impacted by a problem. Instead of using the victims' exact words, journalists in this case tried to give the story a "human face" by using personal examples (personification). Media content uses adjective-heavy language to evoke sympathy, understanding, and sympathy among viewers (Neuman, Just and Crigler, 1992 pp.70).

In addition, Bennett (2016) argues that tailored news favors particular actors and human interest stories above broader institutional, social, and political context. A human interest story emphasizes drama and provides an emotional perspective through inspiring empathy or

sympathy. Because of this, news is becoming a product (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 93–109).

### **C. Attribution of Responsibility Frame**

A government, an individual, or a group's responsibility in relation to an issue or problem is covered by responsibility frames. The term "attribution of responsibility frame" refers to the discussion of obligations in the media, whether on a governmental or personal level. Solutions, issues requiring immediate action, and discussions of the government's options for easing the issue are the main topics (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). When an actor has great controllability and intentionality, this frame is frequently used. Attribution and episodic news frequently go hand in hand (An & Gower, 2009).

The authors' suggestions regarding how these circumstances, including the five frames and the media's societal role, have evolved historically are covered in the next section. The responsibility frame focuses on media discussions of personal or governmental duties. Solutions, issues requiring immediate action, and discussions of the government's options for easing the issue are the main topics (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 93-109). When an actor's controllability and intentionality are strong, the concept of responsibility is frequently used (An & Gower, 2009, p. 107–112).

### **D. Morality Frame**

By referring to specific moral prescriptions relating to societal norms or other religious doctrines, morality frames were used to describe current events, problems, or issues. Morality frame (MorF): when referring to morality, religion, or social prescriptions. Because they must adhere to objectivity standards, journalists frequently use the MorF in an indirect manner (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). When organizations are dealing with a contentious problem, the framing is rarely used. Even so, the frame was more often when the tragedy might have been avoided. It frequently corresponds with an episodic strategy (An & Gower, 2009).

Morality frame is used to describe situations in which the media portrays occurrences in the context of morality, focusing either the negative or positive aspects of the occurrence. Correct or incorrect assessments of many situations are also addressed here.

Morality, religion, or societal rules are all examples of the term "morality frame." Because they must adhere to the standards of neutrality, journalists frequently employ the morality frame in an indirect way (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p.93–109). The frame is rarely employed by organizations operating in contentious situations. Even so, the frame was more often when the tragedy might have been avoided. An episodic approach and moral framework are typically correlated (An & Gower, 2009, p. 107–112).

#### **E. Economic consequence frame**

The economic consequence frame presents economic advantages and drawbacks as an event, problem, or concern for an individual, group, or institution. Financial Framework (EconF): refers to past, current, or future financial consequences. The media discusses the financial repercussions of acting or not acting in an economic environment. Frequently, the amount of spending or the associated costs are at stake (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). It is the only frame that is consistent with the media's thematic approach (An & Gower, 2009).

When media portray an event using an economic framework, the concentration of the material will be on the factors of loss and gain. The economic framework, in Neuman, Just, and Crigler's opinion, aligns well with the media's tendency to publish data from the perspective of authoritative sources. (pp.63)

In an economic context, it is mentioned if a financial outcome will occur now or in the future. The media places the financial consequences of choosing or not taking action in an economic perspective. The amount of spending or the associated costs are frequently a factor (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 93–109). An economic consequences frame draws attention to an event, issue, action, or problem's actual or potential financial impact or ramifications on people, societies, or countries (Luther & Zhou, 2005, p. 857).

#### **F. Episodic frame**

Shanto Iyengar describes episodic frames as event-focused reporting that causes viewers to respond to various themes in an individual but instead of socially-oriented manner in his classic study on how television frame influences attribution of blame for various social circumstances (Iyengar, 1991). Iyengar claims that case study reporting—which has a propensity to follow a plot—involves episodic framing. Porto, meanwhile, describes episodic frames as news pieces

that are event-centered and present "facts" or actors' remarks while using a highly detailed style of reporting (Porto, 2001).

Episodic frames show how anyone perceives an issue, engage the viewers as a consumer, and provide adequate data as a remedy for difficulties (Benjamin & Robbins, 2007). They also retain their emphasis on the personal realm (a person's psychology, or conduct within a group). It is clear from both descriptions that episodic framing is an event-driven frame that adheres to a precise narrative about the occurrence.

Various academics contend that sharing stories in an episodic instead of a thematic approach can help to shift public discourse on social matters and build support for practical policy approaches to today's most pressing social concerns (Ibid). Although this type of frame is frequently utilized in political coverage, majority research on media and communication show that, comparing to the strategic and issue frames which are widely employed in the West, personality-centered and episodic frames are not as frequently employed.

#### **G. Personality-Centered Frames**

Individual actors frequently receive priority in personality-centered frames, which take a human-interest perspective on situations and minimize political and institutional issues (Bennett, 1988). Porto claims that when describing the phrase "human-interest" frame, this form of frames concentrates on the personal traits of the nominee as well as other important

performers' skills and traits, as well as electors' perceptions of the actors as people (Porto, 2001). Personality-centered frames, often referred to as "Image frames," may extend beyond the display of the candidates' individual traits, such as mannerism, speech method, and political viewpoint.

