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**THE PRACTICE OF CONFLICT-SENSITIVE REPORTING BY  
FANA BROADCASTING CORPORATE DURING THE  
CONFLICT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION  
GROUPS IN 2015**

By: JEMAL AHMED

ADVISOR: ELIAS WORKU (PhD)

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF  
JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
IN JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

ADDISABABA, ETHIOPIA

July, 2024

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**ADDISABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**MAY, 2024**

**Addis Ababa University**

## School of Graduate Studies

### Declaration

I declared that the study entitled "the practice of conflict-sensitive reporting by fana broadcasting corporate during the conflict between the government and opposition groups in 2015" is my original work, and I have properly cited the sources of the materials utilized.

With Great Regards

Jemal Ahmed

May 2024

Examining Committee:

External Examiner -----Signature-----Date-----

Internal Examiner -----Signature-----Date ----

Advisor -----Signature -----Date ----

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Chair of the Department of Graduate Coordinator

## **Abstract**

*The media scenery of Ethiopia has been serving the groups controlling power over a long period of time. However, the media is a powerful tool for shaping public opinion. Because of the sensitive nature of conflicts, the media has to take certain considerations when reporting on conflicts. This study examines the practice of conflict-sensitive reporting within the media, focusing on the Ethiopian context with a specific emphasis on the, FBC (Fana Broadcasting Corporate). Against the backdrop of the contemporary political landscape in Ethiopia, characterized by ethnic tensions and political transitions, this research delves into the strategies employed by FBC to promote conflict-sensitive reporting. The study used a qualitative approach, combining content analysis of FBC's news coverage with qualitative interviews conducted among media professionals. By analyzing the framing, language, and tone of news reports, the study assesses the extent to which the media integrates conflict-sensitive reporting principles into its coverage. The researcher used purposive sampling for news content analysis. The study discovered that the attempt at conflict-sensitive reporting by the media is very poor. The interview revealed that the media under study see it as objective and balanced this was however disputed by the content analysis and in-depth interview. Additionally, the findings indicate that FBC's reporting is significantly influenced by its alignment with the government, leading to a polarized portrayal of the conflict. Journalists at FBC face significant challenges in maintaining professional and ethical standards due to political pressures and threats to personal safety. These challenges complicate efforts to report impartially and uphold the principles of conflict-sensitive journalists. The findings shed light on the challenges and opportunities faced by FBC in navigating the delicate balance between journalistic integrity, government interests, and the need to mitigate the risk of exacerbating existing conflicts.*

### **Key words:-**

Conflict-sensitive reporting, Mainstream media, Framing and Themes

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

First and foremost, I am grateful to God, for helping me to complete this thesis.

I would also like to forward my sincere thanks to my advisor, Dr. Elias worku for his committed and unreserved constructive guidance, correction, advice and encouragement in carrying out the research from starting to the final day of submission.

My families, specially my Mother who take me school while she is uneducated, she have had a great role in my success. Thank you very much and I am always proud of you. Of these, Special gratitude is to my mother, Lubaba Issa, Her encouragement has always been instrumental in my success, and she has always been a source of strength for me.

I also want to extend my thanks for Abel Adamu the one who helped in many ways while conducting this study and supported me in many ways. He is the source of unconditional support for me and I thank you for that.

I would also like to acknowledge with a great gratification for all those who directly or indirectly assisted me and participated in giving constructive ideas and suggestions during the study period of postgraduate.

Finally, I would like to thank all the interviewees and all my friends who helped me in the data collection process.

## **Acronyms**

AWTV- Addis Walta Tv

BBC- British Broadcasting Corporate

CSR- Conflict Sensitive Reporting

DW- Dimts Woyane

EBA- Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority

EBC-Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation

EMMA- Ethiopian Mass Media Authority

ENA- Ethiopian News Agency

ENDF- Ethiopian National Defense Force

EPRDF- The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

ERTA- Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency

FBC- Fana Broadcasting Corporate

FM- Frequency Modulation

HPR- House of People's Representatives

IDS- Institute of Development Studies

IMS- International Media System

ISIS- Islamic State of Iraq And Syria

OBN- Oromia Broadcast Network

OLA- Oromia Liberation Army

OMN- Oromia Media Network

TPLF- Tigray Peoples Liberation Front

TV- Television

UN- United Nation

UNDP- United Nation's Development Program

UNESCO- United Nation's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and influencing the dynamics of conflict. In the present political landscape of Ethiopia, the practice of conflict-sensitive reporting holds an immense significance, particularly in light of the internal conflicts that have inflicted substantial harm.

On the positive side, the mainstream media is paying attention and covering everything for us. Mass media therefore ensure social control. However, mainstream media has a direct impact on the psyche of ordinary people. On the negative side, mass media are considered manipulative. Joseph Klapper, author of "The Influence of Mass Communication," once wrote that 'mass media does nothing more than create consent'. This negative impact of mass media becomes even more apparent when societies are threatened by violent conflict. (1967 p, 326).

Getnet (2019) asserted that the role of the media in exacerbating conflicts in a specific country can either expand or diminish. Hence, an examination of media coverage on the Ethiopia conflict post the withdrawal of National Defense Force troops in June 2021 is warranted. It is crucial to scrutinize the portrayal and dissemination of the armed conflict in Ethiopia by mainstream media outlets such as FBC. According to Aemere (2015), Ethiopian media operates within intricate circumstances, emphasizing that the portrayal of conflict narratives should not be oversimplified compared to other news coverage. Effective conflict reporting necessitates a heightened level of analytical aptitude, comprehensive data, and adeptness to prevent escalating violence and agitating existing tensions. It is imperative to acknowledge that the media plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative of the conflict, thereby underscoring its significance.

Journalists face greater difficulties in countries affected by conflict and human insecurity, such as Ethiopia, where information may be censored or unreliable as rival sides try to control mainstream media. Conflicts in Ethiopia, often involving dialogue, religion, ethnicity, or politics,

have occasionally been a cause for concern; it is one of the main problems arising from the culture of society throughout the country. Especially since the commencement of the war in the Tigray region, which resulted in significant loss of human life and billions of birr, and the ongoing conflict in the Amhara and Oromia regions with opposition groups, the role of the mainstream media in disseminating information about these events has been crucial.

Media is at the center of conflict coverage as it plays an important role in easing tensions and reducing and containing conflicts. However, the recent increase in conflicts is alarming, as they fail to play a role in de-escalating conflicts, finding solutions, and setting agendas. The mainstream media is committed to tolerance and social responsibility for the national integration of all ethnic groups in Ethiopia.

As per Stefanie (2016), it has been elucidated that media frames play a pivotal role in shaping opinions through accentuating specific values, facts, and other factors, attributing them with heightened significance. The portrayal of war-related news holds significant importance in enlightening individuals situated far from the conflict zone about the ongoing events and underlying concerns. War news frames distort the actuality and obscure public perception, necessitating the provision of context or elucidation alongside war narratives, leading to the establishment of a new frame that aids audiences in recollecting images and explanations from memory and reinforcing them. (Stefanie, 2016).

The power of media to positively or negatively influence people's perceptions of things cannot be overstated. However, most of the time, Ethiopian media coverage of such crises is considered biased, fueling polarization and unethical reporting along the country's borders.

So this master thesis aims to analyze the application of conflict-sensitive reporting to political issues, focusing on a specific case study of FBC news coverage. This study seeks to assess the extent of conflict-sensitive reporting by the FBC, a prominent news outlet in the country. This circumstance prompted the researcher to delve deeper into this issue, thereby paving the way for further exploration in this realm.

## **1.2 Statement of the study**

Reporting conflict issues is susceptible to sensitivity or unbalanced coverage, impacting public perception and political discourse. Identifying the extent to which journalism principles are followed in news reporting is crucial in assessing media ethics and the media's role as an information disseminator in the political domain.

Ethiopia has experienced significant political changes in recent years, including the appointment of a new government and subsequent reforms. These changes have opened up opportunities for media outlets, particularly FBC, to play a vital role in the country's democratization process. However, the media's coverage of conflicts and political issues can have a profound impact on societal stability and the nation's overall well-being. In recent years, the Ethiopian government has made efforts to reform its media landscape and promote more balanced and unbiased reporting. However, these reforms have faced significant challenges due to ongoing political and ethnic divisions, as well as threats to press freedom and independent journalism. In Ethiopia, media organizations face significant operational challenges due to the unstable environment in which problems arise. Based on these conditions, this paper suggests that there is a benefit to greater collaboration and integration of light analysis methods.

A number of studies have explored contemporary media strife in the Ethiopian media. One study found that selected Ethiopian local media tended to minimize the coverage of internal conflicts and hide important elements of the events related to these conflicts. Another study discussed conflict-sensitive journalism, which aims to make conventional news media practices more relevant to conflict resolution by introducing conflict analysis skills to journalists.

Additionally, a report highlighted the polarization and ethnification of the media landscape in Ethiopia, with journalists aligning with their ethnic backgrounds and using sources that support their own ideological or personal interests. These findings suggest that while there have been improvements in media freedom in Ethiopia, there are still challenges in reporting on conflicts, including self-censorship, conflict bias, and the exploitation of media for ethnic agendas.

GetnetEndeg (2019) conducted a study on media framing of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia, comparing coverage by private and government-owned print media. The research concentrated on two regional state-owned media outlets, examining how they portrayed a serious crisis during wartime in their news reports.

In addition, Temesgen (2021) explored global media coverage of the conflict between the Federal Government and Tigray Armed Forces, specifically analyzing BBC and Reuters. Variations in reporting styles among different media outlets were observed, with a focus on these two renowned organizations as case studies.

Gitlin & Hallin (1994) note that war news tends to attract a large audience, evoking strong emotional and intellectual responses. Public opinion is often mobilized significantly during times of conflict, surpassing levels seen in established democracies.

The media, whether local or international, consistently encounters challenges when covering conflicts. There is a tendency for political pressure to prioritize immediate, violent, or dramatic incidents over providing in-depth explanations of underlying issues and backgrounds (International Media Support, 2006).

The editorial policy of Fana Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) stipulates possible conflict arenas by contextualizing them in terms of the country's specific situations. However, the nexus between Ethiopian media outlets' reporting and their editorial policy has not been studied enough.

The selected Ethiopian mainstream media have been found to have minimal coverage of internal conflicts, often silencing important issues and facts. To improve conflict-sensitive reporting, it is important to conduct comprehensive research on the health system impacts of the crises in Ethiopia, including regions affected by the conflict.

Mulatu (2017) posited that a significant correlation exists between the media and conflict, particularly for individuals who adhere to the belief of "if it bleeds, it leads," consequently directing their attention towards conflict due to its high marketability. The portrayal of conflicts amplifies the impact of news media, as evidenced in the study's examination of internal conflict coverage.

There for effective conflict-sensitive reporting is crucial for fostering a comprehensive understanding of complex political situations, promoting tolerance, and facilitating peaceful resolutions within a society. It is important to assess if FBC, widely accessed media outlet, adheres to conflict-sensitive reporting practices while covering political conflicts in Ethiopia.

Media is therefore expected to play an active and all sided role in conflict situations. The constructive role of mainstream media is to create the reality of a peace process that resolves conflicts. Otherwise, the deconstructive role of mainstream media may be demonstrated by the fact that news content may generate violent reactions among conflict participants. Conflict-sensitive reporting is therefore critical to managing peace and conflict situations. (Howard, 2008; Ozuhu-Sulaiman, 2013; Popoola, 2014, 2015).

Advertisements are made by employers with different employees and cultural backgrounds, which can lead to unfair and unethical performance (Dorle, 2020). While news anchors avoid media impartiality and fairness because of their group's influence, others are biased because of their ethnic and political communities. (Monroe 2021). These events reflect the role of the media and lead the public to question the integrity and ethics of the media. Simultaneous reach allows mainstream media to either: It helps resolve or diffuse violent conflicts in society. In conflict sensitive reporting the decision to present one's own story may be beyond that of the victims.

Journalism plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and providing accurate and unbiased information; especially in the context of political news reporting. It is now necessary to evaluate the practices of mainstream media in Ethiopia, focuses on the FBC in its coverage of the conflict and examines how the media lacks objectivity and impartiality in conveying contradictory messages. Fana broadcasting corporation (FBC), is of particular interest due to its potential impact on a wide audience.

In interstate conflicts, the mission statement is important in resolving the conflict. In particular, public media should serve society and solve the problems and conflicts they face. That's why I focused on the main news stories leading up to the Ethiopian conflict since 2020.

FBC, as a major mainstream media outlet in the country, holds significant influence over public opinion and has the potential to either exacerbate or mitigate conflicts through its reporting. This study aims to investigate the practice of conflict-sensitive reporting by the Fana Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) within the current political context of Ethiopia.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. How does Fana Broadcasting Corporate reports conflict news?
2. What are the main sources of news when Fana broadcasting corporate report conflict issues?
3. What are the primary concerns brought up Fana broadcasting corporate when reporting conflict news?
4. How Fana broadcasting corporate entertains conflict news during prime time?
5. What are the major challenges of journalists in balancing the practice of professional journalism in relation to conflict sensitive reporting by Fana broadcasting corporate?

### **1.4 Objectives of the research**

**1.4.1 General objective:** The overall objective of this research is to investigate Ethiopian Media for conflict situations reporting in the contemporary Ethiopian political context by taking FBC Newsroom as a case study. The role and practice of the FBC Newsroom examined with particular emphasis on its contributions on themes like news framing on conflict and its level of coverage on such cases.

**1.4.2. Specific Objectives:** The specific objectives are to

- To assess the coverage of conflict news pertaining to Fana broadcasting corporate's role during periods of conflict.
- To investigate the utilization of sources in the reporting of news and information pertaining to the framing of the reporting.
- To examine the main issues that the media considers when covering news related to conflicts.
- To assess the nature of reporting conflict issues during prime time.

- To identify the major challenges of journalists in balancing the practice of professional journalism in relation to conflict sensitive reporting in Fana broadcasting corporate

## **1.5 Limitations**

This research aims to collect data on conflict-sensitive news or programs from different sources to better understand the current context of this exercise in Ethiopia and why it is important on reporting conflict cases. Because the concept of this study is broad, it also has its own limitations. Many organizations are currently developing or recreating tools to analyze the problem that cannot be shared. Most information regarding conflict analysis is confidential and cannot be shared and Conflicts are not integrated across the economy.

The researcher encounters significant problems during the data collection process in distributing and collecting important information from interview respondents because some respondents do not want to complete the interview for fear of the government. Thus the researcher tried to minimize such challenges by collecting rich and quality primary data added to building confidence with the research participants. The cumulative effect of these factors may affect the result of the study.

## **1.6 Scope of the study**

Different media around the world uses different methods for conflict reporting. However, this study aims to analyze the main role of media conflict reporting in the Ethiopian context: the case of FBC. The study will cover from September to August 2015 E.C. The channel and year is deliberately chosen since there were a number of conflicts and reporting such cases within in the country. The time is selected because the conflict was reached its peak. The conflict was relatively a severe one which forced the country to its state of emergency following the incumbent sides become more powerful. Therefore, all the news and other types of genres broadcasted in the selected media have been included in the sample.

The study's scope is limited to the analysis and focus on FBC. The selection is because I have insiders there. Additionally, it aims to examine reporters and their reporting. The geographical limitation of the study is Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The study's conditions involve all actors involved in a conflict management study, pursuing strategies to control communication and the

flow of information. It was also a convenient media house for the researcher to save time, cost and energy.

Therefore, the research that there is a need to increase balanced news and coverage of civil conflicts to ensure that the public is fully informed of important events and developments. Conflict is common in human history, and the media always likes to report it.

### **1.7 Significance of the study**

The main idea of this research is to give an insight into the mainstream media and the media conflict in the Ethiopian context. So it tries to provide insights into the practice of mainstream media in conflict-sensitive reporting in the Ethiopian contemporary political context.

The results of this study can be used to inform media professionals, policymakers, and other stakeholders about the importance of applying fundamental journalism principles to conflict reporting in the mainstream media.

The study can also be used to develop guidelines and training programs for journalists to improve their conflict-reporting skills.

Additionally, the study can contribute to the development of media policies that promote conflict-sensitive reporting and the protection of journalists in conflict zones. Overall, the practical implications of this paper are to improve the quality of conflict reporting in mainstream media and promote peace building efforts in conflict-affected regions.

The study may have practical implications for the Ethiopian media, emphasizing the need for increased coverage of internal conflicts and addressing the challenges faced by journalists.

The study aims to improve the quality of conflict reporting in mainstream media and promote peace-building efforts in conflict-affected regions. It emphasizes the need for increased coverage of internal conflicts and addresses the challenges faced by journalists. This MA proposal aims to delve into the conflict-sensitive nature of political issue reporting through a case study of FBC news coverage.

This research will contribute valuable insights to the broader discourse on conflict-sensitive reporting in state-controlled media organizations, offering lessons and recommendations for enhancing media's role in fostering dialogue and understanding in conflict-ridden societies.

The research is expected to provide a nuanced understanding of the current state of conflict-sensitive reporting at FBC and its impact on the Ethiopian public. The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on responsible journalism in conflict-prone contexts.

By examining the extent to which FBC adheres to these issues and analyzing the impact on the quality and credibility of their reporting, this research intends to contribute to the understanding of the role of media in political journalism. The findings and recommendations derived from this study can be valuable for media practitioners, policymakers, and researchers interested in promoting ethical and balanced political news reporting.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter is planning to survey the history interrogate about the significance to media girding the conflict. The chapter includes a preface of systems concerning conflict sensitive content, media extent of wars and conflict isn't a new subject to suppose about for media professionals. The chapter ranges, alongside the history of different wars within the globe, widely and locally likewise, has been created through distinctive stages in which different focuses are stressed. This chapter is latterly planned to supply a general picture of war or conflict reporting within the global setting and Ethiopia as well.

#### **2.1. Functions of Media**

Media, as its name implies, serves as a responsible institution for the greater public by providing an accessible platform for societal dialogue on matters of concern. Additionally, it fulfills the role of safeguarding the public from those who possess the ability to operate public entitlements and assets. In contemporary times, the international development community has recognized the significance of unconfined, non- amateur, and diverse media in play part in to effective governance. A vibrant media allows individuals to freely access information, facilitates dialogue, encourages the expression of opinions, promotes increased governmental activity, and fosters responsibility (UNDP, 2017, p.1). Media issues are frequently established by regimes through legislative routines, and while some are subject to wide state running, utmost also retain legal deals of self-reliance witnessing their positions and influence.

