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Addis Ababa University

School of Journalism and Communication

**PRESS FREEDOM CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF
ACCESSING PUBLIC INFORMATION IN SELECTED ETHIOPIAN
COMMERCIAL MEDIA**

By: - Tesfaye Solomon

**Addis Ababa Ethiopia
June, 2025**

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COMMERCIAL MEDIA**

**By
Tesfaye Solomon**

**Research Thesis Submitted to the College of Humanities Language
Studies, Journalism and Communication Studies in Partial
Fulfilments of the Requirement for the Degree of Masters of Art in
Public Relations and Strategic Communication**

Advisor: Mekuria Mekasha (ASST.PROF)

**Addis Ababa Ethiopia
June, 2025**

Certification

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Evaluating the practice of PR in “PRESS FREEDOM CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF ACCESSING PUBLIC INFORMATION IN SELECTED COMMERCIAL MEDIA” submitted to Addis Ababa University for the award of the Degree of master in public relations and strategic communication and is a research work carried out by Tesfaye Solomons, under our guidance and supervision. Therefore, we hereby declare that no part of this thesis has been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Advisor’s Name

Date & Signature

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, prepared under the guidance of my advisor. All sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged. I further confirm that the thesis has not submitted either in part or in full to any other higher learning institution for the purpose of earning any degree.

Name: Tesfaye Solomon
Signature

June 2025 Date &

APPROVED BY BOARD OF EXAMINERS

Approved by: we the examiners' board approve that this thesis has passed the defence and review process.

Chairperson Signature & Date

External Examiner Signature & Date

Internal Examiner Signature & Date

Principal advisor Signature & Date

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges and prospects of access to public information and press freedom in the private commercial print media in Ethiopia. The fundamental goal is to assess the state of media independence, legal limitation, and explore avenues for enhancing press autonomy. Employing a mixed-methods research strategy where 22 questionnaires administered for three prominent media outlets Capital, Fortune, and Reporter with consolidating qualitative interviews and media practice content analysis. The findings depict the existence of negative perception of media freedom due to censorship by the government, legal ambiguity, resource shortages, and cultural factors. The advent of digital transformation initiatives and legal tools brought potential avenues to promoting media freedom. The study contemplates that it is essential to correct systemic problems through legal amendments, capacity building, and cultural transformation in an effort to encourage an independent and responsible media. The study recommends reforming the media laws, establishing independent regulatory bodies, enhancing journalists' professional competence, and boosting media literacy among the citizens as a condition to democratic progress.

Keywords: - Press Freedom, Media Independence, Ethiopia, Digital Media & Access to Information

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CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

Freedom of expression is individual's right to express their opinions without government intervention or political limitation (Lieberman, 1953; Hachten, 2005). Although the concept springs up in Western political philosophy as a fundamental human right, its values are universally applicable, transcending cultural differences, particularly in nations with histories of advocating for human rights and democratic values (Kierulf & Rønning, 2009). In constitutional democracies, protecting this freedom is a legal obligation, as it is intrinsically tied to human rights (Kierulf & Rønning, 2009). Essentially, all citizens should have the unrestrained ability to share and produce their views, meaning that press and expression freedoms extend beyond media institutions to the broader public. A society thrives when individuals can freely advocate for their rights and well-being through media platforms, making freedom of expression a foundation of democratic governance.

Likewise, access to information is a globally recognized human right, vital for democracy and sustainable development. This is mirrored in UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 16.10, which emphasizes ensuring public access to information (UNESCO, 2020). Furthermore, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights defends freedom of expression as a foundational right, with media freedom and access to information helping as key enablers for the protection of all other rights (UNESCO, 2015).

To exercise democracy effectively, the whole public including citizens, politicians, opposition groups, military factions, academics, civil society, and business leaders must be well-informed to evaluate different views. Yet, despite reforms, Ethiopia's media continues to face momentous hindrance. Press freedom is a foundation of a free society, but it does not mean the absence of accountability; as Blackstone (1769, cited in Y. N. Win, 2014) argued, while prior censorship is unacceptable, legal consequences may follow after publication if laws are profaned. In essence, individuals should not be fined for expressing the truth in good faith. Democratic nations, including those transitioning to democracy, enshrine freedom of expression, speech, and press in their constitutions, aligning with international standards. These rights must remain clear and

unencumbered by restrictive conditions. A free press is critical for the practical realization of these freedoms, helping as a key pillar in democratic societies by enabling free expression of idea and flow of information.