#### **H. Strategy and Issue**

Candidates give a ton of speeches, put out a lot of position papers, and present a lot of promises and plans to the electorate throughout political campaigns. However, political news reporting frequently gives the impression that it is more interested in "horse race" issues like candidate strategy and polling results. Researchers in communications Joseph Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (2003) looked at how these two frame types—"issue" and "strategy"—affected people's perceptions of political trust. They carried out experiments that showed when people watch politics described using the strategy frame, they display higher degrees of political cynicism, or

skepticism, than when the campaign is addressed by putting the focus on the relevant topics (cited on Sterling, 2009)

The phrase "issue framing" refers to interpretive patterns that concentrate on politicians' positions and proposals on certain issues. This type of framework provides a clear picture of the competitors' stances on particular issues. In campaigning coverage, issue framing places an emphasis upon policy topics, challenges, and remedies. Rhee claims that this frame or manner of reporting presents recommendations for issues, information concerning who is supporting which policy alternatives, and outcomes of the issues and proposals (Rhee, 1997). This kind of framing is frequently used by politicians to discuss policy issues pertaining to particular topics such as the economy, education, jobs, etc.

### **2.11.5 Framing Techniques**

Information can be located, perceived, identified, and labeled using frames. According to Goffman (1974), we categorize, label, and interpret our experiences in an effort to make sense of them. Kuypers (2002) stated that the media use frames, which are composed of specific terms, metaphors, concepts, and symbols; they work by emphasizing some characteristics of reality over others. This statement helped to clarify how the public is formed by media news presentation. Additionally, researchers Goffman, Gamson, and Modigliani (1989) provide five different framing strategies, including metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, portrayals, and visual images.

In the media framing study of eleven mechanisms, Tankard suggests the "list of frame" method as a substitute: headlines, subheads, images, photo captions, leads, choice of sources or affiliations, choice of quotes, pull quotes, logos, statistics, chart, graphs, and concluding statements or paragraphs of articles (Tankard 2003, p.111–121).

According to Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) basic tools of framing techniques includes:

- Metaphor: the use of an analogy to clarify a conceptual idea.
- Stories (myths, legends): to vividly and enduringly frame a topic via narrative.
- Tradition (rituals, ceremonies): cultural norms strongly related to artifacts that provide value to the everyday.

- Slogans, lingo, and catchphrases—using a memorable phrase to frame an object can help it become more memorable and relatable.
- An artifact is a visual or cultural phenomena that has intrinsic symbolic value and is more meaningful than the object itself.
- Contrast is to describe an object in terms of what it is not is to contrast it.
- Spin: the presentation of a concept in a way that implies a value judgment (positive or negative) that may not be immediately obvious; this by definition introduces bias.
- Framing and Personal Aspects

Instead of automatically responding to newly received information, people frequently process it in accordance with their pre-existing worldviews. Sometimes people may reject or disregard this new information, and they will continue to perceive, comprehend, and retain things in the same way. As a result, media effects like framing may depend on how well a frame meshes with people's pre-existing knowledge systems and the dominant ideas in a particular society. It's possible that certain frames just don't register with their viewers. The chance of frame transfer decreases with the media frame's congruence to a person's schemas (Sterling 2009).

The majority of the studies on framing that were covered above were conducted in lab settings, which don't quite mirror how people actually consume media. According to some researchers, framing effects are transient and it may disappear fast, especially if consumers debate media texts with others who might hold divergent opinions.

However, the fact that framing can be influenced by both individual circumstances and the environment in which the message is being received should not lessen the significance of framing. There is an overwhelmingly large amount of research that suggests how a story is conveyed can have a substantial impact on how the public perceives key political personalities and larger social themes.

Because of this, Knight (1999) asserted that frames are effective systems that can help clarify and resolve issues and influence public opinion. In some circumstances, the way that the media frame a subject can influence not only attitudes and also actions and conduct ( cited in An and Gower 2009: 107).

### **2.11.6 Media Framing**

How a specific media outlet frames an event is referred to as media framing. A media frame is theoretically defined by Gamson and Modigliani (1987, p. 137–177) as a primary organizing principle or plot that gives meaning to a developing sequence of events. The frame makes it clear what the main contention and concern are. A central organizing theme of the storyline that gives meaning to an event is what media frames are, according to scholars like Scheufele (1999). Tuchman (1978) provided a definition for media frames that reads, "The news frame organizes everyday reality and the news frame is part and parcel of everyday reality. The news frame is an essential feature of news."

Gitlin (1980) provides a more thorough explanation, conceptualizing frames as rules of choice, emphasis, and presentation in relation to what is real, what happens, and what is important. Frames stress a specific facet of life rather than portraying reality as it is through selection and focus.

Gamson and Modigliani (1989, p. 37-177) assert that at least three factors—cultural resonances, sponsor activities, and media practices—determine the media frames. Media frames are also influenced by journalistic standards, political ideology, and culturally ingrained perceptions, according to Dimitrova and Stromback (2008, p. 203-220).

In order to interest its readers, viewers, and audiences, media do more than just present information; they also give some context and omit others. For instance, a tabloid publication would focus on the effects of a drought on people, whereas a more serious publication might emphasize its political and economic ramifications. The same story may be presented differently in two newspapers by their selection and emphases of various facets or perspectives of the same subject (Gibbs and Warhover, 2002).

Media frames are also used by journalists as working routines that enable them to quickly analyze and categorize information and "package it for efficient conveyance to their viewers" (Gitlin, 1980). The sender's intention can be included in this media framing idea, but there is also the possibility of unconscious motives (Gamson, 1989, p.157–166). The demands on media

organizations are greater than those on most other sectors, thus they concentrate on unique and surprising stories, especially drama, to draw readers (Rindova et al. 2006, p.50–71).