The allocation of resources by the owner, whether it is the public or the government, ensures that these media outlets remain free from fiscal dependence. Similar assurances and resource availability enable the media to fulfill its main ideal of serving the society equitably. The main purpose of mainstream media is to make possible the well- being of the people by uncovering cases of mismanagement and advocating for rational authority within the state. This brings to light conflicts of interest among various political sides and claim categories, and it serves the whole individuals impartially, without demarcation/ bias. Being mainstream entails, being

accessible to the entire community or a larger audience. Paulino and Guazina (2016) describe being public as having the potential to reach all individuals and having a broad impact. The notion of inclusivity is inherent in the mainstream, particularly within a democratic context, as it suggests equality between those to whom the collective content has been directed (p.3). Mainstream media address those social absorption and equality in contexts where there is democratic culture and responsible state organizations. However, despite being media outlets that serve the broader public, there are instances where they might prioritize the interests of leaders and party members by concealing cases of state dishonesty and encourage individual engrossment. UNESCO describes these shortcomings as follows.

*The media has the potential to perform multiple functions. However, it is also apparent that in specific situations, the media can strengthen the influence of powerful groups and worsen social inequalities by disregarding critical or marginalized perspectives. In media environments that lack diversity, the media can even contribute to conflict and divisions within society (2007, p.15).*

Hence, the primary objectives of mainstream media involve the distribution of noteworthy information in a manner that is autonomous from governing bodies, sponsors, and other vested parties, while also encompassing diverse content to address a variety of societal issues. In essence, mainstream media serves as the conduit for conveying messages from a source to a wide audience. But some there are some challenges of the mainstream media that may emanate from internal and external sources. In conclusion, the functions of mainstream media encompass surveillance, entertainment, cultural transmission, advertisement, and agenda setting, and etc.

## **2.2. Media History and Media landscape in Ethiopia**

The origins of Ethiopian mass media may be as ancient as the history of printed publications. Ethiopia is among the pioneering nations to benefit from the invention of the printing press. As a result, it was at the forefront of the publishing industry. The publication of newspapers, however, occurred several centuries later, approximately around 1900. During the turn of the 20th century, Semeurd; ethiopie and Aemero emerged in the literary realm (Teffera, 2006). In another publication by Dirbaba (2009), the historical beginnings of Journalism in Ethiopia partly mirror to the early origins of Journalism in Europe nearly 2000 years ago.

The Acta diurnal daily acts constituted an endeavor to inform the general public about the Roman Government and were displayed in public areas. Getachew (2003) and Gebremedhin

(2006), as cited in the historical account of the Ethiopian Press primarily presented by Dirbaba (2009), argue that the nature of Ethiopian media is closely tied to the prevailing government of the time. According to Teffera, cited in (2006), the first printing press was introduced to East Africa during the reign of Emperor Theodros in October 1863. A second printing endeavor was undertaken in Keren, where an Amharic-Geez grammar book was printed by Lazarist missionaries in 1871. With regards to broadcasting media, Teffera (2006) mentions that radio was the first established form of broadcast media in 1935 in the town of Akaki, located in the southeastern part of Addis Ababa. This period is forever etched in Ethiopian history as it coincided with the Italian Invasion. Lastly, on November 2, 1964, the first television broadcast in Ethiopia took place.

The historical origins of mass media in Ethiopia may date back as far as the history of printed publications. Ethiopia is counted among the nations that were early beneficiaries of the invention of the printing press and, consequently, played a leading role in the publishing industry. However, the publication of newspapers did not occur until several centuries later, around the year 1900. It was during the turn of the 20th century that literary publications such as *Semeurd*; *ethiopie* and *Aemero* emerged (Teffera, 2006). In a separate publication by Dirbaba (2009), it is argued that the beginnings of Journalism in Ethiopia partly resemble those of Europe nearly 2000 years ago. The *Acta diurnal* daily acts, which were displayed in public areas, were an effort to inform the general public about the Roman Government. This information is presented by Dirbaba (2009) based on the historical accounts of Getachew (2003) and Gebremedhin (2006), who assert that the nature of Ethiopian media is closely intertwined with the government of the time.

The first printing press was introduced to East Africa during the reign of Emperor Theodros in October 1863, as stated by Teffera (2006). A second printing endeavor took place in Keren, where a grammar book in Amharic-Geez was printed by Lazarist missionaries in 1871. In terms of broadcasting media, radio was established as the first form of broadcast media in the town of Akaki in 1935, according to Teffera (2006). This period is significant in Ethiopian history as it coincided with the Italian Invasion.

The first television broadcast in Ethiopia occurred on November 2, 1964. Ethiopian radio is currently celebrating its eight decades of continuous transmission, while EBC is approaching its fiftieth year since its establishment in 1965. These broadcasting platforms primarily served the

imperial governments at the time, rather than the public, which makes it inappropriate to categorize them as public media. This pattern continued even during the socialist Derg regime. However, following the downfall of the Derg regime in 1991, the freedom of the press was proclaimed and enshrined as constitutional law in 1995 under Article 29. This article clearly outlines the provisions for freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right to access information.

Despite the clarity of these constitutional provisions, concerns have been raised by scholars regarding the insufficient implementation of these provisions. One researcher, Bonde, expressed his reasoning as follows (2018, p.6):

*"Despite the clarity of these constitutional provisions, various articles in the existing media-related laws have been interpreted in a manner that restricts the rights of journalists and the media to express themselves. Ethiopian laws and proclamations that directly or indirectly regulate freedom of expression, media, and journalists have been employed to significantly curtail journalistic freedom and impose severe and arbitrary penalties on the media and journalists for many years." (2018 p.6)*

It took Ethiopia more than a decade to establish private broadcast media in the form of radio, and we had to wait 22 years to have private television stations. It is worth noting that regional state media were established by relocating them from the centralized federal state media in Addis Ababa. These regional state media entities previously operated as departments under ERTA (Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency) in their respective regional languages. Skjerdal (2020) pointed out that the restructuring process, based on regional language, began in the state broadcaster around 2009.

Subsequently, the Tigray and Affaan Oromo departments were moved to regional mass media agencies in Mekelle and Adama, respectively (p.11). In the wake of this commendable decentralization of media, nearly all regions and city administrations established their own media houses under their respective media agencies. Following June 18, 2020, the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority (EBA) provided an updated count of media outlets, revealing the existence of around eight public television media and 18 private television media.

Collectively, the country is home to 26 TV channels. In terms of radio channels, there are approximately 71, with 49 of which being community stations, 12 being private, and 10 being

public. The number of broadcast media outlets is experiencing a significant increase, and the EBA noted that one-tenth of these media outlets are currently undergoing trial transmissions, with additional stations in the preparatory phase.

However, it is worth mentioning that certain broadcast media outlets have ceased operations due to various reasons, resulting in a decline in the overall number of channels. Example, Mulatu's quick media assessment in 2019 reported a higher number of electronic media outlets compared to the update provided by the EBA in 2020. According to Mulatu, there were 29 TV stations (both privately and state-owned) and 72 radio radio, including regional, federal, and community radio channels in the country (2019, p.6).

Sadly, the decline of print media houses is becoming increasingly apparent, resulting in a decrease in both their quantity and circulation when compared to the broadcast media. According to data collected by the Ethiopian Mass Media Authority (EMMA), there are currently only 20 privately owned newspapers and magazines in circulation. Similarly, federal and regional states own and circulate 23 newspapers and magazines, providing information to readers in various languages. The nature of mainstream media, as previously discussed, remains a topic of controversy, encompassing its nomenclature and the purposes it serves.

FBC (Fana Broadcasting corporate) one of the mainstream media in the country, and commenced service in 1994 and presents various contents to its audiences which contains one TV channels, one national radio station and know a days, it has 12 FM stations across the country that gives broadcasting services in different languages. In the realm of media regulation, it is crucial to note that mainstream media, whether state-owned or public, are not interchangeable terms. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2017) provides a clear distinction, stating that a state broadcaster is responsible to the government, while a public media outlet is responsible to the public and parliament. In particular, a state broadcaster operates under the direct authority of the Minister of Information, whereas a public media entity is governed by an independent board of trustees.

It is difficult to distinguish between the two types of media regulation and their financial resources in the Ethiopian context. According to the new mass media policy of 2020, the public broadcast service is an organization established either at the federal or regional level and is answerable to the House of People's Representatives (HPR) or the respective regional council. The government provides the majority or all of its funding. However, there is a concern about

media independence, as the policy emphasizes that these media outlets must operate independently from the government to offer diverse content to the public. In contrast, the UNESCO definition of Public Service Broadcasting defines it as a media platform established, funded, and overseen by the public exclusively for the public.

It is important to note that this type of broadcasting is neither commercially driven nor owned by the state, thus ensuring freedom from political interference and commercial pressures (UNDP, 2017). Defining mainstream media in Ethiopia is difficult, so scholars have classified all federal and regional state media as public media as a result. Mulatu (2019) categorizes media ownership in Ethiopia into three groups: public media, owned by government entities at regional and federal levels; commercial media; and community media. The licensing of commercial and community media started in 2007 (p.6). Similarly, Bonde (2018, p.18) considers regional media as part of the public media sector. Currently, each region in Ethiopia operates its own radio and television stations, known as public broadcasters, under the ownership of regional authorities.

At the federal level, FBC (formerly known as Radio fana) serves as the second broadcast media outlet, transmitting content from its Addis Ababa station. The same pattern is observed in the realm of print media, where the Ethiopian Press Agency distributes newspapers across the country. Addis Zemen and the Ethiopian Herald are some of the oldest daily newspapers. This thesis primarily examines the mainstream broadcast media service, with a particular emphasis on FBC, which functions on a national scale. Fana Broadcasting Corporate is one of the prominent mainstream media platforms that have been providing news and entertainment in local languages for the past three decades in Ethiopia.

It is important to note that the media company in question, the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), is under the authority of other government-owned media organizations, particularly Fana Broadcasting Corporate (FBC). EBC employees perceive Fana Broadcasting Corporate as being better equipped and having a higher journalistic ambition rather than the designated state media outlet (Skjerdal, 2020). However the ongoing political change poses challenges for the media in framing and reporting independently (p.32).

FBC, which is seen as the mouthpiece of the government, does not receive favorable comments from experts, politicians, and government officials. This is especially true in times of conflict when individuals are reluctant to provide neutral opinions to such a media outlet. UNDP's assessment states that conflict or transitional environments often hinder the growth of

independent media, as corruption is prevalent, pay is low, Sources are hesitant to speak to journalists, unions and associations lack strength, and the legislative and regulatory framework is more inhibiting than encouraging of freedom of expression and press (2017, p.6).

Furthermore, the polarization of the media in Ethiopia aligns with the ethnic divisions within the country. FBC, being a public broadcaster at the federal level, does not target a specific geographical or social class audience, public service broadcasters do not encounter any discrimination in any aspect compared to private commercial media within the region, as they have their own community in a certain location (Bonde, 2018, p.38). However, it is unfortunate that the media landscape has become polarized, with two extremes emerging. This polarization, as Skjerdal notes, is different in nature from previous divisions, which were primarily political and centered on private vs. state media. Ethnic interests play a major role in the current polarization, with media organizations frequently labeled according to their support for particular ethnic groups (2020, P.16). Mulatu suggests that this polarization is varied and still has a significant effect on the present media environment. In fact, the Ethiopian media can now be described as being extremely polarized, with four main categories of polarization: pro-government, pro-opposition parties, ethnic interest, and unionism, with the latter promoting unity with less focus on diversity (p.20).

Shifting our focus to local media, the Oromia Broadcast Network (OBN) and Tigray Radio and Television organization were the first official regional public broadcast media organizations. OBN, previously known as the Oromia Radio and Television Organization, and Tigray Radio and Television organization began operating in their respective regional cities in 2009 under the regional mass media agency. However, it is important to note that the Amhara Regional State took the lead in the print media sector with the establishment of the Bekur newspaper in 2001. Today, nearly all regional states have their own media organizations to provide public service broadcasting. The belief that the media The notion that the media has evolved into a significant exogenous factor that influences other political institutions is a contributing factor that has led scholars in comparative politics to start acknowledging media institutions that were previously overlooked, as indicated by Hallin and Mancini (2004) (p.26).

Previously, the mainstream media exhibited a high level of centralization and portrayed the EPRDF coalition as a unified entity. However, according to Skjerdal (2020), regional media outlets have gradually emerged and developed their own distinct identities. As a result, there has

been an increase in division, with organizations in various areas aligning with distinct ethnic groups (p.16). Skjerdal goes on to elaborate that these regional media organizations have received support from other extreme ethnic media outlets that are privately owned. Examples of such outlets include DW, OMN, and Asrat Television. Ownership of media organizations has taken a backseat to their loyalty to specific ethnic groups. For example, in the Tigray region, privately-owned DW works closely with the state-owned Tigray Mass Media Agency to counter media from other areas.

The rivalry between media outlets in the same region with similar ethnic backgrounds has also increased as they aim to accurately represent their respective communities. In pursuit of their respective interests, these outlets tend to emphasize the negative aspects of events, thereby exacerbating conflicts rather than fostering peace and security. Bonde explains that this trend is also evident among professional journalists, who tend to portray their own group in a positive light while adopting a more critical stance towards others when reporting on conflicts between conflicts among nations, areas, and local communities, even in circumstances characterized by elevated levels of expertise and democracy, are unquestionably apparent.

The manifestation of this occurrence is unmistakably evident in Ethiopia, as indicated by the depiction of disputes between regions and specific ethnic groups (2018) (p.37). Before the aggressive confrontation between the TPLF and the Federal Government, regional media establishments were actively endorsing divisions, regardless of the potential consequences.

These media outlets, which are particularly focused on ethnicity, have promoted agendas that favor their respective ethnic groups while undermining others. Consequently, they have played a detrimental role in perpetuating division and animosity within the Ethiopian community, as Mulatu explains (2020) (p.55). Therefore, it can be concluded that media organizations have played a negative role, rather than a constructive one, within the nation. Even after a ceasefire between the two groups has been established in many parts of the country, conflicts still persist.

### **2.3. Concepts and definitions of conflict**

Conflict revolves around the inherent nature of societies possessing collective resources, authority, and principles. In instances where conflict manifests itself through violent means, individuals are burdened with concerns regarding personal safety and potential loss of property. According to Florain's discourse, conflict arises in society because of its inherent structure that fosters conflict, much like how human nature is inclined to experience moments of anger.

Throughout the course of history, there have perpetually existed individuals who possess certain attributes and those who lack them, comprising the powerful and the weak, the dominant and the vulnerable. This affair frequently leads to an ongoing struggle between these divisions.

Conflict can be comprehended through the following three perspectives, namely the institution's capability to:-

1. Comprehend the framework within which it functions.
2. Apprehend the repercussions of its influence and framework.
3. Take action based on this understanding to minimize the adverse effects of conflict and enhance its positive outcomes.

Conflict can be defined in various manners. When discussing conflict, one immediately envisions how differences and disagreements give rise to such occurrences. Conflict can thus be characterized as a situation where multiple individuals or groups endeavor to pursue goals or aspirations that they believe cannot be shared (Howard 2004). Consequently, it can be understood as a disagreement among groups or individuals marked by antagonism and hostility. This is typically fueled by one party opposing another, in an effort to achieve an objective distinct from that of the opposing party. The conflicting parties hold differing sets of principles and values, thereby allowing such conflicts to arise.

Conflict arises within a relationship when the involved parties hold the belief that their respective aspirations cannot be attained simultaneously. Alternatively, conflict may arise when there is a perceived divergence in values, needs, or interests, and the parties intentionally utilize available power to either eliminate, neutralize, or alter one another in order to safeguard or advance their own interests during the interaction. It is worth noting that conflict does not necessarily culminate in violence, as it can be effective for the growth of individuals if properly controlled. In situations where friends, relative, or sets of individuals possess varying perspectives, ideas, or concepts, it is possible for them to engage in debates regarding these differences and ultimately reach a consensus. In this context, the term "differences" encompasses variations in perceptions, interpretations, or views, encompassing factors such as beliefs, traditions and principles. These variances do not always lead to immediate clashes. Numerous intellectuals have provided explanations for these social interactions in human life. Conflict involves a variety of different perspectives that don't always result in hostility. This means that conflict represents a unique outlook or opinion on a particular issue or situation.

Chukwuma, Diri, and Oginibo (2015) unanimously stated that ongoing conflicts in many African countries have exacerbated poverty, human suffering, environmental degradation, and human displacement, creating problems for local and international communities. This unstable situation has led development communication scholars to argue that no development agenda can succeed in the face of conflict. Based on this observation, conflict hinders development and leads to poverty in communities, if not entire societies or countries. The media therefore needs to act as interveners for development purposes during conflicts. However, it is important to note that conflict can also result in devastating consequences for human life and the surrounding environment. This has been exemplified by the conflicts in Ethiopian regions such as Tigray, Amhara, and Oromiya over the past few years, where the power struggle between opposition groups and the federal structure has resulted in significant loss of life among military personnel and civilians.

Conflict is when two or more groups have a struggle involving their values and claims to status, power, and resources, with the aim of neutralizing, injuring, or eliminating their opponents. Scholars have looked at the definition of conflict from different angles, exploring both its causes and effects on human development. Nicholson (1992) sees conflict as a situation of disagreement or hostility between individuals, whereas Folarin (2013) views it as a natural part of human life. Folarin further posits that as long as humans coexist, disagreements will arise due to differing interests and clashes thereof, potentially leading to discord.

Therefore, when a group of people come together, it can lead to the development of strong emotions and connections. Conflict is defined by some scholars as a major disagreement over an issue that one party deems significant, while the other party does not see it in the same way.

#### **2.4. Media and Conflict Reporting**

The media, when functioning independently, can play a crucial role in preventing violent conflicts in any nation. However, in most cases, they are influenced by political and economic realities, seeking advantages in both sectors. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), there are no media professionals who are completely independent of any political interests worldwide. Nonetheless, they can distance themselves from similar interests in order to avoid becoming entangled in conflicts involving different groups and the general public. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) explains that when editorial content is politically aligned, it

can be used as a tool in the battle between rival political groups, promoting divisiveness instead of agreement, hate speech instead of sober debate, and hesitation instead of social trust. In such situations, the media can have an anti-democratic impact, contributing to cynicism towards the government and the decay of democratic institutions. Consequently, people lose confidence not only in the media but also in democratic institutions as a whole. This leads to public apathy and a breakdown of democracy (UNDP, 2017, p. 7). If the public loses trust in the media, especially during times of conflict, the media finds itself in a precarious position.