In Ethiopia a progress has been seen after the end of military rule in 1991, as Ethiopia adopted international human rights treaties (1993) and a new constitution (1995) toward securing press freedom a right historically suppressed by successive regimes. However, regardless of this move, freedom of expression and press freedom remained heavily limited, with Ethiopia gaining infamy as one of the world's worst offenders, including the imprisonment of journalists, until 2025. Press freedom in Ethiopia faces many challenges. Governments directly and indirect censors to suppress dissent, often using legal mechanisms such as anti-terrorism laws, sedition charges, and defamation lawsuits to target critical journalism. Coverage of sensitive topics carries risks, with journalists facing threats, harassment, and even physical violence.

In recent years, social media has emerged as a vital tool for uncovering injustices and highlighting issues overlooked by traditional media. While these digital spaces still encounter government restrictions and regulatory hurdles, they continue to serve as relatively open forums for debate and investigative journalism. This created substantial opportunities to bolster press freedom. With expanding internet access, online news platforms, podcasts, and social media enable both reporters and citizens to engage in discussions that might otherwise be suppressed. A key positive trend is the growth of digital and independent media outlets, offering journalists innovative avenues to connect with audiences.

As a result, digital and social media now rival traditional news sources are shaping public opinion and disseminating information. These platforms allow journalists to share news rapidly while expanding their scope and impact. Today, internet-based platforms including video-sharing sites, blogs, podcasts, and social networks provide content creators and journalists with alternative ways to disseminate multimedia content to a global audience. This override the gate keeping and high costs associated with conventional media outlets. Similarly, they empower ordinary citizens and grassroots journalists to participate in the news cycle, breaking stories or offering commentary on public issues that can quickly gain widespread attention undermining the traditional media's former ascendance.

The media serves as one of the most crucial mediating institutions in a rule-of-law society. To foster trust between citizens and leaders, it must remain free from political and economic influence. However, the relationship between media and politics often reflects either conflict or media subservience to political power. In a democratic system, opposing viewpoints are vital for informed public discourse. Conversely, authoritarian regimes suppress debate and exclude citizen input in decision-making. Despite advocacy by human rights groups and media organizations, achieving true media independence remains an ongoing effort.

Mainstream media often echoes the perspectives of the ruling class in societies marked by class divisions. The ties between media combines and corporate interests threaten editorial independence, while underfunded independent outlets strive to survive. In nations where state institutions outweigh individual rulers, media freedom is more secure. However, where political leaders dominate the state, the media becomes a tool of control. Whether viewed as a democratic forum (Lievrouw, 2009) or an ideological apparatus (Althusser, 1971), the media has consistently played a pivotal role in shaping societal worldviews.

Under the current reformation, media in Ethiopia has the chance to provide the required information to the public, which is essential for the exercise of democracy. But in spite of the changes that have occurred during the reformation period, the media in Ethiopia is still facing many challenges, such as difficulty in accessing information and limitations on editorial independence.

This study tries to assessing the challenges of press freedom and opportunity towards some commercial print media in the Ethiopia. Commercial media refers to media outlets that are privately owned and operate primarily to generate profit through advertising, subscriptions, or other revenue streams.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The past decade has experienced a sharp decline in press freedom, even among democratic governments. In the RSF 2023 World Press Freedom Index, multiple countries have experienced deteriorating conditions for reporters as populist and authoritarian regimes conspired to undermine media autonomy (RSF, 2023). They are not only concerning censorship but also challenging the

very essence of democratic principles of free and autonomous media that can hold their leaders accountable (McQuail, 2010).

In the context of Africa, the media institutions are forever enduring restrictive laws, harassment from the government, as well as political intimidation. There have been some progress towards media freedom but still threatened because of legal constraint such as laws of censoring, calumny law, and security law (Obar, 2020). These juristic have a tendency to promote the interests of power, where journalists are limited to report freely and independently (Mabweazara & Chibwende, 2018).