Journalists, like all humans, have limited cognitive capacity and may be influenced by their personal frames of reference (Scheufele, 1999). Framing, according to Valkenburg, Semetko, and de Vreese (1999), is a specific way that journalists put together a news item to maximize audience accessibility. The media chooses which news to report and highlights certain issues, personalities, and problems while ignoring others (McCombs and Shaw, 1972, p.176-187).

### **2.11.7 Media Framing Determinants**

Several things can have an impact on framing. According to Scheufele (1999), there are a variety of socio-structural, organizational, and individual, as well as ideological, aspects that might affect how a journalist frames a story. He also highlighted five factors, including social norms and values, organizational demands and limits, pressure from interest groups, journalistic routines, and journalists' ideological or political orientations, that could potentially influence how journalists frame a problem or an event. During election seasons, when the populace has a say in the political system of their nation, it is more customary in Ethiopia for media outlets to frame their election-related news stories and political parties.

### **2.11. 8 Factors related to politics**

Due to the meddling of government officials and other interested parties in the media's independent operation, particularly during the time of national elections, the issues facing the press in Ethiopia have gone through many ups and downs. It is important to frame political parties either positively, negatively, or neutrally in order to facilitate the press's participation during an election.

Skjerdal claims in his doctoral dissertation, which was presented to the University of Oslo, that despite rumors coming from various sources, direct government interference in news production is uncommon. "Each state media outlet's editors-in-chief are entrusted with the duty to guide their organization in accordance with journalistic standards and editorial guidelines, yet there are plenty of opportunities for error to occur.

reports of higher officials and government representatives calling journalists directly to voice their displeasure with their work; although direct criticism of government ministers is unusual, an Ethiopian Herald journalist claims that "if you criticize a minister, the minister will call immediately." A long-time editor with ENA reports that "there are times when news, especially political news, is read through the telephone directly and edited by officials."

Although this may have been standard practice in the past, it is no longer the norm. This could be a sign that officials and other public figures are more aware of the differences between the political environment and the media, at least in terms of routine news coverage (Skjerdal, 2012).

### **Economic variables**

The economy presents additional difficulty for Ethiopia's public and private press, with the private press being more affected. Due to low profitability and the nation's extreme poverty, the majority of newspapers have a low circulation. Ashenafi Gudeta cited Gebremedhin (2006) who stated that "High levels of poverty, poor literacy rates, and expensive distribution outside of the capital Addis Abeba have not created conditions that are favorable for media investment and expansion. Newspapers can dissolve their pacts with political parties and declare themselves independent thanks to higher advertising revenues, but Ethiopian publications are suffering from the lack of the advertisers".

The print media in Ethiopia is struggling due to the aforementioned issues as well as the steadily rising cost of printing and stationery products, which finally causes a huge number of papers to leave the market due to competition, poor sales, and a lack of advertising revenue ( Ashenafi , 2012). Therefore, the presence of financial insecurity in the media can be seen as one of Ethiopia's private and government media's main difficulties that either directly or indirectly affects how political parties are framed.

### **Professional Issues**

According to Gebregziabiher, who was referenced in Hailemarkos (2006), the private press is primarily responsible for the government's unenthusiastic reporting of the absence of professional journalists and a code of ethics as a major issue. Additionally, he recommended giving journalists extensive training and creating codes of ethics for professionals. Although self-censorship is most frequently associated with the private media, when writers limit themselves to

avoid harsh responses from authorities, it is also evident in the state-owned media (Hailemarkos , 2006).

Although these unsettling causes and anticipated responses in the state media may not be as strong as in the private one, journalists worry that defying the accepted standards may have additional negative effects, such as lost opportunities for promotion and general misery in the workplace. The circumstances force media professionals to frame the news's contents and its target viewers in particular ways.

## **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Methodology and design**

Commonly there are two main approaches to research, namely quantitative approach and qualitative the quantitative approach involves the collection of quantitative data, which rigorous quantitative analysis in a formal and rigid way. Meanwhile, the qualitative approach uses the method of subjective assessment of opinions, behavior and attitudes.

In this study, qualitative research approach predominantly and quantitative method to support the qualitative approach with qualitative. According to (Creswell, 2009) qualitative is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of

looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation.

Quantitative research may be a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, are often measured, typically on instruments, in order that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. The ultimate written report has a set structure consisting of introduction, literature and theory, methods, results, and discussion (Creswell, 2008, p.23). Like qualitative researchers, those that engage in this form of inquiry have assumptions about testing theories deductively, building in protections against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and having the ability to generalize and replicate the findings. Therefore, a quantitative research method deals with quantifying and analysis variables so as to get results. It involves the utilization and analysis of numerical data using specific statistical techniques to answer questions like who, how much, what, where, when, how many, and how.

Expanding on this definition, Aliaga, and Gunderson (2002), describes quantitative research methods as the explaining of an issue or phenomenon through gathering data in numerical form and analyzing with the help of mathematical methods; in particular statistics. Therefore, qualitative methods to analyze contents based on the given criterion and quantitative methodology to describe measurable issues in quantity is the appropriate methodologies together to conduct this study.

### **3.2. Sampling technique and Size**

The sampling technique that is employed for this study is purposive sampling is preferable because of its nature (Walliman, 2006) to give the chance for the researchers to select what he/she thinks is a 'typical' sample based on specialist knowledge or selection criteria. As far as the paper seeks to focus on the coverage of Election, issues related to the election were selected. Hence, Addis Zemen newspaper is a daily newspaper. Two purposively selected newspapers issues from each week were analyzed. To analyze the coverage of election from the Government owned perspective and private one.