It is highly likely that people will have less trust in private media compared to public media. State-owned media outlets have historically been closely associated with authoritarian regimes and, to this day, are less critical of the government compared to private media. Considering that despotic and oppressive regimes have recently been in power, citizens of these countries are likely to remain cautious of the media (p. 3). Hallin and Mancini (2004) suggest that in order to produce a robust mainstream media, it is essential to strive for independence from both political and economic influences (p. 13).

Radio, television, newspapers, and magazines give us the opportunity to reach millions of people at the same time with our messages. As technology advances, the media and its impact on society have been growing exponentially. Mainstream media is a means of social interaction, providing each of us with a platform to express opinions and share information on various social and political issues. Understanding the background and context of conflict-sensitive reporting in Ethiopia is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of current media practices and suggesting potential improvements.

## **2.5. Brief Overview of Conflict reporting in Ethiopian media**

We are in an era when conflicts are prevalent in Ethiopia and when it is important to develop maximum sensitivity should the country solve the conflicts in peaceful dialogues. The role of the media is vital here in either conflict resolution or exacerbation through war propaganda. Editorial policies are also meant to shape the narrative, set standards, and draw lines of ethics that media outlets are to expect to establish.

Ethiopia, a nation plagued by numerous conflicts throughout its history, has attracted a diverse array of actors due to its abundant natural resources, as noted by Mano (2012). The conflict in Ethiopia, while sharing similarities with other African conflicts, possesses distinct characteristics. The question revolves around how the media allocates attention and fulfills its designated role. Journalists within the Ethiopian media landscape, encompassing both state-run and privately-owned outlets, have exhibited a nuanced discernment when handling potentially contentious subject matter. Narratives pertaining to religious and ethnic topics necessitate meticulous handling. Numerous such narratives have been withheld from publication altogether if they contain underlying tensions. Despite the persistent challenge that internal conflicts pose to Ethiopian authorities, they have received scant coverage in both government-affiliated and independent newspapers. These conflicts have frequently been depicted through a lens of annihilation, wherein key players, events, and rationales are notably absent from media coverage (Mulatu, 2017). While a significant portion of the process of marginalization has been driven by self-imposed censorship among individual journalists within newsrooms (Skjerdal, 2010), specific content has been outright prohibited from being addressed. Consequently, ethnic matters are intricate not only in the context of the broader political disputes within the nation, but also at the level of minority groups and communities.

Media connects the world, a global village, and a small community. Considering that communication can easily spread in a short time and that mainstream media can shed light on life, but its absence naturally drags people into darkness. As Ethiopia has been experiencing political tensions and conflicts in recent years, the role of mainstream media in such contexts becomes pivotal, as it can either contribute to understanding and resolution or escalate hostilities.

Conceptual conflict management cannot be achieved unless the complexity of conflict is explored and understood. Therefore, it is necessary to explain conflict management and the precautions that Ethiopian journalists should take to prevent violence and contribute to peace while covering conflict situations. According to reports, Ethiopia has experienced many violent ethno-religious conflicts in the last 22 years, and all efforts to restore peace have failed to achieve their desired goal (Addis, 2021). The impartiality and integrity of some media organizations that provide information to the public are threatened. Its ability to prevent wrongful deaths, hacking sites, and damage has led to public opposition to broadcasting. This

has led to many people being dissatisfied with such media outlets, which are the only ones that need to be criticized.

Pruitt and Kim (2009) have provided a definition of conflict as the result of a belief that the genuine or perceived interests and ambitions of the involved parties cannot be achieved simultaneously. The central focus lies in the divergence of interests and aspirations among these parties. Interests are commonly interpreted as the necessities, wishes, and worries of the parties, while aspirations can be viewed as the highest form of these interests. Interests are often contrasted with positions, which are typically considered as the specific expression of one's interests. Managing disagreements or conflicts peacefully and constructively can lead to a positive process. Conflicts, if conducted without resorting to destructive force, are deemed a fundamental aspect of social existence and can foster beneficial progress.

However, once parties abandon peaceful goal pursuit and resort to violence in any form, conflict turns violent. Hence, the primary goal of conflict prevention is not to evade conflict but to prevent its escalation into violence. Galtung & Ruge (1965, as cited in Mulatu, 2017) asserted that conflicts inherently attract the attention of journalists and readers alike. Negative occurrences such as conflicts tend to captivate the media, influencing their selection of topics for coverage in newspapers. The media exhibit a strong inclination towards sensationalizing news, accentuating crises and conflicts in narratives rather than focusing on continuity or concord. Instead of merely reporting conflicts in their original context, journalists may frame political discourse in terms of conflict (Bartholomé 2015). However, the journalistic process inherently involves condensing the issues discussed, thereby highlighting certain aspects of reality to the audience. Puddephatt (2006) explained that both local and international media outlets perpetually encounter a significant challenge in downplaying conflict. The pressure to prioritize immediate, violent, or sensational incidents will inevitably overshadow efforts to elucidate the underlying background and complexities of the conflict.

The role that the media plays during a conflict, as well as in the phases before and after, is influenced by various factors, such as the media's engagement with conflict actors and its autonomy from dominant societal groups. Typically, conflicts receive extensive media coverage, often resulting in widespread devastation. This pattern is observable on a daily basis in the international media. Such coverage may obscure the political dynamics of conflict and conflict

resolution, leading to biased, inaccurate, or culturally disconnected analyses (Mac Ginty, 2013). However, employing a toolkit approach is essential for condensing a vast amount of information into a concise and comprehensible report. The pursuit of quantifying, monitoring, and comparing peace and conflict globally has resulted in the creation of indicators and databases that some argue do not align with, or adequately represent, local perspectives (Mac Ginty, 2013). It served as a stark illustration of how a society can disintegrate and be manipulated by the power of the media in the hands of unscrupulous individuals. With media coverage guaranteed, the so-called war (often targeting unarmed civilians) was orchestrated with a constant focus on its portrayal in the media. All parties involved in the conflict became adept at utilizing the media to shape the political landscape in their favor (Puddephatt, 2006).

Through the perspectives of the aforementioned scholars on news definitions, it is evident that news is not a straightforward presentation of facts as they are. This is due to the fact that mass media serve as more than mere conduits through which information is disseminated devoid of the incorporation of analysis by various individuals such as sources, reporters, and editors. Consequently, regarding analysis and significance, the news is defined by the aforementioned individuals.

Aemere (2015) emphasizes that the Ethiopian media operates within intricate circumstances, and the presentation of conflict narratives should not be oversimplified compared to other news topics. Effective conflict reporting necessitates a high level of analytical expertise, comprehensive information, and aptitude to prevent escalating violence and worsening tensions. The media plays a crucial role in shaping the perception of conflicts, highlighting the significance of responsible reporting.

Over the past three decades, there have been multiple violent ethnic uprisings against authorities in the country due to similar feelings of unhappiness and marginalization. These ethnic tensions forced the EPRDF, an ethnically grounded political coalition that led the TPLF, to split and disband, demoting the TPLF from the front-runner party to its home country of Tigray. At this time media were relaxed to ensure the responsibility of authorities in the country. Indeed the PM, who led the political reform, was challenged live in his press briefing. Once of an incident where the Prime Minister challenged by a journalist to respond to the claim that there are two governments in Ethiopia; one in Addis Ababa and one in Tigray. Dr. Abiy was bothered by the question, but he gave an answer and the interview was broadcasted. In the history, it's doubtful

that an interview where the premier was visibly irritated would have passed the editorial office, if the question was at all asked in the first place Skjerdal, (2020) (p. 14) as cited by belsti).

Murphy (2007) expounded upon the notion that the ideology pervasive in the media exerts influence over the socio-political environment within the media sphere. The historical backdrop, organizational framework, and ideological underpinnings (e.g., free market fundamentalism as opposed to democratic idealism) persist as pivotal domains warranting investigation. Discourse surrounding media evolution and political conduct in the era of globalization delves into various aspects, be it the focus on "public ignorance" and the tumultuous nature of the public sphere, or the intentional involvement in activities such as radical or counter-hegemonic media endeavors (Habermas, 2006). The divergence in reporting by different channels has resulted in audience fragmentation, leading individuals to question the credibility of the information presented. Additionally, Skjerdal (2012) observed, through his study, the tendency of individuals to align themselves either as pro-opposition or pro-government factions based on their preferred media sources. It is postulated that the emergence of this polarization can be discerned amidst the ongoing political unrest in the region of oromia.

Moreover, certain ethnic conflict issues are either disregarded or receive inadequate attention. There exists a noticeable deficiency in scholarly investigations and literature that thoroughly examine trends in conflict reporting within Ethiopia's mainstream media landscape. Therefore, evaluating the practice of conflict reporting in Ethiopian mainstream media seeks to address these gaps and offer meaningful insights to the ongoing discourse in the media industry.

## **2.6. Conflict between the Federal Government and the Regional States**

This has led to a significant shift in the political landscape of Ethiopia, with calls for greater autonomy and self-determination becoming increasingly vocal. The government's response to these protests has been met with widespread criticism, as reports of human rights abuses and crackdowns on dissent continue to emerge.

The ongoing conflicts in Oromia and other regions have highlighted the need for a more inclusive and democratic system of governance in Ethiopia. The Federal Government must address the grievances of marginalized groups and work towards building a more equitable society that respects the rights and freedoms of all its citizens.

In order to achieve lasting peace and stability, it is essential that the government engages in meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders, including opposition groups and civil society organizations. Only through genuine reconciliation and reform can Ethiopia hope to overcome its current challenges and build a brighter future for its people. Semir (2019), Social movements emerged as a new type of competitor and succeeded where political parties failed, as organized and legal opposition failed to pose a real threat to the government. According to Semir (2019), a number of groups with ethnic undertones emerged from long-simmering public complaints about administrative, political, and economic issues that interacted with increasing urbanization and the use of cyber technology. About a million networked cells spread throughout the nation, particularly in Oromia, and overcame previous organizational difficulties (p. 10). Protests demanding political independence and the acknowledgment of ethnic identities proliferated throughout the northern region of the nation, especially in the Gonder region.

The integration of those indigenous movements served to advance their interests within the civil administration. Additionally, political activists from both the governing coalition and the outside provided support for these movements. Additionally, familial ethnic groups within the EPRDF itself created the Oro-Mara partnership, which emerged from this activism. Semir noted that when the EPRDF's core members repositioned themselves in support of social movements and contested the TPLF's rise, internal tensions within the party intensified. The TPLF's authority over the EPRDF's institutional circumstances was relinquished throughout this process. The reformists were given the upper hand in the process, which led to a number of political liberalization initiatives (2019) (p. 1).

A fresh miracle occurred in Ethiopia as well: political reform began in April 2018 under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, giving many people hope that the nation was moving away from its dictatorial past and toward a far brighter future. However, implementing the expedients nationwide wasn't that easy. The TPLF's support of indigenous disputes made it difficult for the state to become unstable both directly and indirectly. In this regard, the TPLF is singled out and frequently accused of conducting deputy conflicts around the nation, according to Semir. While there are many conflicts that are questionably linked to Tigrayan chicanery, some are accorded more weight than others by intelligence sources (2019) (p. 36). In the end, on November 4, 2020, the TPLF forces betrayed the North Command of Public Defense in an attempt to settle their dispute with the Federal Government. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed then

ordered the mobilization of all military forces under a single command, declaring war in defense of public security (EBC, November 5, 2020).

Also after the conflict broke out for nearly two years and sealed agreement of ceasefire. Then after the federal government try to make regional Special Forces banned and as it sounded that the major problem to exercise its power. However there has been strong opposition from Amhara forces and law enforcement started in the region and since then conflict is still witnessing.

## **2.7. Understanding Violence and Conflict**

Not all conflict is characterized by violence. Conflict is a normal occurrence that arises from the presence of change. While some individuals may desire change, others may hold differing opinions. However, conflict can be a constructive process if it is managed peacefully. Conversely, when conflict is not properly managed, it can escalate into violence. In instances of violent conflict, individuals experience concerns for their personal safety and survival. It is important to note that when we refer to conflict, we are generally referring to violent conflict. Conflict should not be equated with violence, as conflict is a normal and transformative force, as stated by Pearson and Lounsbury (2009). Researchers and practitioners in conflict resolution often argue that not all forms of conflict should be regarded solely as negative interactions (Rothman and Olson, 2001, p. 72). Conflict can serve as a catalyst for productive communication and cooperative problem-solving. Violence, on the other hand, involves the deliberate use of force to resolve conflict. Violence is a conscious choice and can sometimes be sanctioned by the state or influenced by societal values. When we discuss conflict, it is generally in the context of violent conflict (Howard, 2002).

Ethiopia has a prolonged history of ethnic bias, marginalization, and repression, dating back to the imperial era and continuing through the military dictatorship of the Derg regime in the 1970s and 1980s. Lingering historical injustices and unresolved grievances have fostered deep-seated resentment and distrust among various ethnic groups, fueling ongoing conflicts and violence. Political marginalization stands out as another element that has fueled violence and conflict in Ethiopia. The absence of political inclusivity and the authoritarian governance style of the government have nourished opposition movements and armed uprisings, leading to heightened levels of violence and conflict.

According to Getahun (2019), Ethiopia's violence and conflict are deeply rooted in historical ethnic tensions, religious dynamics, and recent political occurrences. Historical ethnic conflicts have deep-seated origins, originating from imperial administrations that sowed seeds of discord and subjugation. Recent conflicts, such as the Tigray conflict, have been influenced by factors like delayed elections, ethnic federalism, and responses to oppression. In the early stages of the conflict, the government imposed a state of emergency in Amhara state following a series of violent incidents in the region. Subsequently, government forces faced accusations of failing to address the massacre of hundreds of Amhara individuals in Oromia the following month.

Consequently, in April 2023, the central government announced the integration of all regional security forces authorized under the national constitution into the national security services. This decision was widely perceived as an effort to diminish regional autonomy, inciting violent protests and militia activities in Amhara and other areas. In a shift of alliances, throughout 2023, the ENDF engaged in clashes with Amhara's regional Special Forces and the Fano, the most dominant non-state militia in the region; both groups rejected the directive to disband and merge with the national army. Ethiopia enforced a six-month regional state of emergency from August 2023. In Oromia, local militants initiated a series of assaults on ethnically Amhara settlements in early March 2021, prompting waves of Amhara residents to flee Oromia. Despite the federal government deploying troops to combat the OLA, the violence persists. Towards the end of the Tigray War, violence reignited in Oromia, culminating in a particularly brutal attack on an Amhara settlement that resulted in around two hundred fatalities in June 2022. By July of the same year, hundreds had perished in massacres in parts of Oromia with a majority Amhara population.

In April 2023, the central government in Ethiopia made a big announcement. They said that all regional security forces allowed by the national constitution would now be part of the national security services. This decision was seen as a way to take away some power from the regions. It caused protests and militia activity in places like Amhara. After this decision, the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) started fighting against the Special Forces in Amhara and a powerful militia group called the Fano. These groups didn't want to join the national army, so they fought back. In August 2023, Ethiopia declared a state of emergency in the region.

In Oromia, there were attacks on Amhara people living there. Many Amhara people had to leave because of the violence. The government sent troops to fight against the militants, but the violence continued. In June 2022, a deadly attack in Oromia left around two hundred people dead. The violence spread to Amhara-majority areas in Oromia, leading to more deaths in July.

Ethiopia has many different ethnic groups, which has caused tension and conflict. Competition for resources and power has led to rivalries and violence between these groups. The government's policy of dividing the country into ethnic regions has made these tensions worse.

Past injustices under old rulers have also played a part in the current conflicts. These historical issues have added to the problems with ethnic policies and conflicts in Ethiopia. To truly understand the violence and conflict in Ethiopia, we need to look at many different factors. Historical events, political decisions, ethnic differences, and socio-economic issues all play a role. By considering all of these factors, we can start to make sense of the challenges facing Ethiopia today.

While Kempf (2000) as cited in Kempf (2019) comprehends violence as the result of the violation of individuals' physical or internal well-being, Galtung's (1996) concept of violence surpasses this understanding. Galtung believes that violence is always present when individuals are informed that their current physical and internal satisfaction is lower than their implicit satisfaction.

### **2.7.1. Journalism in the Context of War and Violence**

This mode of journalism is intimately connected with war and violence. In its reporting, the focus is often solely on the conflict itself, isolating it from its broader context in terms of both time and space. Consequently, the causes and consequences of the conflict are established within the confined arena of the conflict. War is portrayed as a zero-sum game between two opposing sides, with a clear distinction between "us" and "them," whereby "them" is seen as the source of the problem. Another significant aspect of war journalism is the dehumanization of the "other." The focus is narrow, primarily centered on the visible aspects of war.

Reporting in this context is often reactive, only showing interest after an event has occurred. War journalism is inclined towards propaganda in the sense that it is primarily concerned with

exposing the falsehoods and secrets of the opposing side while safeguarding its own, contributing to cover-ups. It is frequently associated with elites, as it is predominantly represented by white males, with only the opinions of the influential aristocracy being given any credibility. Ultimately, war journalism is focused on achieving victory, which is attained through a ceasefire. Other possibilities are generally excluded from the conversation, at least until victory seems likely. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on treaties and institutions, and interest wanes as soon as the war comes to an end (Hällgren, 2012).

### **2.7.2. Journalism in the Context of Peace and Conflict**

The Norwegian scholar argues that mainstream media largely follows a path of reporting conflict that can be described as a violent clash between two adversaries within a confined space and time. This approach tends to ignore peace initiatives and adopts a zero-sum perspective commonly used in sports reporting (Ibid). This is what he refers to as war journalism. Galtung (1986, 2002) advocates for an alternative approach, which he calls peace journalism or the high road, that focuses on transforming conflicts. According to Galtung (2002), the role of peace journalism is to move beyond the surface-level depiction of violence in the war zone, uncover the root causes of conflicts, and thereby reveal opportunities for peace without violence. In contrast to the zero-sum game model of war journalism, peace journalism is envisioned as responsible reporting, where journalists must look beyond the physical battle between individuals and the complaints they have, in order to delve into the causes, remedies, and preventive measures of conflicts (p, 259).