Beside this, the economic environment renders independence of the media hard; state advertisements or political patronage for funding could determine editorial content (Nwagbara & Makinde, 2018). The tension between freedom and responsibility further serves to emphasize that press freedom is an absolute right but has to be balanced against the need for responsible reporting for the good of society (Karim, 2015). Media outlets also face internal challenges, such as competition and self-regulation, which sometimes compromise journalism standards and present additional barriers to investigative journalism (Mabweazara & Chibwende, 2018).

The case is particularly desperate in Ethiopia. It stands at 145th rank on RSF's 2023 Press Freedom Index, reflecting on-going issues with press independence, access to information, and press security (RSF, 2023). Although the 2018 political changes enhanced hope for greater media liberties, several repressive pieces of legislation persist. The Official Secrets Act, defamation legislation, as well as trespassing legislation, continue to be used to suppress critical reporting (Freedom House, 2022). Although the Ethiopian constitution safeguards freedom of expression, freedoms are consistently trimmed by national security and public order provisions, which tend to override free speech assurances (Ethiopian Constitution, 1995).

The private media are under constant surveillance by the government despite the growing industry. Journalists are frequently harassed, arrested, or detained for reporting on issues sensitive to the state like issues of governance, security, or war (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Despite of political reformation underway in Ethiopia, this oppression is also still present, with journalists being charged criminally using broad security legislations. Recently Addis Standard media house was raided and its journalists jailed.

Apart raid and threatening journalists, constraining access to information also restricts press freedom. Official statistics and government reports often are unavailable or delayed, making it difficult for journalists to provide correct information to citizens (Freedom House, 2022). Despite constitutional protection, the operational realization of legal rights remains broad, especially during periods of political instability. The global decline in press freedom and the proliferation of disinformation pose additional dangers to democracy all over the world. Dominating independent media can empower authoritarianism, facilitate corruption, and silence marginalized voices (Norris & Curtice, 2020). These restrictions lead to a culture of fear and censorship, undermining the press watchdog role (Obar, 2020). These issues only need to be addressed by wide-ranging reforms protection of journalists, reform of media law, and a viable media economy.

This study attempted to assess the difficulties and possibility of freedom of the press in Ethiopia's commercial print media and how one may understand the complex interaction between legal, political, and economic factors that shape media independence. To this end, this study investigates the challenges and opportunities for press freedom in Ethiopia's commercial print media, aiming to shed light on the ongoing struggle for a free and independent press and also examines the current state of press freedom in Ethiopia and analyse challenges the journalists and media organizations face. It will also explore the potential opportunities for enhancing press freedom and strengthening the role of a free press. The study also investigates factors affecting selected commercial media under study on press freedom and access to public information.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The study has the following general objective.

1.3.1. General Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess the current commercial media freedom in Ethiopia, identifying challenges and opportunities.

1.3.2. Specific Objective

The following specific objectives are set to achieve the general objective of the study.

- 1.** To investigate the current state of press freedom in Ethiopia and analyze challenges and opportunities
- 2.** To explore the role of a free press, the potential opportunities for enhancing press freedom and strengthening access to information.

3. To investigate and identify factors affecting press freedom and access to public information in selected private media.

1.4. Research Questions

These research questions are set to guide the investigation into current challenges and opportunities of media freedom in Ethiopia in selected printing private media.

1. What is the current state of press freedom in Ethiopia, with a focus on the legal framework, challenges to press freedom such as intimidation and violence against journalists, government interference and censorship, limited access to information, and the role of self-censorship?
2. What are the opportunities for enhancing press freedom in Ethiopia, specifically in terms of strengthening legal protections and legislative reforms, promoting professional Standards and ethical journalism, enhancing journalist safety and protection, building capacity and professional development, and engaging civil society and international support?
3. What are the factors affecting press freedom, free express and access to public information on selected commercial media?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study is useful to understand the importance of press freedom and its necessity for enhancing freedom of expression. The study on press freedom: challenges and opportunity of access to public information which is significant as it provides insights into the factors that affect press freedom in Ethiopia. This study will contribute to the existing literature on media freedom and independence in Ethiopia, where press freedom is limited. According to analysis made by scholars, the Ethiopian government restricts media freedom, which has resulted in limited freedom of expression and a lack of independent reporting. This study will provides recommendations for improving the state of press freedom and independence in Ethiopia and shed light on the challenges faced in commercial print media organizations, such as Addis Standard, Fortune and Capital and how these challenges impact their ability to report independently. The finding of this study is relevant to scholars of media studies, journalism, and political science, as well as policymakers and media practitioners who are interested in promoting press freedom and independence.