It is known that a reporter newspaper is published twice a week, and the two newspapers will be analyzed. A total of 32 issues were analyzed, 16 of which were published before polling day and 16 of which were published after polling day. A total of 32 issues were analyzed. Therefore, the sample size of this study is 32 issues from the two selected newspapers.

### **3.3. Data sources and Subjects of the study**

Secondary data was used to collect the appropriate data to conduct this study. The two selected newspapers, namely The Reporter and Addis Zemen newspapers were the data sources. The texts, photos, headlines, places, and stories are the main inputs for this study. The Addis Zemen newspaper is the daily newspaper and is government owned. However, the reporter newspaper is one of Ethiopia's most influential privately owned newspapers, and it is published twice a week (on Sunday and Wednesday). Therefore, Addis Zemen and the reporter newspapers are the subjects of the study, and all of the data collected from the two newspapers is included.

As David Burton cited in Hailemarkos (2005), there are four categories used as a coding category to analyze election reporting. Therefore, the researcher will use the six categories of coding as it is.

1. Total coverage
2. Placement of stories
3. Headlines
4. Photo
5. Tone
6. Frame

On the bases of the above categories four code sheets were prepared and used as an instrument to collect the data. The code sheets are prepared in such a manner that can show how or with what frequency news stories in the selected newspapers appear in relation to the listed four categories.

### **3.4. Method of data collection and analysis**

One popular method or instrument for qualitative research is content analysis, which is used to examine the characteristics of the content. This method of quantifying qualitative data involves grouping data and contrasting various informational components to condense it into actionable insights. On the other hand, Content analysis, used for gathering data from the chosen

newspapers, was utilized to gather the necessary data. It was described as "a research method that uses a series of procedures to make reliable inferences from inferences" by a number of academics (Weber, 1990:9). Determine the presence of particular words, ideas, or concepts in a text using content analysis. Researchers can also use it to quantify and examine the frequency, significance, and relationships of particular words, topics, or concepts. According to Busha and Harter (1980), content analysis is used to identify and quantitatively quantify the occurrence of particular words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences inside texts. Content analysis can be used to any printed resources, including books, written texts, periodicals, newspapers, and other printed materials. A research method called content analysis is used to identify the presence or absence of specific terms or concepts in texts or collections of texts.

### **3.5. Method of data analysis and interpretation**

This study used content analysis as the primary method of data analysis, both qualitatively and quantitatively. In order to examine the frequency of coverage, tone, topics, sources of information, and frames of articles used to debate the political parties, a coding sheet was established based on prior research and the review of literature. The information was acquired by carefully reading the sample newspapers' news, features, and articles.

### **3.6 Unity of Analysis**

The editorial and news articles published in the chosen newspapers that are directly related to the election will be the unit of analysis employed in this study. An editorial is an article produced by the editor of a newspaper or magazine or under their supervision, as well as a press release that is read out on radio or television. Editorials provide thoughts on significant current social, political, economic, or legal issues with the goal of persuading readers to support a specific viewpoint. Editorials represent the opinions of media firms' owners, managers, or board of directors (Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001).

And news is information which is transmitted from sources to audiences, with journalists- who are both employees of bureaucratic commercial organizations and members of a profession - summarizing, reasoning, and altering what becomes available to them from sources so as to

make the information suitable for their audiences (Gans, 1980, p.80). Therefore, the unit of analysis for this study was editorials and news stories directly related with election.

## **Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter is focused on data analysis and discussion. 179 election related issues were quantitatively analyzed from the two selected newspapers. Additionally, the chapter has two sections. The first section is about quantitative data analysis and the second section is qualitative data discussion of findings. The two sections presented as follows:-

### **4.1. Quantitative Data Presentation**

The study has employed content analysis techniques to assess the coverage of newspapers on Ethiopian sixth election relating to the categories of coding of approach mentioned above, the quantitative data presented.

*Table 4.1. Frequency distribution of stories published on Addis Zemen and Reporter Newspapers regarding the 2021 Ethiopian national election*

		<b>Frequency</b>	
<b>Publication</b>	Addis Zemen	75	41.8%
	Reporter	104	58.1%
<b>Total</b>		179	100%

As indicated in table 4.1, the two newspapers published 179 stories about the election and electoral campaign. During the campaign and election period, Addis Zemen published 75 articles and news stories about election-related issues. On the other hand, the privately owned Reporter newspaper published 104 election-related news and stories. When we compare the average publication of the two newspapers, the reporter newspaper gave more coverage than Addis Zemen, which means the reporter gave 104(58.1%) than the Addis Zemen, which is 75 (41.8%). The media play a vital role in the struggle to shape the public agenda during the campaign period (Walgrave and Aelst, 2004: 31-47). This clearly showed that the reporter newspaper gave more coverage than the Addis Zemen newspaper. Beyond comparing, the two newspapers gave enough attention to the election and played a great role in creating awareness about it.

The media plays a role in the creation of awareness among the people about democracy and the election system. The media facilitates information sharing and access for nation's residents. Voters typically obtain the data they need before considering it while making decisions. Voters are impacted by political communications, presuming they are aware of and receptive to the information (Zaller, 1992). As a result, the two publications were extremely important in the election.