## **2.8. Media Approaches, Trends in Conflict Reporting**

Reporting on conflict situations carries a significant responsibility for the media. With limited knowledge of events happening in distant countries, the public often relies on media accounts to understand what is unfolding. It is crucial for the media to observe, investigate, and then present their findings as objectively as possible. Reporting on ongoing conflicts is particularly challenging, as it requires a delicate balance in everyday reporting. The relationship between media and conflict, as noted by Anderson in 1983 and cited by Budka (2020), is complex and elusive.

One key example of this complexity can be seen in an island nation where the media has played a vital role in promoting national unity. While conflicts are essential elements for

newsworthiness in traditional journalism, the ability of journalists to report on conflict situations truthfully, fairly, accurately, and impartially is still a subject of debate.

While some believe that journalists, especially those advocating for peace journalism, can play a role in facilitating peaceful resolutions to conflicts through their reporting, others have a different opinion (Obijiofor, 2011). In conflict reporting, lack of information can be dangerous. Focusing on the effects rather than the root causes of conflict can lead to incomplete storytelling. Such misreporting can create misunderstandings that fuel further conflict (Singh S, 2011). The impact of the news media is particularly crucial during times of war. Journalists serve as the eyes and ears of the public, providing information about ongoing conflicts. Their coverage can have a significant influence on a democratic government's ability to wage war. While the media can help convey the government's rationale for the war and rally public support, it also has the power to shape public perception of the conflict (Willis, 2007). The coverage of the war was considered to be the most comprehensive and accurate at that time.

## **2.9. Conflict-sensitive reporting**

Conflict-sensitive reporting is a journalistic approach that aims to give accurate, unbiased, and sensitive content of conflicts. It involves integrating a balanced lens, esteeming pivotal morals of journalistic professionalism, and shuffling generalizations that limit and trivialize individualities. The practice requires journalists to look behind the positions of stakeholders in a conflict and to apply conflict analysis to search for new voices and ideas about the conflict.

It's presumed on the supposition that journalists infer the conflict environment in which they operate, the relation between their action and the conflict state of affair, and act upon the understanding of these relations to keep away from cynical effects and boost useful effects on the conflict situation and the involvement (Howard, 2004). Hence it's applying a conflict-sensitive approach to the gathering and donation of the news while chancing ways to recite conflict-sensitive stories engagingly and fully as soon as the situation permits.

The media can be used or abused depending on the interests of those who enjoy and control it, as well as the nature and effectiveness of the nonsupervisory frame in place. The media can ease and palliate ethnic and religious pressures. Still, this is dependent on how journalists frame and report their stories. In that case, the journalists reporting on conflict should be tuned by conflict-sensitive reporting.

As stated a head, the media can ease and palliate ethnic and religious pressures and promote concession, however a constructive or destructive part of the media is dependent on how journalists frame and report their stories. The prolonged inter-ethnic and religious conflicts, as well as low-power insurgencies, continue to pose significant challenges in many communities, creating insecurity and instability that require intervention from both state and non-state actors. The media is considered a key non-state actor that can play a role in promoting peace in the region, although there is a perception that they can sometimes be more disruptive than helpful in this regard.

It is important to recognize that conflicts can be shaped by the way they are portrayed in the media. The way journalists report on conflicts can influence public perceptions and impact the peace building process. While journalists have been involved in fueling conflicts in countries like Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Kenya, and Nigeria, they have also played a positive role in promoting peace in other conflicts by reporting sensitively and objectively.

One example of impactful journalism is Sorious Samura's documentary, Cry Freetown, which was released in 2000. This documentary is a powerful example of how journalism can play a significant role in bringing about the end of war by shedding light on the realities of conflict and promoting peace.

Conflict-sensitive reporting pertains to the act of gathering and propagating unbiased information in regions affected by conflict, with the intention of advancing human rights, societal harmony, as well as conflict operation and resolution. It entails reporting on conflicts in a manner that is fair, precise, and conscious of the implicit consequences on conflict dynamics.

The absence of such effective and standardized canons of conduct for reporting on conflict poses difficulties for intelligencers in nations like Ethiopia. Journalists in transitional countries encounter challenges and pressures between journalistic principles of impartiality and the realities of political instability, violence, and governmental interference. Conflict Sensitive Journalism (CSJ) is that fortifies conventional news media practices to render them more material to conflict resolution. Therefore in the eye of conflict sensitive journalism, reporting conflict is not deniable, but how to report is the concern.

As stated by Ross (2009) Conflict-sensitive reporting reflects a modernization of the indigenous values of the news media. It's bedded in the belief that the news media in most part of the societies can be an important force to reduce the causes of conflict and enable a conflict stressed

society to more pursue conflict resolution (p. 12). The media can do this by training its journalists to more understand conflict and the media's part in it. A journalist can strengthen his reporting to avoid generalizations and narrow perspectives on the causes and process of conflict. The media can contribute to a wider dialogue among distant parts of the community in conflict, through bettered reporting. It can explore and give information about openings for the conflict resolution. And at the same time, the media must maintain its essential morals of accuracy, fairness and balance, and social responsible manner.

The goal of professional journalists is not to reduce conflict. We strive to provide accurate and objective information. However, Howard argues that effective reporting often reduces conflict (2004, p. 8). He also describes crash reporting requirements as follows:

*Providing trustworthy information to the public during a crisis requires additional journalistic skills. Journalists need more information about the causes of conflicts, how they develop and how they end. Journalists need to know where to find causes and solutions. By providing this information, journalism helps the public understand the conflicts that underlie violence and contributes to finding solutions. He also added Journalists must recognize the important role journalism can play in times of crisis (p. 5).*

Therefore, it has been argued that a lack of conflict-sensitive framing and reporting was one of the factors that led to the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the “war on terror” in Iraq, which resulted in the loss of millions of lives and property. Adisa, 2012; Ibrahim, Pawanteh, Peng Kee, Basri, Hassan, & Mahmud, 2011).

This has undeniable significance on the conflict escalation, especially in the current situation where media channels gain and people come more reliant on social media as a primary source of information. Journalists and media practitioners, therefore, must explore and fully understand all possible goods of their media engagements as equal as conflict-sensitive reporting.

More insidious and intractable are the numerous protracted inter-ethnic and religious conflicts and low-level insurgencies that breed insecurity and instability in many communities, demanding more effective interventions from state and non-state actors alike.

The media constitute one of the key non-state actors whose work can contribute to peace building in the region, although the perception persists that they are often disruptive rather than helpful in promoting and sustaining peace. Indeed conflicts are partly what the media make them to be. Thus how journalists mediate information and debate on conflict influences perceptions of it and the peace building process.

Journalists have played ignoble roles in conflicts in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Kenya, and Nigeria but have also been unsung heroes in some of these same conflicts and in countless others when they have reported on them sensitively and in a manner that helps bring about peace. Sorious Samura's documentary *Cry Freetown* in 2000 is but one example of courageous journalism that can turn the tide in helping to bring about the end of war.

The media often referred to as the "Fourth Estate," play a pivotal role in fostering accountability within the state and society, whether on a national or local scale. They constitute a crucial element in the triangular dynamic involving the state, the populace, and the dissemination of information, which serves to ensure governmental responsiveness to the needs of the citizens. Through acting as a sounding board for societal grievances, free media outlets enable individuals to articulate their priorities and apprehensions. In the absence of this mechanism, discontent is more likely to manifest through widespread public demonstrations or violent acts.

Furthermore, the media make significant contributions to the process of nation-building by disseminating information pertaining to legislation, governmental policies, public service initiatives, and the priorities set forth by officials to the general populace. They also play a role in reflecting the opinions and reactions of individuals towards policies and prevalent issues, often through mediums like letters to the editor. In numerous regions characterized by fragility and conflict, media platforms have been utilized by peace-building entities to propagate messages and initiatives that foster peaceful cohabitation and progress, or to raise awareness regarding resolutions to divisive matters. Such interventions may take the form of newspaper adverts or radio broadcasts centered on specific topics, like curbing domestic violence, or encompass entire media networks dedicated to promoting peace-oriented content. Frequently, media content can be adapted, translated, or reproduced to deliver cost-efficient programming aimed at influencing attitudes and behaviors concerning security issues through local media outlets. Groups of radio listeners can also serve as valuable forums for deliberating, reinforcing, and providing input on the effectiveness of these messages. In essence, the contribution of a free and autonomous media

to peace-building lies in reinstating the unrestricted circulation of information, viewpoints, and feedback.

Journalism in Africa is a demanding profession even during periods of relative tranquility, and it can be perilous under more trying circumstances. The conventional perception of journalism dictates that practitioners must report events with impartiality and precision, refraining from taking sides. However, this conventional stance fails to acknowledge the reality that African journalists are not detached observers but rather individuals enmeshed in the tumultuous events they strive to comprehend and report on. Consequently, they often find themselves embroiled in the heart of the crisis.

The media predominantly focuses on conflict rather than peace-building efforts, with its role in exacerbating conflicts being more widely acknowledged than its potential in fostering peace. Nevertheless, experts frequently assert that the media's influence on peace-building processes must be substantial given its considerable sway over conflict dynamics. The prevalent journalistic ethos that "If it bleeds, it leads" underscores the tendency to prioritize violent conflicts in news coverage over intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. This inclination to spotlight conflict and violence distorts reality, leading many to perceive conflict as pervasive and peace as an abnormality.

The media influences our perception of conflict through the content we see and hear. Journalists' perspectives and convictions are primarily shaped by their on-the-ground encounters. Owners of media outlets are driven by economic motives; their aim is to distribute their content to an audience willing to purchase their publications or view their broadcasts. The rise of corporate dominance in media within certain nations further influences the selection and presentation of news stories.

## **2.10. Theoretical Framework**

The realm of media, as an institution, exists within a much broader network of interpersonal and societal influences. It is crucial to recognize that any examination of media frames cannot be divorced from the social and artistic scripts from which they originate. On one hand, the media constructs significant representations of reality for the public. On the other hand, the public draws upon these frames and contextualizes them within pre-existing schemas. However, it is important to note that the term 'frame' has been subject to multiple interpretations and uses.

## **2.10. 1. Framing theory**

The concept of framing refers to the process of decoding messages in order to assign meaning to them, allowing for efficient interpretation in relation to beliefs or ideas (Webel, Galtung, 2007). This proposition introduces a fresh perspective to the longstanding debate on journalistic neutrality. In response to objectivism, framing denies its underlying assumptions, as reporters inherently frame reality and provide their own point of view when recounting events. When journalists create news, whether through written or visual descriptions of a particular aspect of reality, they select a frame. The strategies employed to give prominence to certain information at the expense of others can vary greatly, as noted by Abreu (2015).

Omission is one such strategy, although it may not necessarily be the most significant one. All news stories inevitably have omissions, whether intentional or unintentional, as it is impossible to approach a subject from all perspectives, utilizing all available sources and thoroughly explaining the involvement of every actor connected to the issue (p. 429). Therefore, framing is a natural consequence of our limited perspective or dimension for convenience. Additionally, framing is crucial in presenting the most important aspects of a news story in our reporting.

There are various types of framing, including human interest framing, economic framing, responsibility framing, and conflict framing. Given that this thesis focuses on conflict-sensitive reporting, conflict framing is the preferred theoretical frame for this exploration. This frame highlights conflicts between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing the interests of viewers or readers. Consequently, the news media has been criticized for fueling public skepticism and distrust towards political leaders. Based on this description, it can be inferred that this frame is prevalent in content related to political extremities such as ethnic tensions, war, terrorism, and protests.

Within this theoretical frame, the deductive approach is preferable for analyzing news stories as samples. The complexity of studies grounded in an inductive approach has led most researchers to adopt a deductive system (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000).

The examination of media revolves primarily around the content and dissemination of information. Information is conveyed to audiences through various communication channels, all of which are tailored to align with the objectives of the information sources. Central to this process is the concept of framing, which dictates how the media presents stories, issues, and events for the consumption of audiences. Framing theory has been significantly shaped by

scholars such as Entman (1993), who define framing as the strategic selection of elements from reality to emphasize specific problem definitions, causal interpretations, and moral assessments. Robert Entman, a key figure in framing theory, characterizes framing as the process of highlighting connections among selected elements of reality to advance a particular interpretation.

Framing, according to Entman, involves the essential components of selection and salience. The term 'to frame' is thus interpreted as the act of emphasizing certain aspects of reality in a communicative context. Media framing, therefore, refers to the deliberate selection and emphasis of issues within media representations. Entman (2007) further expands on framing by outlining four key functions: defining problems, analyzing causes, making moral judgments, and promoting solutions. Through priming, framing influences how audiences interpret information and shapes their preferences by emphasizing certain ideas and activating mental frameworks that guide audiences towards specific thoughts, emotions, and decisions.

Content analysis conducted through this approach is easier to execute, can be applied to a large sample, and is highly replicable. However, a drawback of this approach is the potential loss of relevant information, as frames that have not been predefined cannot be identified or measured.

**Accuracy:-** it is of utmost importance when it comes to obtaining the correct information. The primary objective of reporting conflict is to minimize acts of violence and aggression between opposing parties. It is suggested by Howard (2004) that all reported information should be described directly, including the accurate spelling of names, the chronological presentation of events, and the true meaning of statements. Prior to delivering the news to the audience, verification and precise data are sought. Trust and credibility, which are the consequences of inaccurate reporting, contribute to the media's loss of audience.

**Impartiality:-** commonly known as balance, holds great significance in the principles of good journalism. This requires producing a report that remains neutral and does not take sides. Inspired by Johan Galtung's peace journalism paradigm, the list emphasizes the responsibility of journalists to cover the trauma and personal stories of all victims involved in the conflict. True balance necessitates exploring alternatives to war Orgeret, Tayeebwa (2016) (p.19). To achieve balance, both sides of the story must be included, as conflict always involves multiple perspectives. In a prolonged violent conflict, citizens need to be informed about what the opposing side is saying and how it may impact them.

In this context, framing refers to the construction of messages through language, illustrations, and delivery, which guide the interpretation of the audience. The media plays a significant role in conflict situations, either as a contributor to the conflict or as an agent for peace, depending on its framing and agenda-setting.

Impartiality also implies that professional journalists should not align themselves with any political or interest group or movement. Balanced journalism serves as a crucial defense for journalists during times of conflict, as it allows them to remain neutral. This value earns journalists admiration within the community, as they do not take sides with any actor involved in the conflict.

**Responsibility:-** Journalists have a responsibility to society, which includes delivering accurate, balanced, and informative news to their audience. Additionally, journalists are responsible for protecting the identity of their sources. If sources fear being exposed, they may be hesitant to share important news. The Institute on War and Peace Reporting has outlined six duties for journalists covering conflict and peace: understanding the conflict, reporting impartially, providing background and causes of the conflict, presenting the human side, reporting on peace efforts, and examining the influence of intelligence Orgeret, Tayeebwa, (2016) (p.19).

Framing theory can be applied to analyze the differences between peace journalism and war journalism, as it reveals how frames and certain understandings are embedded within media content (Fahmy, Eakin, 2013).

### **2.10.2 Polarization**

Polarization is defined differently by various scholars, with many definitions linking the term to political polarization while others associate it with its presence in the media landscape. The concept of polarization encompasses both a procedural aspect and a state of attitudes; it represents "the reinforcement of one's initial position or attitude" or alternatively "the scenario wherein members of a group maintain strong, or even more extreme, and conflicting attitudes about an issue" (Beak, 2011). Polarization is conceptualized within the framework of individual and group opinion formation, where "the initial inclination of individual group members towards a certain direction is strengthened after group deliberation" (Ibid). In such a scenario, the validity of an opinion is not as crucial as the perception of individuals or groups towards a particular source. In addition to group identification, the perception of group opinions also exerts a

significant influence, causing individual viewpoints to polarize in alignment with perceived group stances.

Matthew (2013) asserts that Partisan or polarized media can be characterized as opinionated media: outlets that not only disseminate news but also provide a distinct perspective on it. These media platforms tend to exhibit biased story selection, emphasizing topics that align with their viewpoints while downplaying stories that contradict them. Debate has no place in polarized media. Partisan news programs are not primarily focused on presenting facts; rather, they aim to help individuals interpret the world based on specific predispositions (Ibid). In polarized media, ideas are not introduced for debate; the debate has already been settled, and the results are simply presented, particularly where they align with the host's views. Political polarization occurs when public opinion gravitates towards two extremes, leaving little room for centrism or moderation. Media polarization, on the other hand, arises when the content of state-owned and privately-owned media outlets diverges drastically. A polarized media landscape signifies a fragmented industry with outlets holding increasingly disparate beliefs. As media perspectives become more polarized, accessing accurate information becomes more challenging.

### **2.11. Local Studies Related to the study**

The stage of combined inquiries with the concept of conflict sensitive reporting in Ethiopia can be categorized as being in its early stages, as the existing studies on this topic are inadequate. However, it has recently gained attention, leading to the emergence of some combined studies that explore the concept of conflict sensitive reporting in various ways. While the researcher may have access to some local studies in this area, it should be noted that these are not the only papers that have examined this topic.

One study conducted by Alemayehu M. (2017) aimed to investigate how internal conflicts were reported in Ethiopian local newspapers, namely Addis Admas, reporter, The Daily Monitor, and the Ethiopian Herald, between 2005 and 2013. The author employed three key questions to evaluate the main objectives of the study: 1) To what extent did these newspapers cover internal conflicts? 2) How did they frame the stories? 3) What challenges did they encounter while reporting on these cases? To answer these questions, the study utilized content analysis, textual analysis, and interview data collection and analysis tools. The findings revealed that the coverage of internal conflicts in the aforementioned local newspapers was not only limited in terms of

quantity, but also failed to address certain issues or provide comprehensive information about the events in their stories.

In another study conducted by Belsti A. (2022), the focus was on assessing the public media's reporting of the conflict between the federal government and the forces of TPLF, particularly examining the cases of ETV and TTV. The findings of this study indicated that these media stations paid little attention to important peace-promoting news during the specified period. The study also highlighted the unequal service provided by the current public media in Ethiopia, which appeared to be influenced by the political dynamics of the country's racial politics, a major source of conflict. The use of content analysis and qualitative studies revealed that both media outlets primarily catered to the interests of the political parties that controlled them.