**Table 4. 1 Media frame while covering election 2021**

	Addis Zemen		Reporter		Total	
	No	%	No	%	Number	Percent
Conflict frame	13	17.33%	29	27.88%	42	22.6%
Human interest frame	17	22.66%	24	23.07%	41	22.86%
Responsibility frame	29	38.66%	30	28.84%	59	33.75%
Morality frame	9	12%	11	10.57%	20	11.285%
Economic consequences frame	7	9.33%	10	9.61%	17	9.47%

As indicated in the above table, the responsibility frame is the dominant frame used by the two newspapers. As the data showed, this dominant frame shared 33.75% of the total publications.

The next dominant frame used by the two newspapers was the human interest frame, which was shared at 22.86% of the total publication. Another frame, which shared 22.6% of the total publication, was the conflict frame. The remaining two frames, which are morality and economic consequence frames, shared 11.285% and 9.47%, respectively. Conflict news frames can have polarizing effects on audiences by causing them to align with one of the conflicting parties or enhance perceptions of social identity (Han & Federico, 2018). When we compare the framing styles of the two newspapers, we find that the two newspapers used the word "responsibility" dominantly. In contrast to this, the conflict frame registered the second dominant frame used by the reporter newspaper, which occupied 29(27.88%) of the total coverage.

On the other hand, Addis Zemen newspaper's human interest frame as a second dominant frame, which occupied 17(22.66%) of the total publication. This human interest frame registered as a third most dominant frame in the reporter newspaper. The remaining two frames, morality and economic consequences, received the lowest percentage of the two newspapers. Therefore, according to the data, the responsibility frame was the preferred frame by the two newspapers. The responsibility frame focuses on media discussions of personal or governmental duties. Focus areas include finding answers, pressing issues that need attention, or exploring ways that the government might be able to help (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000: 93-109). When an actor is highly controllable and deliberate, a responsibility frame is frequently used (An & Gower, 2009: 107–112).

**Table 4. 2; Frequency distribution of media frames against story type in Addis Zemen newspaper**

		Frame type						
			Conflict frame	Human interest frame	Attribution of responsibility frame	Morality frame	Economic consequences frame	Total
Story type	News story	no	12	16	28	8	7	71
		%	16%	21.33%	37.33%	10.66%	9.33%	94.6%

	Editorial	No		2	2			4
		%		50%	50%			5.33%
Total								

As indicated in the above table, Addis Zemen newspaper had 71(94.66%) of the total story types as news format. whereas the remaining four (5.33%) stories were classified as editorial. Of those news stories, 28(37.33%) were framed as a responsible news frame. In this context, the media discusses obligations, either on a national or personal level.

Focus areas include finding answers, pressing issues that need attention, or exploring ways that the government might be able to help (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).whereas 16(21.33%) of the news stories were framed as human interest. 12 (16%) of the news stories were framed as conflict frames, which is the third dominant frame, and the remaining two frames, which were morality and economic consequence frames, shared 8 (10.66%) and 7 (9.33%), respectively. On the other hand, four story types that were published as editorial occupied human interest and responsibility frames.

**Table 4. 3Frequency distribution of media frames against story type in Reporter newspaper**

		Frame type						
			Conflict frame	Human interest frame	Attribution of responsibility frame	Morality frame	Economic consequences frame	Total
Story type	News story	no	29	24	26	11	10	100
		%	29%	24%	26%	11%	10%	
	Editorial				4			4
		%			100%			
Total			<b>29</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>104</b>

As shown in the table above, reporter newspaper stories accounted for 100 (96%) of all story types. whereas the rest of the four (4%) stories were identified as editorial types of stories. Of those news stories, 29(29%) were framed as conflict news stories. Whereas 26(26%) of the news stories were framed as a responsibility frame. 24 (24%) of the news stories were framed as human interest frames, which is the third dominant frame, and the remaining two frames, which were morality and economic consequence frames, shared 11 (11%) and 10(10) respectively. On the other hand, 4 story types that were published as editorial occupied responsibility frames.

**Table 4. 4 Percentage of sources used in the newspapers**

News Sources	Addis Zemen	Reporter	Total
Government	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>
Opposition	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>
International	-	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Civic society	<b>12</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>50</b>
Ordinary people	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>

As mentioned in the above table, 41(57.33%) of the stories published in the Addis Zemen newspaper were written by journalists working for the media institutions while the source of the stories was not determined. On the other hand, 45 (43.26%) of the reporter stories were prepared by the journalists of the institution. Civic Society is used 38 times in the reporter newspaper, as compared to 12 times in the Addis Zemen newspaper. The government was used eight times as a source in the two newspapers. An international source was never used in the Addis Zemen newspaper, but the reporter sourced once. Finally, ordinary people were used as sources seven times in the Addis Zemen newspaper and five times in the Reporter newspaper. The civic

societies used as sources in both newspapers were the Human Rights Commission, the National Election Board of Ethiopia, religious institutions, youth associations, labor organizations, and women's associations. The publication only uses the European Union as an international source of news. According to Kadirgamar (2005), both organized and unorganized groups, the current government, political parties, the armed forces, police, and election adjudicating bodies, as well as civil society, must accept and support the process rather than undermining it through violence, intimidation, or any other illegal means. Therefore, it is feasible to state that the two publications' preparation of the news and stories employed various sources.