Furthermore, Terje Skjerdal and Mulatu Alemayehu Moges (2020) conducted a study titled "The Ethnification of the Ethiopian Media," which involved the inclusion of 25 media practitioners. The findings suggested that many of these practitioners had a favorable perception of the concept, particularly those working in government/public media. It was observed that journalists often favored sources that aligned with their own ideological interests, while avoiding sources from opposing sides that could provide a balanced perspective. The study argued that ethnic and political agendas often conflicted with the professionalism of the media.

Recent research on conflict coverage in Ethiopian broadcast media is scarce; particularly studies centered on newspapers and media outlets in Addis Ababa. These studies reveal that newspapers tend to give minimal coverage to internal conflicts and are often described as passive media platforms.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the strategies utilized for data collection, sampling methodologies, and procedures implemented to fulfill the study's objectives were examined. The research methodology constitutes the overarching concept representing the approach and techniques through which a particular study is to be conducted. Within this section, the researcher determines the research framework, methodologies, instruments, and the methodology for data collection, arrangement, and analysis, with a focus on data resources and ethical considerations.

Research methodology involves the theoretical examination of the set of methods and principles linked to a specific field of study. As noted by Imy & Rose (2005), it typically includes concepts such as paradigm, theoretical model, phases, and quantitative or qualitative techniques. Research methodology serves as a systematic approach to solving research problems, addressing fundamental research questions, and guiding the research process. The primary aim of the research was to assess the practice of conflict-sensitive reporting on Fana Television.

#### **3.2 Research design**

Media professionals or journalists are tasked with conveying a narrative within specified limitations of time and space, while also ensuring that it is accessible to a diverse and often heterogeneous audience. The only means by which this can be accomplished is through the organization of information, whereby an interpretive framework is created to facilitate the comprehension of the message. In the creation of news stories, journalists employ frames to imbue reality with meaning and simplify it to some extent, while also maintaining the public's interest, as stated by Valkenburg et al. (2000).

Research design encompasses a plan or outline that encompasses all the steps involved in research, ranging from problem identification to the interpretation of the results. As Kerlinger (1973) cited in Riffe et al. (1998) (p.41) argued the research design includes the outline of the investigator's actions, from formulating hypotheses and determining their operational implications to the final analysis of the data. As stated by Grix (2004), the concept of Research design pertains to the comprehensive strategy that is selected to amalgamate the diverse elements

of a study in a consistent and rational manner, thereby ensuring that the research effectively tackles the research problem. It serves as the framework for the gathering, evaluation, and interpretation of data. Within this particular research, a qualitative case research method was utilized as the primary approach. This study embraced a qualitative methodological approach, focusing on a thorough examination of news articles from various perspectives. The application of qualitative research methods aids in mitigating the inherent limitations of individual methodologies, qualitative by leveraging the strengths of each other.

Content analysis encompasses a spectrum of analytical methodologies that range from impressionistic and intuitive interpretations to systematic and rigorous textual examinations. This is something that may be less achievable with certain other approaches, particularly those that adhere to the quantitative tradition, as noted by Getnet (2019, p.37). Qualitative content analysis is a method used to analyze written, verbal, or visual communication messages, as defined by Leedy and Ormrod (2001, cited in Mohajan 2018 (p.36). It involves a comprehensive and systematic examination of the contents of a specific body of materials, with the aim of identifying patterns, themes, or biases. This method has a long history of application in various fields, including communication, journalism, sociology, psychology, and business, as highlighted by Neundorf (2002) and Akşan and Baki (2017). The selection of a specific content analysis approach by a researcher is contingent upon the researcher's theoretical and substantive interests, as well as the nature of the issue under investigation. This process extends beyond mere word counting or extracting objective content from texts, delving into the exploration of meanings, themes, and patterns that may either be evident or concealed within a given text.

Researchers are afforded the liberty to comprehend the underlying elements in a subjective yet scientific manner. Given that an in-depth comprehension and analysis of critical content is imperative for studying media polarization, the researcher concentrated on aspects such as language usage, tone, visual representations, and the historical context within the news narratives of media outlet. Qualitative content analysis assumes significance as the extent of polarization was gauged through the researcher's readings and interpretations of the materials. Furthermore, these interpretations are essential for evaluating the framing strategies employed by each media outlet.

### **3.3 Methods of Data Analysis**

#### **3.3.1. Content analysis**

Shannon and Hsieh (2005) define qualitative content analysis as one of many research methods used to analyze textual data, alongside ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and historical research. Research utilizing qualitative content analysis focuses on the linguistic characteristics of communication, with particular attention to the content and contextual meaning of the text. In language, various elements such as words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and overall content, including tone and context, must be considered in order to develop themes for interpretation. Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis fall under the umbrella of qualitative descriptive design. They comprise a set of techniques used to analyze textual data and elucidate themes.

The key characteristic of these techniques is the systematic process of coding, examining meaning, and providing a description of social reality through the creation of themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p.100). When analyzing the theme of content, framing is an important approach for comprehending media content and identifying the intentions and interests of the media outlet in constructing their news stories based on events or occurrences in a specific situation and context. Any communicative text, whether informative or persuasive, requires narrative structures to organize its discourse.

In the case of the media, news stories tend to be structured based on narrative conventions that provide an explanation of who is involved, what they are doing, and with what purpose (Abreu, 2015, p.424). Mulatu (2020) also emphasizes the extensive use of framing in text analysis, as it assists in structuring the meaning of the text by considering sources, themes, audiences, and cultures, as framing can be present in all these aspects (p.38).

#### **3.3. 2 In-depth interviews Analysis**

In-depth interviews serve as a qualitative research method utilized to facilitate comprehensive exploration of internal sentiments, perspectives, interpretations, knowledge, opinions, and life experiences of the research subjects. According to Patton (2002), the utility of this tool is underscored for both the researcher and the interviewee:

In-depth interviews stand out as a prevalent qualitative approach, primarily due to their efficacy in humanizing research predicaments. Engaging in interviews, furthermore, proves to be a

fulfilling experience for both participants and interviewers. Participants find in-depth interviews as a platform to articulate themselves in a manner uncommon in their daily lives. Interviewers, on the other hand, are privileged to be entrusted with insights into the personal lives of individuals who are essentially strangers (p.29).

In this study, in-depth interviews have been added as instrumental in complementing the findings of content analysis, facilitating a profound comprehension of the informants. Moreover, it emerges as a favored technique to reinforce the outcomes derived from textual analysis. In-depth interviews furnish comprehensive context regarding the rationale behind respondents' specific responses, enhancing the accuracy of feedback on sensitive topics.

Essentially, an in-depth interview possesses distinct attributes typically involves smaller sample sizes and delves into data related to respondents' viewpoints, values, motivations, recollections of experiences, and emotions. The in-depth interview enables extensive examination of respondents through in-depth dialogues. It also involves Customization to individual respondents is feasible, enabling interviewers (the researcher) to pose follow-up queries based on each respondent's input (Ibid).

Although time-consuming and resource-intensive, an in-depth interview is characterized by its flexibility, dynamism, non-defectiveness', lack of structure, non-standardization, and open-ended nature. Thus, it is due to these distinctive features and others that the researcher opted for this method of data collection. The interviews were purposefully conducted with eight media reporters, editor in chief, editors and Deputy Executive of the media all of whom held pivotal positions enabling them to furnish essential insights on the subject matter. Because these professionals are keen to such contents to provide relevant information like the use of source, the intended frames and themes they used to explore messages. In addition, with the issue of the entitled title whether they are engaged as reporter, editor or on positions to decide the stories to be transmitted or not, they have a great role. So those professionals have detailed information to support the study.

### **3.4 Sampling and Sampling techniques**

Sampling involves selecting a subset of units from the entire population under study, and this can be accomplished through non-probability sampling or probability sampling methods. Sampling aids in the selection of representative samples from the population of interest in order to achieve these objectives. Researchers may opt for non-probability sampling or probability sampling

techniques based on their preference. In the context of this thesis, non-probability (non-random) sampling technique is deemed appropriate due to the nature of the conflict that transpired in Ethiopia since 2020. The inception of the conflict between the Federal Government and other opposing entities dates back to the implementation of political reforms in 2018. Despite the fact that the conflict escalated into aggression in November 2020, it had been intensifying in the preceding years (even as far back as the previous 3 years) due to various activities taking place in the country. The sampling for this study is based on the decisions and activities that occurred after this period, as reported by the media and witnessed by the parties involved. Therefore the data is derived from media news and programs that pertain to the current inter-ethnic relations of the nation. Qualitative content analysis serves as one of these broad approaches that can be employed to interpret the conflict that occurred in Ethiopia since September 2022. To ensure a focused scope, the selected data is limited to the period between September 2015 and August 2015 E C, as this year timeframe encompasses the heightened severity and consequences of the conflict.

In Ethiopia, most TV channels opt to air their prime time news at 7 or 8 pm in the evening, and the selected media outlet, FBC, follows the same trend. Therefore, the prime time news is selected as the focus of this research. The news program on this channel is conducted exclusively in the Amharic language, which is suitable for the research and ensures consistency. The placement of news stories within a program is also crucial for influencing the audience, with the first three or four news stories typically addressing the most significant issues of the day. On some days, these major issues may be approached from different angles and serve as sampling units for further discussion, in line with the chosen sampling technique. The total population of news stories for this research amounts to approximately 48. This discrepancy can be attributed to the fact that, during the conflict, the attention of the media and the audience is primarily focused on the aggression between the opposing forces. Consequently, the number of samples taken during the confrontational phase is more than double that of the post-violence conflict.

Sampling refers to the act of choosing a specific number of participants for a research study in a manner that accurately represents the larger group from which they were selected. A sample comprises individual entities, items, or occurrences selected from a significant population (Harwell, 2011). Within the realm of qualitative research, the selection of a sampling method is typically determined by the chosen methodology and subject matter, rather than the aim of

generalizing the results (Higginbottom, 2004). As noted by Wimmer & Dominick (2003), researchers in mass media often opt for nonprobability sampling techniques. Opting for nonprobability (nonrandom) sampling techniques is deemed more favorable in order to confine the population and its representative sample within a specific timeframe. According to Riffe et al. (1998) such sampling methods are deemed suitable under certain circumstances, often necessitated by the absence of a sufficient sampling frame (p.48). Nonprobability sampling techniques encompass different categories, such as convenience sampling and purposive sampling. Convenience sampling is frequently utilized when the data collection is unrelated to the objectives of the study, as highlighted by Riffe et al. (1998) especially in cases where creating a sampling frame poses challenges and when crucial relationships are yet to be adequately examined.

The most favored approach is the purposive sampling technique, aligning with the nature of the research project, where the sample frame is closely intertwined with the conflict under analysis in the thesis. A purposive sample, a form of non-probability sampling also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, encompasses various techniques that rely on the researcher's discretion in selecting the units (e.g., individuals, cases/organizations, events, data points) to be analyzed. The primary goal of a purposive sample is to create a sample that can be deemed representative of the overall population. This is typically achieved by leveraging expert knowledge of the population to non-randomly select elements that present a cross-section of the population.

In the current investigation, purposive sampling was employed to select news content related to the conflict between the federal government and other opposing sides, as broadcasted on fana broadcasting corporate.

In my study, specific news presentations during distinct time periods hold particular significance, serving as pivotal moments in the unfolding conflict within the country. To address the intricate linkages between sampling procedures and the research objectives, purposive sampling proves to be both applicable and beneficial. This method is considered instrumental in elucidating how media framing reflects the escalation of conflict into aggression in Ethiopia, utilizing consecutive-unit sampling to analyze a series of news reports from the violent conflict era under investigation. Maintaining consistency, a uniform number of samples are deliberately selected

from the various sources, with certain aspects intentionally omitted for subsequent discussion during the analysis phase.

### **3.5 Data source**

The data source utilized in this study is from the media archive. This day, much of the Media organizations, such as television channels have turned to social media as an additional means of reaching their audience. Even though many of the mainstream media stations upload their content on you tube to expand their viewership, during the sampled period FBC did not utilize you tube to disseminate its news stories to its audience on the platform. Following asking letter of recommendation from the school of journalism and communication and accepted by the media, I had got to access the media's archive catalogue. Then the data for this research was collected from the archive source using appropriate sampling techniques. Using this source I collected all the necessary data according to the sampling technique. Riffe, et al. (1998) discussed various forms of content, including verbal, written, and visual communications, which can be analyzed. Despite the traditional distinctions between print and broadcast media, it is feasible to analyze audio-visual content available on archive for research purposes. So the researcher using the appropriate sample news stories from the media archive as the possible way of getting such news.

### **3.6 Data analysis instrument**

#### **3.6.1. Transcription**

In order to facilitate content analysis of audio-visual material, the initial step involved transcribing it into written text to convert it into a textual format. Subsequently, a comprehensive review of television news segments from FBC, available on archive over a period of three months, was conducted. This examination aimed to analyze the secondary sources represented in the news stories, as crafted by the reporters associated with these media outlet.

#### **3.6.2. Translation**

In order to facilitate content analysis of audio-visual material, the initial step involved transcribing it into written text to convert it into a textual format. Subsequently, a comprehensive review of television news segments from FBC, available on archive over a period of three months, was conducted. This examination aimed to analyze the secondary sources represented in the news stories, as crafted by the reporters associated with these media outlet.

The act of translation involved rendering the news stories transcribed from archive into the English language suitable for research purposes. These English news narratives were carefully crafted to mirror the original Amharic news stories in terms of significance, context, and mood, ensuring consistency within the research framework. Non-verbal communication introduces additional complexities that may obscure the explicit content of the message being conveyed. For instance, while verbal communication, like written text, relies on the semantics of words or symbols, it also encompasses nuances such as intonation and emphasis that can influence the interpretation made by the recipients, as noted by Riffe, et al. (1998, p.57).

### **3.7 Procedure and tools of Data Analysis**

As explained above the techniques used to analysis the data is content analysis and in-depth interviews. Within the realm of media framing, as elucidated by Entman (1993) the text is characterized by frames that are discernible through the inclusion or exclusion of specific keywords, standardized phrases, stereotypical images, sources of information, and statements that present thematically cohesive collections of facts or evaluations (p.52). Employing the framing technique, I adhere to the process of grouping words, phrases, and sentences along with their tonality, their information sources, in order to construct a narrative that culminates in the inferred interpretations among the audience. Various framing strategies, such as the annihilation frame or the attribution to responsibility frame, may be applied to assess the professional trajectories within the media industry as outlined in the theoretical framework.

### **3.8 Unit of Analysis**

As per Wimmer & Dominik (2006), the unit of analysis could consist of a single word or symbol, a theme (an individual assertion regarding a particular subject), or an entire article or narrative within written material. The unit of analysis in this research comprises news stories explicitly covered by the chosen media organizations and connected to the ongoing war. An individual news story was scrutinized, and pertinent details were extracted to demonstrate how the war was framed by the two media outlets. In this investigation, the unit of analysis for the study was a theme from news stories broadcasted by the designated television channels during the specified period related to the war. Consequently, all stories sourced as news materials from the designated media outlets were employed as the unit of analysis.

### **Code**

Coding involves the utilization of a word or brief expression that represents, assigns, encapsulates, and/or evokes a significant attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2015). In order to scrutinize the content of news articles, a coding sheet was formulated by the researcher after a thorough examination of existing literature. This process facilitated an examination of the frequency of coverage, the tone, themes, sources of information, and the frames employed in the news. This investigation resulted in the creation of a construct by the researcher that represents or interprets data, assigning significance to individuals for the purpose of identifying patterns, categorization, and other analytical procedures. The designated coding units include themes, news origin, numerical data, and prevailing themes. Regarding themes, the researcher systematically classified news articles under the subsequent subcategories. Dimitrova and Stromback (2005) assert that the application of a frame specific to war involves the development of several frames devoted to representing tones of news stories, all of which are encompassed within the specific coding classifications linked to a central organizing theme. Numerous frames tailored to war are methodically created and classified under a series of eight core organizing themes.

As posited by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), the concept of conflict framing plays a crucial role in the portrayal of conflicts involving individuals, groups, institutions, or nations, with the aim of capturing the interest of the audience. The reporting of conflicts typically involves a dynamic between those posing 'support and blame' inquiries and the stakeholders responsible for managing the situation, with the media framing the issue in a manner that aligns with the interests of involving parties. With regards to the theme, the researcher systematically classified the news stories into the following distinct subthemes.

**Blaming Oppositions:** These news articles pointed fingers at the opposition for the unrest, casualties, property damage, and overall adverse outcomes of the event. The Selection includes criteria for this category included headline contents, details, and key vocabulary terms.

**Supporting Government Actions:** These news stories expressed support for the government's measures, actions, such as the imposition of a state of emergency amidst the conflict. Categorization was based on headlines, sub headlines, detailed content, and significant terminology.

**Reports on Stability and Peace:** These reports reassured the public that the situation was under control, ensuring stability in cities and the nation for normal daily activities. Categorization relied on headlines, sub headlines, detailed content, and critical vocabulary.

**Backing Defense Force:** the Categorization of news stories in this group was determined by headlines, sub headlines, detailed content, and significant vocabulary.

**Sources:** another classification of news stories into this category was based on the sources from which the news originated. News stories in this category were selected based on their sources, aiming to provide a balanced narrative.

Furthermore, it was imperative to incorporate the viewpoints of media professionals. As a result, a thorough and elaborate interview was conducted with journalists, editors, and media executives from the respective organizations. This methodology aids in addressing the research questions posed in the thesis.

## Chapter Four

### 4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1. Data presentation

In accordance with the discussion on sampling presented in the previous chapter, the start of data collection is initiated with reference to the news stories broadcasted from September 2022-August 2023. These stories are then classified into various themes within the station to facilitate a clear observation of reporting patterns. The process of transcribing and translating the sampled news stories for the purpose of the thesis was personally undertaken. Consequently, the current chapter encompasses the exposition and examination of the data derived from the media establishment, as well as the feedback garnered from in-depth interviews. The analytical framework is constructed upon distinct subcategories delineated from the dataset. In alignment with the research inquiries of this investigation, specific subcategories have been identified as the foundation for the presentation, examination, and discourse of the data. The primary objective of this research endeavor is to scrutinize the application of conflict-sensitive reporting, with a particular emphasis on the broadcasts of the aforementioned media house pertaining to the contemporary political landscape of Ethiopia.