Table 4. 5 **Tone of the story**

Tone of the story	Tone for the governing party		Addis Zemen	Reporter
		Positive	8	32
	Neutral			
	Negative		11	
	Tone for the opposition party	Positive	4	16
		Neutral		5
		Negative		

As indicated in the above table, out of the total stories of the reporter newspaper, 64 (61.53%) stories dealt with the political parties, and the rest 40 (38.46%) stories were about elections and electoral related issues. In contrast with the reporter newspaper, only 12 (16%) of Addis Zemen's stories deal with the political parties. The remaining 63 stories (84%) are about the general election and electoral issues. When it comes to the tone of the story, the governing party was negatively framed 11 times more in the reporter than in Addis Zemen newspaper, which was not negatively framed.

On the other hand, the reporter newspaper positively framed the ruling party 32 times, while Addis Zemen newspaper positively framed the ruling party 8 times. From the opposition party side, the reporter positively framed 16 times, whereas Addis Zemen framed 4 times. None of the newspapers negatively framed the opposition parties. The reporter framed the opposition parties neutrally five times, but the Addis Zemen newspaper never neutrally framed either the government or the opposition parties.

Table 4. 6Parties sourced in headline

Newspapers		Frequency of parties sourced		
		Ruling party	Opponents	Total
<b>Addis Zemen</b>	Positive	6	3	
	Negative			
	Neutral			
<b>Reporter</b>	Positive	9	4	
	Negative		2	
	Neutral	2		

As mentioned in the above table, which deals with how many times each party was used as the source of the headlines in each newspaper, the newspapers used the party's views as their source to make headlines. Headlines are also believed to be elements of newspapers where readers are

most likely to process them (Michelle, 2004). As the most read part of a newspaper, headlines can definitely be favored. In the government-owned Addis Zemen newspaper, the ruling party was the source of the headline in 6 out of 8 headlines when it had a positive tone. This newspaper sourced the opposition parties in 3 out of 8 headlines when it had a positive tone. On the other hand, the privately owned newspaper sourced the government in 9 out of 13 headlines when it had a positive tone. Also, this newspaper sourced the opponents in 4 out of 13 headlines when it had a positive tone. The Addis Zemen newspaper does not source either the ruling party or its opponents negatively or neutrally. Contrarily, the reporter sourced the opponents twice when it had a negative tone and the governing party twice when it had a neutral tone.

Table 4. 7**Placement of the story**

Newspapers	Frequency of parties sourced				
	Ruling party		Opponents		Total
	Front	Home	Front	Home	
<b>Addis Zemen</b>	2	2	1	3	8
<b>Reporter</b>	15	37		5	57

As mentioned in the above table, out of 75 stories published in Addis Zemen newspaper, only 8 stories deal with the issues of the ruling and opponent parties. Under this variable, the reporter newspaper gave more emphasis to the parties' issues. Out of 104 stories, 57 stories dealt with parties' issues. Of 52 stories focused on the ruling parties, 15 were published on the front page and the rest, 37, were published on the home page of the newspaper. Out of 57 stories, only 5 focused on the opponent's party and all of the 5 stories were published on the home page of the newspaper. In contrast to this, Addis Zemen newspaper published 2 stories on the front page and 2 stories on the home page of the ruling party. Additionally, 1 story was published on the front and 2 stories on the home page of the newspaper.

Table 4. 8Photos

Newspapers	Tone	Frequency of parties sourced				Total
		Ruling party		Opponents		
		Candidate	Supporters	Candidates	Supporters	
<b>Addis Zemen</b>	Positive	2		5		7
	Negative					
	Neutral					
<b>Reporter</b>	Positive	5		6		11
	Negative					
	Neutral					

As the data indicated, most of the stories published in the selected newspapers were texts. Some of the stories presented are combined with photos and text. From those stories, Addis Zemen newspaper only used 7 photos of the governing and opposition parties. On the other hand, the reporter used 11 photos of the ruling and governing parties. Out of 7 photos published in Addis Zemen newspaper, 2 positively framed candidate's photos from the ruling party and 5 positively framed candidate's photos from the opposition party. On the other hand, the reporter newspaper presented five positively framed candidate's photos from the ruling party and six positively framed candidate's photos from the opposition parties. Berger (2002) notes that during elections, the role of the media includes: scrutinizing parties and candidates; exposing electoral irregularities; and educating the public to participate in "free and fair elections. None of the two newspapers negatively framed the candidate's photo from the two sides. Also, they didn't publish supporters' photos from the two sides.

## 4.2 Qualitative Discussion and Findings

In this section the researcher tries to discuss the evaluation of news story coverage on both selected News papers based on the coding categories qualitatively.

### 1. Election Coverage

The media plays a great role during an election. Voters can get enough information about the election, candidates, policies, strategies, and others. This is all provided to the voters through the media. Therefore, this makes the role of the media during an election tremendous. Voting intentions are strongly influenced by media coverage; the trend to vote for a specific party is associated with positive media coverage (Dewenter, Linder, & Thomas, 2019: 245-261). Another study conducted earlier proved this assumption and reality. The media play a vital role in the struggle to shape the public agenda during the campaign period (Walgrave and Aelst, 2004: 31-47). The media plays a role in the creation of awareness among the people about democracy and the election system. The media helps people or citizens of the country share, get fair and appropriate information. In the decision-making process, voters tend to gather the necessary information before evaluating it. Political messages affect voters, assuming they are exposed and open to receiving the data (Zaller, 1992:21).