After the decision was made to conduct an analysis on a particular story, the subsequent consideration revolved around the selection of stories to be included in the analysis. Determining the number of stories and the specific criteria to be applied became a pivotal aspect of this process. In the context of the quantitative content analysis tool employed, a total of 48 news stories broadcasted by FBC on the contemporary political context in Ethiopia in the sampled period by the selected. These news stories are prone to conflict period. A subset of these stories was then chosen for further textual analysis. It is worth highlighting that the purposive sampling technique was utilized in this study.

A total of 48 news articles were gathered from the media outlet, as previously indicated. The content of these articles pertains to the reports on conflicts within the contemporary political landscape of Ethiopia. While the focus remains on the ongoing conflict, the narratives within the articles exhibit variations that allow for categorization. Consequently, the researcher endeavored to classify these narratives into distinct groups.

### 4.1.1 Analysis of FBC news stories based on theme

Given the characteristics of the study, the literature reviewed, and the data collected, the methodology employed in this research involved the utilization of content analysis. The categorization of the data was conducted according to the information contained in the raw data. As delineated in the coding segment, the news articles were systematically classified and encoded based on their thematic content. Consequently, this section of the study presents the data that was gathered.

A collective of 48 news articles pertaining to the persistent conflict were identified within the FBC news archive. In its capacity as a mainstream media outlet aligned with the government, it appears that the channel omitted coverage of certain significant occurrences throughout this timeframe.

As delineated in the preceding section of this study, various frames were employed by the media in addressing matters pertaining to 'conflict' throughout the duration of the research. According to Entman (1993), media framing pertains more to the structural aspects, such as the physical attributes and particular occurrence and placement of the narrative, rather than the actual content. As Laura (2010) and McAuliffe and Weeks (2015) indicated the classifications of framing regarding the thematic elements present in the media content. The categorizations of framing pertain to the core message or prevailing theme encapsulated within the narratives showcased by the media. The analysis of this investigation reveals that the media employ labeling supporting, peace and stability and other frames. Then, the news articles featured on FBC are organized into the following categories:

Table 4.1: FBC news in categories

No.	Themes	Frequency	Percent
1	Supporting the government	11	22.91
2	Peace and Stability report	16	33.33
3	Blaming oppositions	13	27.08
4	Support defense force	4	8.33
5	Others	4	8.33
	Total	48	100

As presented in the coding, the methodical classification of news stories into distinct categories was conducted according to the content or the communication of and messages of news stories. The headlines, sub headlines, the overall messaging of the news story, and the intentional repetition of certain news stories were employed in the grouping of news stories into various categories. From the above table we can infer that FBC gives much attention to frame the stories on the backing of the government, peace and stability frames and blaming oppositions. Other stories have less attention due to the focus of the Medias theme.

During the conflict the media used blaming, victimization, undermining others, and urging narratives framing techniques most frequently and almost in a similar manner to protect the in-group and to expose the out-group in the face of the audience or to transfer responsibility to the group they considered as the antagonist.

#### ***4.1.1.1 Framed Stories on support the government***

Accordingly, FBC disseminated a number of reports endorsing the governmental measures implemented in the selected establishments. A sum of 11 reports explicitly supported the government, with no instances of reports criticizing governmental actions. The methods employed to express its support may differ, yet all reports favored the government.

#### ***4.1.1.2 Framed stories on blaming oppositions***

The remaining news articles were targeted on attributing faults to opposing factions. Opposition parties were categorized by the government as either certified opposition parties or terrorist organizations. Within this classification, the analyses implicated both officially recognized and terrorist-designated parties for the unrest, casualties, and damage to assets. A cumulative of 13 news analyses was identified to be holding the opposition parties accountable, whereas no analysis was discovered to assign blame to the government.

#### ***4.1.1.3 Framed stories on peace and stability***

The other category of the reports broadcasted by the FBC amidst the conflict pertained to the documentation of efforts towards upholding peace and stability. These reports varied from illustrating the established routine of civilians residing in areas susceptible to instability and conflict, to commending the dedication of the government forces in preserving stability. 16

reports emphasized the importance of stability, whereas there was a lack of reporting on the escalation of instability in similar instances.

#### ***4.1.1.4 Framed stories on Support defense force***

FBC draws attention during the phase by highlighting narratives related to dedication and the support of defense force. The aim of that coverage's is to portray a narrative that aligns the public opinion in favor of the national defense force, emphasizing the extent of sacrifices involved. While 4 reports are focused to showcasing support for the defense force, there is a notable absence of coverage presenting the opposing viewpoint in these situations.

### **4.2. Data Analysis/ Discussion**

This subsection presents the analytical findings discovered in the study. It was noted that the investigator utilized both qualitative and quantitative content analysis approaches to collect the data. The information is presented individually by the media outlet and comparatively towards the conclusion to facilitate comprehension. During the analysis process, the researcher examined headlines, sub headlines, sources of news, statistics, or any data extracted from the news articles.

To answer and give some analysis on the first question is: How does Fana Broadcasting Corporate report conflict news? Throughout the duration of conflicts, the media commonly employs techniques such as blaming, undercutting of adversaries, and persuasive storytelling to shape narratives like victimization. These strategies are consistently applied to safeguard the interests of the in-group while highlighting the faults of the out-group to the audience. The media reports conflict issues in manner reporting conflict issues by framing to the backed the government and blaming the opposition sides using themes.

#### **4.2.1 Themes used by FBC**

The predominant television broadcaster, FBC, generated a collective sum of 48 news stories concerning the ongoing conflict. Nonetheless, it appears that these stories were constructed within the context of the conflict. Within this research, the news accounts were classified into five distinct categories according to the content they convey.

During the conflict the media used blaming, victimization, undermining others, and urging narratives framing techniques most frequently and almost in a similar manner to protect the in-group and to expose the out-group in the face of the audience or to transfer responsibility to the

group they considered as the antagonist.

As indicated in the research question: What are the primary concerns brought up when reporting conflict news?

The media give much concern on backing the government and the defense force at all cost to protect the interests of the party. Several stories in this regard have been presented on the sampled period. As the researcher identifies these themes and observed some level of sensitivity and polarization on covering conflict issues also during an in-depth interview sessions it is practically observed.

#### ***4.2.1.1 Response on the practice of conflict sensitivity coverage and the Media Polarization***

Understanding the presence of polarization involves in the practice of conflict reporting from the media house in Ethiopia's contemporary political landscape. My Interviewees generally agree on this point. Interviewee 2 believes that there is nothing wrong with polarizing sensitive issues to one side or the other. He further goes on to say:

*As we are left through conflict situation most of the reports were and most of the coverage's is conflict itself most of the stories side with government and as it is legitimate practice. A journalist is not just a passive conduit for ideas to flow through without any input. The government may want us to believe that, but according to article 29 of the constitution, we have the right to hold our own thoughts. As a journalist and an individual, I have the right to express my belief that the government should be changed, as long as I present my reasons in a fair and balanced manner. This right is guaranteed to me both as an individual and as a journalist. Some stories are reported without any changes to the ideas presented by government officials. I can share my opinions in the media where I work or in other settings. (personal interview, April 2024).*

Interviewee 2's perspective highlights the polarized and advocacy-driven nature of mainstream media in Ethiopia. This stance on journalism seems to go against the principle of objectivity, a key pillar of professional journalism. According to Maras (2013), objectivity is often linked to impartiality, detachment, and making value-free judgments. Any hint of bias, favoritism, or

involvement is seen as a failure to achieve objectivity. In other words, objectivity cannot exist alongside political or ethical commitments. One of my Interviewee from officials also disagrees with informant 3. According to him:

*The polarization of conflict coverage in the country has various impacts. It hinders the creation of well-informed citizens as the media tends to only show news from a specific perspective, leading viewers to extreme positions. This polarization also influences the country's politics. For example, FBC only presents news that aligns with its developmental ideology, ignoring conflicts like the one in Ethiopia in order to focus on news it deems beneficial for the country's progress. As a result, the media's reporting can shape the views of its audience (Personal interview, April 2024).*

As discussed earlier in the content analysis part the practice of conflict sensitivity and Polarization may see by silencing occasions. Another Interviewee sees this point from two different views. He stated:

*The first one is there is work to be done to balance but as we have focusing on mediating issues we can deliver for a larger society, by thinking about the problems it will cause sometimes stories may not be aired. The second one is there are some things that the government doesn't want to broadcast as a result of sensitive content. Even if the media is biased, it is not appropriate not to report such cases. (Personal interview, April 2024).*

The discussions above indicate a polarization in the media system of this country, with a lack of impartiality and objectivity. The media often accuses the government and society of discrimination, highlighting a deep mistrust between them.

As discussed in the literature part, Hallin and Mancini (2004), states, whether they work in popular media or elsewhere, cannot be completely impartial when it comes to system governance or community participation. It is widely accepted that journalism, globally, is not truly nonpartisan. Many studies have been conducted to disprove this idea. Similarly, Papathanassopoulos (2007) points out that the media cannot be unbiased and shares common characteristics such as low newspaper circulation, advocacy reporting, media

instrumentalization, politicization of public broadcasting, and limited development of journalism as a profession. These characteristics of polarization are highlighted in the following quote, which illustrates the similarities between the media system and the Ethiopian media, a topic that will be discussed further in the upcoming sections.

*In Southern Europe, the press evolved mainly within the realms of literature and politics rather than the market. This led to a media system with less circulation, focused on elites, less professional journalism, high political influence, and heavy state involvement in the media sector. Sometimes, the press even takes on an activist role by rallying readers to support political causes (p. 171).*

Interviewee 2 believes that Ethiopian media similar trend to political parallelism. He thinks that mainstream media sees itself as a force for change, supporting the opposition and aiming to the government. This has led to militant or advocacy journalism becoming the norm in the eyes of the public (Personal interview, April 2024).

During an interview, he mentioned that the political environment and ideological polarization are responsible for the media's coverage of polarization issues. He stated his idea.

*A media official informant argues that the media had to take on the role of the mediator because there isn't a strong opposition challenging the government's exaggerated presentation in the media. The solution to these problems can be found within the problems themselves. The informant emphasized that changes need to be made to the political culture. Before we can have a vibrant and objective media, the social and political culture of our country needs to be revamped. I think it has made a great contribution to traditional conflict resolution by covering different types of conflict escalation ways. (personal interview April 2024)*

The above discussion indicates that the media practice using all side says to balance stories is minimal and journalistic professionalism is practiced too its early stage. The polarization may apply by different ways the politics controls the media and the media nature of volatility gives the system to go along. Even though the media sensational reporting doesn't support the information gathered from those informants argument shows there is some level of polarization,

directly or indirectly, instead of reporting the cause of conflict the media gives much coverage solution based stories. Of course it also has an impact to peace and stability.

#### ***4.2.1.2 Framed stories on support the government***

FBC generated and circulated multiple reports endorsing the initiatives implemented by the authorities amidst the period of conflict. The manner in which they demonstrate their support may differ, yet all their reports unequivocally supported the government.

FBC broadcasted the news: An effort to inform the international society that does not embrace the terrorist activities of the TPLF (FBC News September 13, 2022). The detail of the news which read: ... efforts are being made by the government to inform the international community about the terrorist activities of the TPLF. By ignoring the call for peace, the terrorist group is doing various crimes and other things and it have been easily bring up the international must know the fact that the government have been forced to play its role of maintaining the rule of law of any action.

It is obvious that the government need to take action to maintain peace and responsibility. However, the news was polarized in two ways. The first thing, while conflict actors were accusing each other for no interest to talk each other which FBC didn't say nothing about it. Secondly, the news accused the other group for the ongoing conflict.

Another news head of presented: The government urged to take irrevocable action in the terrorist TPLF group. (FBC News September 16/2022)

This news story attempted to state the responsibility of government to protect its people and the country and the hardship experienced as result. The hidden aim of the TPLF was stated as: the terrorist group is building a huge force and has started the third round of war against Ethiopia. The hidden agenda of the current act by the group is to make the country powerless. The story portrayed the group as, which cannot continue its life without war and urged the public to stand with the government's side,...thus it should be destroyed unconditionally without giving the terrorist group a fourth chance. To support the story presents that legal and military experts also say...although the government's patience has eased the diplomatic pressure, a strong action is needed now.

The international organization was pressuring for possible peace whether they profit or hurt from the ongoing conflict. The government was not comfortable with those pressures and many news

stories were produced and disseminated to stop that pressure because they are not interested to give support and trying to stop supports as a result.

One of the news of FBC was read as: the practices of some international institutions have deviated from the guidelines of the international principles and founding documents. (FBC News September 20, 2022).

FBC attributed the pressure of the institutions as biased. The stories stated that the reason for the pressure is not the conflict itself, but the renaissance dam and efforts to get out of begging. As a result, the pressure on the government continues to this day. The detail sentence was read: ... Why did the pressure of the institutions from the terrorist group become stronger on the government?...And of course international media broadcasters like BBC reported that the pressure occurred as a result, the government is not interested to swift restoration of services and to end the conflict. But FBC stated that this pressure has also been seen in many countries, so the government should continue without bowing to the pressure, indicating that the pressure is not specifically with the conflict itself but chain of other factors. The government by using multiple choices the realty must be propagated.

Following the aggravation these of pressures, the government declared an act of terrorism in public festivals. Many were warning about its effect on tourism and consequences such as unlawfulness, mass arrest and the trustworthiness of the government to protect the people in the eyes of the international arena. FBC continued presenting news stories like: The Security and Safety Joint Task Force have been announced that 166 members of a terrorist group who were plotting to turn into a national crisis by inciting violence at public festivals have been arrested. (FBC news stories October 03, 2022)

In order to show there is strong system to hold such kind of act, it has been reported that... the suspects who were conspiring to create a national crisis by carrying out acts of terrorism on the occasion of Demera, as well as on the Irecha festival. But the Security and safety joint task force attributes they were regular members of TPLF, Shene and ISIS and were moving by taking missions from these groups. Even though there is the ability and capabilities of the government to manage and foil the conspiracy is very strong.

Another story for those who question the role of Ethiopia's government to end the ongoing conflict in the north region was broadcasted by FBC as: The fact that the government is ready for

dialogue with the rival oppositions shows its commitment to peace: (FBC News October 1, 2022)

The detail of this news reads; ... The government should continue to strengthen the work of seeking peace and security as announced by President Sahlework Zewde, as the TPLF is arranging various reasons to buy time. The rival party's gives support to the government to take immediate action as the war would cause more losses to the country if it is prolonged.

FBC focused on supporting the actions that were taken by the government on the ongoing conflict. Their reports showed strong support for the government and harsh criticism on oppositions. As we can see from the above example headlines of news stories, the contents support government actions. They were presenting government information without balancing with what the public or the other party had to say. Although UN and other international organizations were accusing the government for holding humanitarian access for the benefits of its own demand, FBC mentioned nothing about that. No report was broadcasted that criticize any action of the government and there is no government loss report because the conflict.

Support for the government was also visible in the selection of interviewees for news. FBC included comments only for those who support the actions of the government. Following the interest of peace talking to end the conflict, FBC produced news stories that attempted to persuade the public to support taken by the government on the ongoing conflict. However, thousands of people were put under custody, which FBC minimal gives minimal coverage about this.

Beyond the themes used that back the actions of the government the other way reporting the conflict is blaming the other side. As the content analysis suggests that most of the stories are framed to give support for the government it is important to ask and add response of the journalists on the issue of freedom and their independence.

#### ***4.2.1.3 Responses on Media independence and media Freedom***

Freedom is a crucial issue for the media, but that doesn't mean they should operate independently. The media, as necessary entities, must collaborate with political and economic elites, albeit cautiously. In Ethiopia, most media outlets either avoid these elites or are avoided by them. Waisbord (2000) emphasizes the importance of working with the government, stating

that cutting ties with the state would be detrimental to the media's interests. This applies to big businesses as well, as they also provide essential resources. Regarding the practices of media freedom in FBC, Interviewee 8, deputy editor in chief at FBC, asserted the following:

*Reporters choose to avoid getting involved in political issues because it is connected to public concerns, problems, and criticisms of the government. Due to fear of the repercussions of speaking out, we often stay silent. This has led to a lack of representation of the voices of the people. As a result, FBC does not effectively reflect the views and interests of the population. In contrast, FBC's coverage of economic development issues is more thorough, despite its use of propaganda and fabrications of the reality on the ground of the truth the media is not being completely independent and free in my view (personal interview, April 2024).*

Asked about how much independent they were while working with powerful sources of influence, the key Interviewees had different responses. A senior journalist at FBC mentioned that there were many influences at play. He explained that:

*Some government officials would become upset when they saw reports that affected their interests, leading them to pressure the media in various ways. Others would try to bribe journalists to prevent them from exposing wrongdoing. The journalist emphasized that even if reporters tried to remain independent, these influences could still interfere with their work. Informant 8 at FBC echoed these concerns, particularly focusing on government and public influences. He noted that while the public wanted media to cover political issues extensively, which was not their main focus, the government was also unhappy with some of their political programs. (Personal interview, April 2024).*

In the argument involving the deputy editor and senior journalist at FBC, Interviewee 1 asserts that no media outlet, regardless of its level of independence, can completely avoid potential influences emanating from various sources. According to Aklilu (2018) and Waisbord (2000), the intricate nature of the relationship between the media and influential entities is highlighted by the fact that there exists a complex interplay of independence and dependence. This results in a multitude of layered and contradictory connections that create both opportunities and obstacles

for journalists engaging in adversarial reporting. Within the intricate landscape of journalism, the autonomy of the media is contingent upon their adherence to a fundamental principle of the profession - preserving editorial independence from the subjects they report on. The rights to freedom of speech and press hold significant importance in a democratic society. Therefore, it is emphasized that the ability to engage in journalism without unwarranted interference, criticize government officials peacefully, and express dissenting opinions are pivotal for the realization of various other rights and liberties (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

#### ***4.2.1.4 Framed stories on blaming oppositions***

One manner in which polarized media operates is by disseminating narratives that attribute all societal problems to the opposing faction. Instead of offering impartial narratives and evidence, these media outlets focus on uncovering flaws within the party they are against. This pattern of media behavior holds true even for FBC. The administration categorizes opposition groups as both legitimate political adversaries and extremist threats. Subsequently, we shall examine the veracity of this assertion by analyzing select news reports disseminated by FBC regarding the ongoing conflict.

FBC broadcasted this news on December 10, 2022: The government, warn to continue its efforts against terrorism, extremism, theft and profit linkages in a way that involves the community (FBC News December 10, 2022). Dr. Legese Tulu of the Government's Ministry of Communication Services announced that the government will take measures on such groups by involving the public and continues its effort on these groups.

In the report, FBC called for an immediate measure of those 'forces'. However, the news failed to address namely the story by incorporating the accused 'forces'. It left by saying individuals. It was also blamed the so called 'individuals' for the loss of life and property in some well-egated areas. Those individuals should take the responsibility for killed innocent citizens and property in the area.

Using the transitional period as an opportunity, information indicates that organized robberies are taking place in some areas of Tigray that have not been reached by the defense forces (FBC News December 17/ 2022)

The detail of the story reads: For the sake of the people and the peace of the country, the

government of Ethiopia is carrying out the promises made in the peace agreement without delay and without flinching. However, information is pointing to the existence of a large amount of looting with a help of patrols on government and commercial establishments. However, the news failed to report on the reaction of the other party. The other news of the same category was about blaming Shene which was headlined as:

There must be efforts to fight and to destroy the terrorist Shene, as the group has caused the loss of many lives and properties. (FBC News January 12, 2022)

The story stated as the group... has no clear feature and does not have a goal to fight for and is satisfied with the shedding of human blood by attributing the residents of the capital.

Rather than covering why the forces of government cannot protect the people in that area the story was to blame 'opposition force'. The detail of the news reads; the group is satisfied with the shedding of human blood. Of course shene kills a lot of people in wellega area as the international media like BBC, and reported severally and the Ethiopian human right commission discovered. It is the main responsibility to protect the people from such act and must be accountable for the filer. Similar news story was also presented under the headline: Communication Office Oromia has announced that the action being taken against the terrorist Shene, which operates in the region, will continue. (FBC News January 24, 2022)

After state of emergency has been declared in amhara region several stories blamed the oppositions broadcasted by the channel. One among the stories:- Economic and social problems has been created in the Amhara region due to an organized bandit group. (FBC News January 24, 2022). The detail of the news story read as: thus groups are exposing the society to robbery, abuse and other social problems by robbing institutions and preventing them from going hungry by indicating state of Emergency report. Thus portraying these opposition as non-interested to solve problems peacefully and the only responsible for that problem.

As we could see from the above news stories, FBC was blaming the oppositions as violent forces causing the conflict. It produces 16 news stories while no news story was produced that blamed the government.

Another issue takes in to focus is: How the media entertains conflict news during prime time?

FBC, during prime time coverage by using themes like peace and stability issues and issues like support the defense force. Omitting some occasions give focus on peace and stability.

Information should alter its trajectory by originating at lower levels rather than higher ones. The framing of the media outlet in Ethiopia should prioritize peace and stability. The question of professionalism becomes here. In relation to this most of the interviewees from the media gives focus on political government reports rather than the profession needs.

#### ***4.2.1.5 Response on State of practicing Professional Journalism in the media***

Professionalism in the field of media constitutes a crucial element in shaping a well-informed public perception, thereby enhancing the engagement of citizens in democratic processes and decision-making. This can only be achieved through the creation of media content that upholds the core principles of professionalism, such as impartiality, objectivity, diversity, equilibrium, and inclusivity, while abiding by these established professional norms. Consequently, media practitioners bear a significant responsibility towards their respective societies, and any shortcomings on their part can have adverse effect on public discourse, paving the way for the dissemination of rumors, misinformation, and disinformation. Journalistic professionalization is a crucial factor in any comparative examination of media systems.

Blumler and Gurevich's (1975) seminal study investigates the legitimizing principles of media institutions, particularly focusing on the relationship between reporters and external influences. This dynamic represents a conflict between the ideal of journalistic professionalism and audience expectations, and the intertwined political and economic factors impacting the media landscape. Nonetheless, Hallin and Mancini (2004) argue that professionalization serves as a key element in clarifying certain complex concepts within the field. They highlight the diverse sets of criteria for professionalization across their four models of media and politics, categorizing them into autonomy, specific professional standards, and a commitment to public service.

They posit that a significant disparity in presenting newsworthiness and establishing criteria for acceptable quality news practices exist in newsrooms globally. In contrast to their consensus regarding the failure of the majority of mainstream media outlets to fulfill their professionalism, key Interviewees in this study exhibit differing opinions on the state of professional journalism within the nation. While some contend that it is present despite its constraints, others assert that characterizing it as professional journalism is challenging. Advocates in the former group cite two factors hindering the implementation of professional journalism in the nation. The initial

factor is the prevalence of erratic media behaviors.

The subsequent factor is the existence of a polarized political landscape that seeks to manipulate the media for its own agenda. Supporting the first group of key Interviewees, the higher official:

*“Given the societal division, it is imperative for a professional to be willing to endure significant challenges initially in order to garner the support of certain segments of the population as their audience. He further contends that in a highly polarized political landscape, being vocal can often lead to rapid acclaim.” This situation presents a disheartening reality for professionals committed to upholding the principles of ethical journalism. (Personal interviews, April, 2024).*

Similarly, editor in chief, supporting the higher official stance, suggests that media professionals who effectively address the prevalent challenges in the field have the opportunity to choose professionalism. (Personal interviews, April, 2024). My Interview director of news and current affair also argues on the professionalism of journalism:

*Ethiopia does have a professional journalism industry, but there is always space for development, especially when it comes to important coverage like conflict reporting. Experience is what one practices in this field. “I believe that the professional media outlets that deliver fair and thorough reporting in a timely manner will be the ones that thrive in the long run.” (personal interview, April 2024).*

Senior reporter Interviewee 7, however, is opposed to the earlier key informants. "It is difficult to say there is professional journalism," in his opinion. He contends that anyone may enter the field, that it is unrewarding for practitioners, and that it resembles politics and the nation. Due of the poor salary and difficulties in the field, even seasoned journalists choose to pursue financial gain over refining their craft. He adds:

*Professional journalism in Ethiopia is scarcely implemented due to various factors. Primarily, the media encounters legal and professional obstacles, hindering the practice of professional journalism. Additionally, the level of training received by journalists is notably inadequate. Consequently, professional journalism is currently at a rudimentary stage. Society often expects*

*journalists to report in alignment with its preferences rather than objectively reflecting reality, thus conflicting with principles of professionalism. Any attempt to report events professionally may lead to societal backlash in the form of labeling or boycotts. Historical observations reveal a trend where media outlets cater to public sentiment rather than presenting factual information. Furthermore, the limited scope for exercising democratic rights contributes to the insufficient freedom of the press. This lack of media freedom frequently results in the transient presence of many media entities in the market. The challenging environment indicates that true professionalism in journalism is unsustainable (personal interview April, 2024).*

Abera, Adem, and Mulatu (2024) examined the Contemporary Contested Ethiopian Media Practice and Its Impact on Journalists' Autonomy and Role. They found that journalists' professional content creation and autonomy, especially regarding political and sensitive topics, were subject to negotiation or interference. Thus, maintaining full professional autonomy in order to uphold impartiality, objectivity, and independence while practicing journalism in Ethiopia poses a significant challenge.

In a similarly statement Aklilu citing D.r Abdisa Zerays interview he gave to zemen (2006) consolidates the level of professionalism in Ethiopian media by stating:

*“Journalism in this nation is currently at a nascent stage. The realm of journalism lacks organization, is devoid of substantial knowledge, and remains underdeveloped. Historically, individuals who engaged in writing often assumed the title of a journalist without adhering to established standards. The transition towards professionalism within journalism was a necessary progression; however, this transformation has not materialized. The state of journalism in our country is notably deficient. By regional benchmarks, our journalism ranks among the least developed on the African continent” (P.48).*

Asked about balance and fair reporting, one of one of my Interviewee told me he doesn't believe stories are balanced and fairly treated when reporting such cases. This may due to the accessibility of the other side and it seems like enough if the government officials say once on it. However one the Interviewees from the media higher officials stated balancing stories and

treated fairly is somehow difficult and trying their best by stating:

*We are trying our best but sometimes it is difficult to make a balance and what we prefer sometimes instead of waiting for balance it is better to report the crises as its making our own journalistic profession responsibilities and we will make a follow up on too. But sometimes it is difficult to balance on things like rebels in oromiya or amhara regions that we want to witness. But how are we going to balance. They are not accessible. So it depends on the situation. But our principal is making a balance as much as possible. (Personal interview April, 2024)*

Pejic (1996) observed a dynamic tension that existed among individuals transitioning from being professional journalists to ethnic journalists. This tension extended to professional media organizations and political parties, as they grappled with the balance between profession and politics, freedom and control, civic and ethnic community, openness and closeness of society, and democracy and dictatorship.

Mulatu (2021) stated that, Journalists have their own criteria to pick the right sources of the information to write the stories. This can be, for instance, prominence of the sources, issues - sources relations (sources relevant to the issues), accessibility, and giving voice to all.

Based on the other question: What are the main sources of news when Fana broadcasting corporate report conflict issues? To answer this question there is an analysis made with the journalist and almost all of the interviewees agreed on using the one side access, which is from the government officials or experts that can emanate to the issues that need to be addressed.

Asked about using source to balance sensitive coverage's the entire Interviewees agreed on using one side source. Balancing is unthinkable and the neither stories nor fairly reported as a result.

One of my interviewee, from the Medias higher officials to gives his answer on the point:

*Without any alternative our sources on such occasions are government communication bureau, government officials, military personnel and the like Issues are presented without any balance and I don't think Journalistic principles are practiced as well. He added 'as a media institution we have some responsibilities to hold reports that are far from the truth but we didn't see enough action of balancing in the ongoing conflict reporting and professionalism were forgotten.(Personal interview April, 2024)*

All the information gathered with regards to professional journalism indicate that the state of professionalism in the sector is in a precarious condition which requires the intervention and the active role of all the parties involved in it. In spite of the fact that the key informants had major differences on the state of professional journalism in Ethiopia, they deviated from their assertions when they were asked the same question about the media. Since the comparison was subjective and no key Interviews had said that the media were perfect in their professionalism, a lot remains to be done as well.

Based on all the evidence acquired, the situation of professionalism in the field of professional journalism is in a perilous position that calls for active participation and intervention from all parties involved. When asked the same question concerning the media, the key informants departed from their statements despite having starkly differing opinions regarding the situation of professional journalism in Ethiopia. There is still more work to be done because the comparison was arbitrary and no important informant stated that the media was flawless in their professionalism.

#### ***4.2.1.6 Framed stories on peace and stability***

The other news category of the reports of FBC during the conflict focused on reporting on the reverse of peace and stability. These reports ranged from trying to show the stabilized day to day life of dwellers in some instability areas taken by opposition sides and areas to hailing the commitment of the defense forces to reverse the instability. 16 reports focused on maintenance of peace and stability while no report was on escalation of the problems. Some of the news stories under this category were:

One of the News head reads: Government controls some cities in the north and efforts are being made to facilitate humanitarian aid in the areas (FBC News October 18, 2022). However, the conflict in reality escalated in the mentioned place. FBC reported how the conflict was controlled, but did not report on the conflict prior to this news on the mentioned areas. The other news story of a similar fashion was:

The government promised to solve the conflict in the north peacefully (FBC News October 21/ 2022)

This news focused on the effort of the government to solve conflict problems that caused much loss. However, no single line story presented the public encounter with economic or political loss

and doesn't give full information on how it is implemented.

FBC broadcasted: Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed said that the acceptance of Ethiopia's proposal was a diplomatic success for Ethiopia. (FBC News, November 3, 2020). This news gives emphasis on the government fully appreciate took measures to end the ongoing conflict and commitment to peace in his message on current affairs to reverse peace and stability in the area.

Another story presented by FBC: President Sahlework Zewde said that Ethiopia won the peace agreement. This news was on the agreement signed by the government marking as very good news for Ethiopia and its people. (FBC News, November 3, 2020).

Following agreement of ceasefire several peace and stability news stories have been disseminated. News head reads like: The conflict in the north is reversed to peace and restoration of services (FBC News November 21, 2022). FBC focused on reporting how the government was effective in reversing the conflict situation by implementing the ceasefire agreement to make peace and stability on the areas. However, at that time, there was no fully implemented stable condition in those mentioned areas. Similarly, the stories tried to laud the effectiveness of the measures taken by the government. To the contrary, there was no news stories produced on the measures taken by the other side too.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the practice of conflict-sensitive reporting by mainstream media within the current political landscape of Ethiopia. In order to draw plausible conclusions, information was collected from primary and secondary sources using qualitative research methods that involved two data collection instruments: content analysis and in-depth interviews. Therefore, the key aspects examined in the analysis of in-depth interviews include: the Role of mainstream media, Major Challenges faced by mainstream media, Execution of roles and responsibilities, the Status of professional Journalism in Ethiopia, and media coverage of conflicts. It becomes the need of peaceful way of conflict resolution role of media. To add insights the in-depth interview has been made with some media practitioners.

#### ***4.2.1.7 Responses on the role of the media on peaceful way of conflict resolution***

The roles of the media in society are theoretically well-defined. However, the extent to which these theoretical roles have been implemented remains uncertain. Kasoma (1995) argues in his

work 'The role of the independent media in Africa's transition to democracy' that these functions encompass the provision of alternative information, fostering accountability, transparency, and upholding principles of good governance. As Kasoma contends that the autonomous press in Africa may at times consciously refrain from fulfilling this duty as a result of instances when the independent media, rather than authentically revealing instances of poor governance by the leaders, engage in unethical journalism to spotlight those in positions of authority out of animosity towards them, rather than a genuine intention to hold them accountable to the public for their actions or inactions. Some of the purportedly independent media outlets in Africa today are culpable of engaging in such unethical behavior.

Based on the most of the key informants engaged in this study, Kasoma's assertion regarding the unethical characteristics of the dominant media is applicable in the context of Ethiopia as well. Instead of assuming the role of a vigilant overseer and functioning as a platform for public discourse where individuals express their opinions, the mainstream media overseas has been operating in opposition to the governing body, possibly due to its aversion to the existing authority. Interviewee 1, a senior producer from news and current affairs, elucidates the reasons behind the animosity that permeated the media from its inception and has persisted up to the present time. According to her:

*The function of media lies in its role as a public sphere, dedicated to serving the public interest by giving a voice to the voiceless. However, in our nation, the majority of media outlets does not operate as the traditional 'fourth estate', but rather function as entities that uphold the existing system, with only a few established media sources deviating from this trend. For instance, media entities like FBC or those affiliated with political parties encounter issues related to professionalism, maturity, and overall capacity (Personal interview, April, 2024).*

Interviewee 2, a producer in the news and current affairs room, enhances the ideas put forth by Interview 1, suggesting that:

*The media should serve as a platform for public engagement and act as a voice for marginalized groups. However, in the present day, there is a tendency for media to prioritize representing the interests of the existing system over addressing pressing issues faced by the public (Personal interview, April 2024).*

Upon the attainment of the ceasefire agreement in Pretoria, the predominant focus within the narratives pertains to the ramifications and positive aspects of the agreement, underscored through the enumeration of various benefits. Absent are accounts delineating disarmament efforts and allegations levied against the opposing faction regarding the feasibility of the agreement; instead, the stories predominantly focus on its pragmatic dimensions.

The interviewees generally observed the role of FBC as a guardian and a platform within its role for public sphere and conflict resolution. Nevertheless, they contended that these functions were not fully utilized. Similarly, a senior reporter at FBC conveyed his apprehension regarding the government's treatment of the media. He cast doubt on the notion that the government regards the media on par with its own propaganda machinery for the purpose of wielding power. Such a perspective is deemed perilous for the media itself (Personal interview, April 2024).

#### ***4.2.1.8 Framed stories on Support the defense force***

As we seen above there have been stories in different categories and there are stories under the category of support the defense force. 4 stories among the all 48 stories focused and targeted to show the support of the defense force. These stories are much in the month of September as the conflict is at its turmoil. Among those categories of news stories: the support and kindness of the people is becoming a great moral force for the national army (FBC News September 14, 2022). The news was also mention... the support given to the Defense Forces gives a high level of confidence and the need for the youth to join the Defense Forces and similar stories are followed by.

FBC broadcasted: The people all over the country are giving various supports to the national defense army, ranging from blood donation to monetary contribution, to support the country's survival. The news story presents beyond the support to the defense forces mentioning the opposition as a treat for the sovereignty and survival of the country.

These stories are framed to create awareness on the opposing parties that the people are on the side of the defense force and power of moral to win the other side. In regard to this most of the interviewee, during such situations stories that come from the side of defense was broadcasted without balancing and commenting on it. According to interviewee 3 it is difficult to give commentaries and asking for balance in such conditions as a result of tense and as if it's enough coming from the side.

As the same stand interviewee 2 suggests on the issue, its strong attachment to the side of government and the defense is its power the media is not far from the system. This indicates the overall side and attention with the indicated group.

According to the FBC content analysis, Ethiopian defense officials have been accusing opposition groups and media outlets that speak out as anti-peace and terrorists who want to seize power through violence. Currently, FBC has been blamed for this. They claim that these groups and media are shifting public attention from important issues to war. FBC journalists, like Interviewee 2, believe that the officials are using this as an excuse to avoid accountability. The Interviewee stated that there is no freedom of the press in Ethiopia, including at FBC. Criticizing journalists without giving them a chance to improve their work is disrespectful and shows a lack of justice in the country.

Asked about its level of volatility he gave the following by agreeing on the idea. FBC senior reporter stated:

*It can't be unchangeable through system to system as it is not free and independent by itself. When the political situation is hot and the media goes along with it and if the situation is cold the same trend is there. Its volatile is only system to system but also from content to time and system of politics. The reason why these are volatile is not what the people wants to present, but what they want to flow with the flow, is their indication. Similarly another informant, senior producer say the following about its level of volatility. I think not fully perfection but the nature of volatility of conflicts with in the country and it does a great job not only on the issues that arise, but also and the conflicts that arise are resolved. There is an omission, but it is playing his role so that the country can continue. (Personal interview, April 2024).*

#### **4.2.1.9 Omission occasions**

The practice of conflict coverage by FBC involved omitting certain occasions and fulfilling a polarization role by disregarding chronic events throughout the conflict period. FBC played a significant role in silencing by choosing to omit certain chronic events during the conflict.