The findings of this study are consistent with other studies conducted before. As the finding revealed, the selected newspapers gave enough coverage for the election. Other studies' findings showed the trend that Ethiopian media gave enough coverage of the election. Therefore, this study's findings are consistent with Hailemarkos (2005), Ashnefa (2012), and Yared (2019). This could be the media making covering the election their main duty and responsibility.

## **2. Framing**

The way journalists and editors frame the news can influence the attitude and perception of audiences. Kuypers (2002) explained how the public is shaped by media news presentations by stating that the media use frames, which are composed of certain keywords, metaphors, concepts, and symbols; they work by highlighting some features of reality over others. During an election, the media frame is a very critical issue and it influences the attitude of the voters. Frames can influence beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the target audience if they are effective (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009: 17–33). In this case, the finding of this study showed that the media institutions used to represent the political parties. The finding is inconsistent with Ashneafi (2012). His finding reveals that the conflict frame was the most dominantly used frame, followed by the attribution of responsibility and economic consequence frames. A responsibility frame

covers the responsibility of a government, an individual, or a group related to an issue or problem. It is when the media talks about responsibilities, either at a governmental or individual level. Focus areas are solutions, matters requiring urgent actions, or discussing the governments' possibilities to ease the problem (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The morality frame and the human interest frame were the least used frames by the selected newspapers. But, under this study, responsibility frame is the most dominantly used frame, followed by conflict and human interest frames. Also, in contrast with his finding, the economic frame is the least used frame by the selected newspapers in this study case. The reason could be the agreement and understanding between the political parties. It may need further study.

### **3. Source of news**

During election time, the media institutions used different sources when they prepared the news about the election. There are many concerned bodies that are involved when the election process is started. The participants are the government, parties, civic organizations, international organizations, ordinary people, researchers, and others. For producing balanced news, it is better to involve all the concerned bodies in the articles and other writings. When the findings of this study compare with the earlier studies conducted in the same area, there is inconsistency. The study which is incontinence is Ashenafi (2012), as his finding revealed government officials, followed by opposition parties, were the most commonly used sources in newspapers, with little attention paid to research and community members. In contrast to his findings, the selected newspapers drew their information from civic society, followed by government officials. This could be because of the role of the national board of elections and other civil societies have improved, but it needs further study to prove this. Civic participation is a key ingredient for successful transformations and effective reforms in political sectors (Baron, Vandello, & Brunzman, 1996: 915–927). Additionally, his findings showed that the government-owned newspaper relied on sources from government officials, whereas the privately owned newspapers

relied on sources from the opposition parties. Contrarily, the two newspapers relied on civic society under this study.

#### **4. Tone of the story**

The media is usually the way people find out about the elections and the political choices. The media needs to be free to report fairly on the campaigns of all the political parties so people can determine if there are differences between them (Howard, 2004: 8-16). Related to the tone of the story, the finding is inconsistency with other findings already mentioned in the literature review parts. The government-owned Addis Zemen newspaper praised both the ruling and opposition parties. The privately owned reporter newspaper, on the other hand, used both positive and negative tones for the ruling parties and only positive tones for the opposition parties.

The studies which are inconsistent with this finding are Hailemarkos (2006) and Markos (2006). For example, Markos's finding showed that almost 84% of the stories in both newspapers were imbalanced. Interestingly, the two newspapers used a positive tone for the governing and opposition parties in most of the stories. The reason for this finding's inconsistency could be the improvement of press freedom, but it needs further studies.

#### **5. Photos**

As Michelle (2004) points out, photos are the typical point of entry on a newspaper page or the part of the newspaper that draws readers' eyes first. It is therefore believed that the use of photos can influence the public perception of a person or event. The photo of the candidates may attract the attention of the readers, and it may also be a source of humiliation or appreciation for the candidates and their parties. The selected two newspapers didn't give emphasis to the photos of the candidates. The Addis Zemen newspaper used eight photos of the candidates from the governing and opposition parties. On the other hand, the reporter used 11 photos from the two sides. The two newspapers positively framed the photos from the two sides. When this finding is compared with early studies, it is consistent. As Hailemarkos stated, the newspapers framed the photos of the candidates positively. This study's findings also support the same findings.

## **6. Placement of the story**

As the studies conducted earlier show, placement is usually considered to have paramount importance in detecting bias since it shows prominence. News that people consider important and thus require attention is typically placed on the front pages of a particular medium, whereas news that people consider less important is typically placed on the inside pages (Journalism.org, 2006). The finding revealed that the selected two newspapers placed the election-related stories on their home pages. The privately owned reporter newspaper never placed the opposition parties on the front page, whereas the government-owned Addis Zemen newspaper placed almost equal stories about the two sides on its front page. The findings of this study are inconsistent with Hailemarkos (2006:37). As revealed by his study, the newspapers in question were intentional in favoring a certain group by purposefully placing selected stories on the front page. This study's findings didn't show this kind of favor and bias across the political parties.

## **7. Headline**

The newspapers used the party's views as their source to make headlines. Headlines are also believed to be elements of newspapers where readers are most likely to process them (Michelle, 2004). As the most read part of a newspaper, headlines can definitely be favored. The majority of the headlines in the government-owned Addis Zemen newspaper were from the ruling party when it had a positive tone compared to the opponents. On the other hand, the majority of the headlines in the privately owned newspaper sourced the government when it had a more positive tone than its opponents. This finding disagrees with the scholar Nyamjoh (2005) regarding the ways in which headlines are presented in many African media. The headlines of the private press are usually dedicated to creating bad images of the government; however, the reverse is true for the government press. That means the government media usually writes headlines that propagate the positive images of the government while leaving out any of its wrong deeds. In contrast to this scholarly idea, the privately owned newspaper is dedicated to creating a good image for the government. Also, the government-owned Addis Zemen newspaper didn't leave out the opponents because it framed them positively.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **5.1. Conclusion**

The study found that attribution of responsibility and conflict frames were the dominant frames used by the two newspapers. The two newspapers, which were the reporter and Addis Zemen, dominantly used the attribution of responsibility frame, followed by human interest in Addis Zemen and conflict in the reporter newspaper. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the attribution of the responsibility frame was a dominantly used news frame during Election 2021.

Regarding the election coverage, the study found that the selected two newspapers covered the election. According to the findings, the private-owned reporter and the government-owned Addis Zemen newspaper both played significant roles in the election process. As a result, it is possible to conclude that the selected two newspapers made a significant contribution to the 2021 election.

Related to the representation of the political parties, the selected newspapers tried to positively represent the government and the opponents. The study's finding showed that the government-owned and privately-owned newspapers positively presented the two counterparts in their publication and coverage. Therefore, it is possible to conclude the selected two newspapers tried to treat the governing and opposition parties equally. This shows the improvement of press

freedom in the country. As mentioned by different researchers, there was bias and misrepresentation during the previous election, but such a problem is not identified in this study.

## **5.2. Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the researcher recommended the following points:

- The front page is the most readable part of the newspaper. The political parties should create an agenda that can attract the attention of the newspaper.
- The newspapers should give an emphasis on the international community as well as researchers and scholars when they use a news source.
- It is known that photos attract the attention of readers. Therefore, the newspapers should use the candidates and their photos for the purpose of creating awareness and giving enough information to the voters.

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## Appendices A

The following coding was used throughout the thesis

1. **Total Coverage:** it indicates the amount of election related issued covered in the newspapers
2. **Headlines:** headlines about the election.
3. **Photos:** photos of candidates of political parties, campaign photos.
4. **Tone-** refers to whether the story is positive, neutral or negative.

**Positive-** a story that shows agreement, support, or affirmation to policies, events or actions taken by either Ezema or Prosperity

**Neutral-** a story that favors or assists neither to Ezema nor Prosperity it entertains different views and opinions of an issue or event.

**Negative-** a story that shows disagreement, opposition or denial of policies, events or actions taken by either Ezema or Prosperity

5. **Sources** – refers to name(s) of a person, group or organization that are quoted directly or indirectly in the story as source of the information.

## 6. Frames

**Morality frame** - when the narrative places the incident, issue, or problem in relation to morals, societal norms, and religious beliefs. When a story instructs its audience on what to do or not do, when it incorporates religious or human rights viewpoints, or both.

**Economic frame** – when a situation, issue, or event is discussed in terms of the economic effects it will have on a specific person, group of people, company, or nation.

**Conflict frame** – when the narrative expresses conflict and disagreement between persons, groups, or organizations, or when it presents two or more competing viewpoints or statements.

**Human interest frame**- when the narrative features characters and their testimonies, or when it presents an event, problem, or issue with a human face or an emotional angle.

**Attribution of responsibility frame** – when the story includes characters and their testimony, or when it depicts a situation, a dilemma, or an issue from a human perspective or from an emotional standpoint.

## Appendices B

Coder \_\_\_\_\_

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ 1) Addis Zemen 2) Reporter

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mark each question as yes or no**

**7. Tone** 1) Positive 2) Neutral 3) Negative

**Prosperity**

1) Positive 2) Neutral 3) Negative

**Ezema**

1) Positive 2) Neutral 3) Negative

**8. Sources**

Government officials \_\_\_\_\_

Opposing parties \_\_\_\_\_

Community members \_\_\_\_\_

Researches and researchers \_\_\_\_\_

International organizations \_\_\_\_\_

No specified source\_\_\_\_\_

If other, please specify\_\_\_\_\_

## **Frames**

### **Human Interest Frame**

Does the story contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy or compassion?\_\_\_\_\_

Does the story go into the personal or private lives of the actors?\_\_\_\_\_

Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/ problem?\_\_\_\_\_

Does the story employ adjectives or personal explanation that generate feelings of outrage, empathy caring, sympathy or compassion?\_\_\_\_\_

Does the story provide a human example or “human face” on the issue?\_\_\_\_\_

If other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### **Conflict frame**

Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue?\_\_\_\_\_

Does the story refer to winners and losers?\_\_\_\_\_

Does one party, individual or group criticize another?\_\_\_\_\_

Does the story reflect disagreement between parties, individuals or groups?\_\_\_\_\_

If other, please specify\_\_\_\_\_

### **Morality frame**

Does the story contain any moral message?\_\_\_\_\_

Does the story make reference to morality, God and other religious tenets?\_\_\_\_\_

Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?\_\_\_\_\_

If other, please specify\_\_\_\_\_

### **Economic consequences frame**

Is there a mention of the cost/degree of expense involved?\_\_\_\_\_

Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?\_\_\_\_\_

Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?\_\_\_\_\_

If other, please specify\_\_\_\_\_

### **Attribution of Responsibility**

Does the story suggest the problem requires urgent action?\_\_\_\_\_

Does the story suggest that an individual or group is responsible for the issue/  
problem?\_\_\_\_\_

Does the story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue?\_\_\_\_\_

Does the story suggest that some level of government has the ability to alleviate  
the problem?\_\_\_\_\_

Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the  
issue/problem?\_\_\_\_\_