Throughout a period, FBC failed to document any instances of public unrest at rallies. Instances such as the killing of innocents in Wellega and Ataye were not covered by FBC during this

period; instead, the focus was on highlighting the restoration of peace in specific areas where previous conflicts were not reported. FBC strategically chose to minimize providing detailed coverage of the situation rather than reports on government efforts to manage the situations. Additionally, FBC highlighted the restoration of peace in specific areas without addressing the prior instability in those locations. Furthermore, while 16 reports were dedicated to peace and stability restoration, no mention was made of ongoing conflicts in other regions and their consequences. Consequently, the framing of the narratives was influenced by the impact of the coverage. The concern of discharging its role and responsibilities of being voice for the voiceless is minimal as the analysis indicates. So then to get some insight from the interviewee the researcher made an in-depth interview.

#### ***4.2.1.10 Responses on Discharging Roles and Responsibilities of the media***

Another point of departure is when key informants shift from their general assertion to assess the media in terms of fulfilling its roles and responsibilities.

The editorial policy of Fana Broadcasting Corporate stipulated:

*When conflicts happen due to various reasons, if we find broadcasting the conflict outweighs its harm and benefits, we do not rush to report it. When finding it necessary and appropriate to report it, instead of dealing with the effects of the conflict, we report giving much consideration to its causes and resorting to putting pressure to solve differences peacefully and democratically.  
(Fana Broadcasting Corporate S.C Editorial policy, 2018, pages 26-27)*

Most of key Interviewees view FBC as mainstream media that is making an effort to fulfill its democratic responsibilities by acting as a public forum and a fourth estate, according to their own perspectives. Interviewee 6, director of news and current affair at FBC, states:

*The media have their own policies that serve the public as a fourth estate. However, the main goal of establishing FBC is to act as a critic of the government and support the ruling party in its political and economic efforts. Mainstream media has the responsibility to support the government based on evidence, regardless of whether it pleases the government or not. However, FBC tends to only show the positive aspects of the party instead of creating a public*

*forum and engaging in investigative journalism (Personal interview, April 2024).*

Deputy Chief Editor explains “most of media managers and officials are not exercising the media tasks as the sector needs or their media background is affiliated with the system of politics. For instance, FBC media managers have been appointed by their political perceptions”. (Personal interview, April 2024).

A senior reporter at FBC, in his part says:

*The media has the potential capability to present news in a fair and balanced way, but it is important to evaluate this on a case-by-case basis. Determining which news is reported fairly and balanced is crucial. Some news may be reported in a balanced and fair manner, while other news may not be. It all depends on the type of news being covered. As for the media's role as a watchdog or public sphere, we are currently not meeting that standard. Journalists need guarantees to ensure they are not facing hardships due to their work before we can expect the media to fulfill its role as a watchdog or public sphere (Personal interview, April 2024).*

As Aklilu portrayed during a training session, Dr. Abdisa Zerai focused on journalism in peace and the importance of professional ethics in journalism. He discussed:

*“The media and journalists have contributed to fueling conflicts in recent years. The need for media and journalists to uphold the core principles of their profession and work towards is the greater good and peace in the country. He highlighted that journalists should not only report on problems but also offer solutions”. (September 9, 2023 Ethiopian Media Council)*

As discussed in the review of literature section, (Obijiofor, 2011).argues that While some believe that journalists, especially those advocating for peace journalism, can play a role in facilitating peaceful resolutions to conflicts through their reporting, others have a different opinion. Considering the limitations of most of the mainstream media in Ethiopia in terms of discharging their roles, one would find it difficult to talk confidently that they have been carrying out these roles to the fullest. However, regarding its conflict resolution role most of my Interviewees agree on its role of conflict resolution and instability coverage, FBC done much rather than reporting

causes of the conflict. Even if it's not enough Interviewees from the higher officials, states that especially after the peace agreement have been signed between the government and TPLF FBC do much on such issues. These he said

*Look at our media, we are generating our income, our revenue and we are surviving. If our media is not acceptable who are going to advertise on the media believe it there is a room for public sphere, but to what extent is the question. (Personal interview, April 2024).*

#### **4.2.1.11 Responses on Challenges of the Media**

In the review of chapter two, the challenges encountered by the media stem from both internal and external origins. The segmentation of these challenges was a prevalent practice among the key informants information. As noted in the literature review, while internal challenges arise from within the media industry itself, external challenges predominantly stem from governmental entities. The primary sources extensively discussed the challenges faced by the mainstream media in this particular nation, more so than any other topic addressed in the comprehensive interview. Virtually all participants concurred that issues such as inadequate information, resources, impatience, lack of media professionalism, and societal discrimination were among the challenges highlighted.

The other issue to be answered in study is: What are the major challenges of journalists in balancing the practice of professional journalism in relation to conflict sensitive reporting by mainstream media in Ethiopia? The culmination of these challenges has led to underdeveloped content, polarization, and a heightened focus on government-related matters. Asked about the challenges of the mainstream media, Interviewee from higher officials, Fana Broadcasting corporate says:

*Being journalist and leading the media institution the people are polarized in terms of politics, religion, even regionalism is there, so whenever we are reporting as a part of the other parts of public come against you. Whenever the society is in the harmony journalism can't pay off. Most of the time I don't think that journalism is practiced as the profession does mean in this country right now weather the private or the government media itself. It is very difficult to get*

*rational. It comes basically the public itself. When you make interviews they are telling what they want to broadcasted not the rational idea. People are not tolerating. That is because societies level of media literacy low. The people understanding of the media are very low level. People don't understand what the media is doing. (Personal interview, April 2024).*

As a result, the absence of journalistic ethics, equilibrium, and societal accountability is evident in their communication. Their material is predominantly opinion-driven rather than evidence-based. The mainstream media is frequently observed to serve its political agenda through propaganda, while public or state media endeavors to generate public sphere media, notwithstanding facing challenges such as a deficiency in charisma and fostering accountability and transparency in the public consciousness (Personal interview, April 2024).

As stated by Tetey (2006) a comparable scenario witnessed in emerging African democracies during the 1990s in the subsequent manner that numerous analysts have expressed strong disapproval towards the media, emphasizing perspectives that depict them as unreliable, self-interested, unanswerable, and jeopardy to the legitimacy and continuity of the democratic mechanism. The practice of journalism has been likened to uncultured political dissemination and censured for its partiality, irresponsible conduct, and unethical practices.

Nonetheless, Interviewee 1, a senior producer at FBC, identifies the challenges arising from differing perspectives, which emanate from internal shortcomings within the media industry and external pressures from governmental entities:

*The capacity of the sector is constrained across various dimensions including professional, material, and financial. Participation in this sector is open to all individuals. The government demonstrates a lack of support towards the media industry. Accessing government information proves to be challenging; Failure to get information quickly from the officials to provide information on relevant issues and the legislation pertaining to media emphasizes punitive measures and constraints rather than fostering its growth (personal interview, April 2024).*

In similar token accessing information is a significant factor that poses a challenge to the mainstream media, in addition to the aforementioned reasons. Despite being explicitly ensured in the declaration, this aspect is still in its infant phase. This notion is corroborated by Interviewee

6, news and current affairs director at Fana Broadcasting corporate, as he reflects on the obstacles faced within the profession:

*If the government wants to support the media, one of the necessary actions is to encourage the media to function as a watchdog rather than a mere mouthpiece for the authorities or the opposing factions. Within this professional domain, a major obstacle is the dearth of information required to provide a balanced narrative. Authorities are often reluctant to participate in interviews. The issue of information scarcity also plagues entities such as FBC and other media outlets in the nation, ranking as a primary, secondary, and tertiary concern. While not outright refusing, there is a noticeable hesitance, often manifesting in requests for formal letters or delays due to their demanding schedules. At its inception, this situation presents the most challenging aspects (Personal interview, April 2024).*

One of my Interviewees, senior reporter FBC news current affairs room, in his part on the challenges of mainstream media says:

*The media in Ethiopia, particularly the mainstream media, encounter a variety of challenges. Commencing from the restrictive regulations to the absence of expertise, the media industry confronts significant hurdles at a heightened magnitude. The proficiency and capability of journalists in their daily media duties are reflected in their stories. The knowledge in proficiency and competence is observable not solely among journalists but also among media administrators who encounter similar issues. The media confronts substantial political impact. The legislation implemented to regulate the media industry has, as frequently emphasized, presented a significant threat to journalists and placed journalistic endeavors in a precarious position. The press regulations, along with the anti-terrorism legislation and numerous other regulations are censured for serving as a mechanism to stifle media expression. Despite having constitutional protections, censorship is still prevalent in various forms. The existence of restrictive regulations, coupled with numerous journalists facing imprisonment or exile, has led journalists to engage in self-censorship. The concept of freedom*

*of information remains largely theoretical. The majority of journalists do not feel at liberty to disseminate their messages or keep the public well-informed. The issue of professional competence constitutes another notable challenge (Personal interview, April 2024).*

Interviewee 1 expresses a dissenting opinion from senior reporter, the Interviewee, highlighting deficiencies within mainstream journalism pertaining to professionalism, ethics, responsibility, knowledge and skills, familiarity with national policies and strategies, and understanding of the political-economic landscape, rather than solely attributing them to the government (Personal interview, April 2024).

This shows that the aforementioned points infer the challenge encountered in mainstream media operations, including those specific to the FBC.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1. Summary**

The investigation was carried out to scrutinize the implementation of conflict-sensitive reporting by mainstream media, with a focus on FBC news coverage regarding the contemporary political situation in Ethiopia. To comprehend the practices of the media organization, a suitable methodology has been chosen to address the research inquiries. Through the utilization of this methodology and data collection instruments, findings aligned with the research queries have been uncovered. Primarily, the study concentrated on conducting content analysis and in-depth interviews of the news stories produced by the media outlet. The research was guided by a set of five questions: to analyze how the media covers conflict-related news, to determine the primary news sources utilized when reporting on conflict matters, to ascertain the main issues highlighted during conflict news reporting, to investigate how conflict news is portrayed during prime time and to identify major challenges of journalists in balancing the practice of professional journalism in relation to conflict sensitive reporting by mainstream media in Ethiopia.

The data collection approach of the study incorporated mainly qualitative and but also quantitative methodologies to address the research questions effectively. A coding sheet was formulated by the researcher based on a review of existing literature to analyze the news content. This facilitated the assessment of coverage frequency, tone, themes, information sources, and news framing. Purposive sampling was employed for the analysis of news content. Consequently, purposive sampling was utilized for the selection of news items, sources, and headlines from the media outlets. The reports concerning the contemporary political landscape of Ethiopia from September 2015 to August 2015 E.C were selected, as this period coincided with heightened turmoil. In order to draw potential conclusions, the study adopted a combination of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods. A qualitative research approach entailing in-depth interviews with eight key stakeholders was employed. Consequently, the analysis of the in-depth interviews revolved around core issues such as the responses regarding the roles and challenges faced by mainstream media, the state of professionalism, and the level of media practice.

## **5.2. Conclusions**

This investigation was carried out to analyze the practice of media content within mainstream media, with a specific focus on FBC news stories concerning the contemporary political landscape of Ethiopia. Through the application of Framing Theory and the utilization of content analysis on FBC's news coverage of the country's ongoing conflict, it was determined that the media outlet demonstrated polarization in its reporting of the conflict, largely influenced by its alignment with the incumbent government. Moreover, it was identified that a significant portion of the news stories produced by the media house aimed to provide a balanced perspective, primarily featuring viewpoints from government officials. The study revealed that the media played a minimal role in exploring the root causes of the conflict and its resulting casualties. Additionally, it was found that FBC portrayed opposition groups and other violating entities as the primary catalysts for the escalation of the conflict, attributing them as the sole entities responsible for the loss of life and property, as well as the worsening crisis within the nation. Furthermore, the research indicated a prevalence of reports emphasizing peace and stability within FBC's coverage, with a notable occurrence of narratives placing blame on opposition groups emerging as the second most prominent theme in their reports.

## **5.3. Recommendations**

While the findings may appear modest, this paper offers valuable insights to media professionals. The mere presence of such publications, no matter how limited in scope, offers important lessons, especially to those currently active in the field or aspiring to enter it. Given the persistent polarization in our political landscape, it is imperative to acknowledge this reality when engaging in this sector. Consequently, practitioners must be adequately prepared both professionally and psychologically. Although effecting change in the political sphere is a difficult task that can drain the resources of practitioners, the ultimate rewards can be substantial. Therefore, patience is essential for practitioners to earn the trust and approval of their audience while providing them with accurate information.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to conduct further research to gauge audience responses to media outlets in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding. The study focused solely on a single

television broadcaster, FBC, to assess the practice of conflict-sensitive reporting by mainstream media. However, a more impactful and thorough analysis could be achieved by including two or more mainstream media outlets in future studies. The study centered on reporting practices related to conflicts in contemporary Ethiopia. This approach is advantageous as it ensures that all media platforms accord equal attention to such critical issues. Nonetheless, instances of polarization are commonly observed in conflict-related campaigns and news coverage. Hence, conducting similar research focusing on these incidents would yield valuable insights.

Academia must actively seek innovative and efficient solutions to break free from the current impasse, as the country cannot afford to remain stagnant. Drawing from successful local and international experiences of transitioning from polarized to vibrant mainstream media can be instrumental in this regard. The government, too, needs to support the fragile broadcasting sector under its purview. The study also advocates for mainstream media to uphold balance, fairness, and the ethical principles of journalism. Reporters should prioritize factual accuracy over sensationalism. Moreover, the public should verify information from multiple sources before taking action.

As a democratic developmental state, the Ethiopian government wields significant influence in shaping the country's trajectory. Given the pivotal role of a robust mainstream media in ensuring the system's efficacy and the state's sustainability, high expectations are placed on the government. These encompass the organization of training opportunities for professionals; primarily, altering the unfavorable perception of the mainstream media; and establishing an equitable environment where governmental advertising is allocated impartially. Should the three entities, namely the media and its professionals, academia, and the government, collaborate closely to enhance the dynamism of the industry, the dynamic media sector would, in turn, influence public opinion, effectively eliminating polarization once and for all. Such measures are crucial for fostering an informed citizenry and contributing meaningfully to peace and stability in Ethiopia.

Thus, the study will function as a reference point for future studies pertaining to the subject matter. Subsequent research should persist in this approach, delving into the potential continuation and dynamics of the conflict. Given the persistent nature of the conflict in Ethiopia, the media could potentially introduce alternative narratives for conflict sensitive reporting.

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# Appendices

## Appendices A

### Interview Guide for Key Informants

The practice of conflict sensitive reporting by mainstream media in the contemporary Ethiopian context: the case of FBC

In-depth interview questions for media reporters, editors and managers

ለሪፖርተሮች፣ ኤዲተሮችና ሚዲያ ማኔጅሮች የተዘጋጀ ቃለመጠይቅ

#### Questions

1. Do you observe some level of conflict sensitivity in Fana Broadcasting Corporates coverage of the contemporary political crisis in Ethiopia? How do you describe it?

አሁን ላይ በተፈጠረው የሀገሪቱ ቀውስ ላይ የፋና ኮርፖሬት ኮርፖሬት ዘገባዎች ላይ የግጭት ስሜትን ታዝበዋል? ትዝብትዎን ያጋሩን

2. If there is a polarization or unbalanced news stories of conflict by FBC, What do you think are the reasons behind?

በፋና ብሮድካስቲንግ ኮርፖሬት የዜና ዘገባቸው ላይ ተቃርኖ ወይም ጫፋዊነት ካለ ምክንያቱን ቢያብራሩልን?

3. What kinds of issues does Fana Broadcasting Corporation cover before and after the conflict than happen in 2022?

ከግጭቱ በፊትና በኋላ ፋና ብሮድካስቲንግ ኮርፖሬት ምን አይነት ጉዳዮች ላይ ያተኮረ ዘገባ ይሸፍናል?

4. Based on your lived-experience and knowledge of the mainstream media sector in this country, what do you think are its major challenges? And how do you evaluate the practice of professional journalism in this country?

በኢትዮጵያ ሚዲያ ላይ ካሉት ልምድና እውቀት አንጻር የዘርፉ ዋነኛ ተግዳሮቶች ምንድን ናቸው ብለው ያስባሉ? በሀገራችን የሙያዊ ጋዜጠኝነት አተገባበርን እንዴት ይገመግሙታል?

5. Scholars who studied the Ethiopian mainstream media consider it as a volatile sector. What is your response on their assessment? If your response yes, state the level of volatility?

ዘርፉን ያጠኑ ምሁራን የኢትዮጵያን ሚዲያ ‘ተለዋዋጭ’ በማለት ይገልጹታል። በዚህ ላይ የእርስዎ አስተያየት ምንድን ነው? ምላሽዎ አዎ ከሆነ፣ ተለዋዋጭነቱን እንዴት ይገልጹታል?

6. Do you think your media house is discharging its roles in terms of balance and fair News while covering conflict issues? ✓ Do you think your media is playing as a public sphere, and peaceful way of conflict resolution? How?

ሚዲያዎ ግጭትን በሚዘግብበት ወቅት ሚዛናዊና ፍትሃዊ ዜናን በተመለከተ ሚናውን እየተወጣ ነው ብለው ያስባሉ? ✓ ሚዲያዎ እንደ ህዝባዊ መድረክና ለሰላማዊ የግጭት አፈታት ያለው ሚና ምን ያህል ነው ብለው ያስባሉ? እንዴት?

## Appendices B

### Coding Guide

Name of coder.....

The coder should write her/ his name Media.....

The coder should write name of the media Data of publication.....

Write the date the story was publishes-month, day and year.....

Headline- .....

Writes the headline and sub-headline if the story has.....

## Appendices C

### Coding sheet

Name of coder \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the media \_\_\_\_\_

Date of broadcast \_\_\_\_\_

Headline of the news \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendices D**

### **Dominant themes used by the media**

Blaming Oppositions: frames focused on pointing fingers at the opposition for the overall adverse outcomes of the conflict.

Supporting Government Actions: frames expressed support for the government's measures and actions amidst the conflict.

Reports on Stability and Peace: frames focused on reassured the public and the international community that the situation was under control, ensuring stability.

Backing Defense Force: frames focusing on the support of the defense force at all cost.

Sources: refer to as a designation for an individual, a collective, or an entity that is cited either directly or indirectly within the news stories.