More importantly, the significance of the study lies in its contribution to the understanding of challenges to journalistic independence within private media organizations, specifically the Addis Standard, Fortune and Capital.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is delimited to three private printing media operating in Addis Ababa. The government media are not included; and in terms of depth, it provides a comprehensive analysis of press freedom's current state, its challenges and potential pathway by examining legal, economic and societal factors to contribute policy discussion and strategies to safe guard press freedom's role in democracy process.

1.7. Research Limitations

Despite of the researcher's attempt to fully organize, collect, analyze and present the research data there were uncontrollable limitations by the researcher side including time, resource constraint and access to participants who were involved in the research due to: Certain operational aspects, organizational policies, and decision-making dynamics might not be fully transparent or easily accessible to external researchers. These all constraints could impact the ability to fully capture the intricacies of how press freedom is upheld or challenged within the organization. The other limitation is related to organization's adherence to professional standards and editorial policies, as well as their potential impact on journalistic autonomy, may present challenges in obtaining unfiltered insights. Given the sensitive nature of media-related research within the Ethiopian context, the study may encounter limitations regarding the open discussion of certain sociopolitical issues, especially those related to media freedom and journalistic autonomy. This has ultimately influenced the willingness of journalists and staff to express their perspectives freely, potentially impacting the depth of insights obtained.

1.8. Organization of the Research

This research paper is organized into five chapters. The first chapter contains an introductory part which is supposed to serve as a gateway to the subsequent chapters. The second chapter deals with review of related literature on freedom of media, freedom of expression, challenge and opportunity. The third chapter is about methodology, tools and techniques used in this research. The fourth chapter is presentation and analysis of data. Lastly, the fifth chapter provides conclusion and recommendation.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Review of Related Literature

In this chapter, the researcher will look into the theoretical dimensions of the study and investigate the relevant related literature pertaining to press freedom in Ethiopia. This literature review will encompass the pivotal concepts and theories associated with independence in journalism, as well as the various factors that influence it. These influential factors may include censorship, freedom of expression and other conflicts of interest. Throughout this chapter, the researcher digs into different perspectives and approaches concerning these aspects, offering diverse insights into the topic at hand.

2.1. Overview

Freedom of the press and access to public information are the basic factors for democratic states, allowing citizens to engage actively in government and holding governments accountable. This review synthesizes the literature on the state of press freedom in Ethiopia, considering legal frameworks, journalist challenges, reform prospects, and broader determinants of media autonomy and access to information. In Ethiopia, wherein constitutional assurances and international obligations exist, the reality of media freedom is elaborate and clouded with obstacles.

2.2. Historical Background of Freedom of Press

The history of freedom of expression expands back to the 7th century in Britain and was carried over to colonial America, finally shaping modern governance. Over time, more states have acknowledged this essential freedom. A 1978 survey disclosed that 142 out of 181 countries, or 87%, guarantee freedom of expression, pointing its status as a universally acknowledged right (Bradley, 1995). Additionally, governments are progressively responsible for upholding freedom of expression as outlined in both international conventions and their own constitutions. This growing recognition raises the question of why freedom of expression is so ferociously protected compared to other rights. In response to this peculiarity, many scholars and journalists in the U.S., beginning with the First Amendment, have sought to develop theories justifying its necessity.

Given that human judgment can be influenced by prejudice, personal interests, or a lack of information and critical thinking, it is often flawed. Therefore, the theory emphasizes the necessity

of achieving rational and critical judgments. Truth is pursued by presenting opinions for critique and considering opposing viewpoints. However, the suppression of information, discussion, and conflicting arguments hinders sound judgment, stifles the creation of new ideas, and fosters falsehoods (John Milton, 1644).

Over time, modern press theory has highlighted that individuals participate in government decisions through their representatives in a representative democracy. Democratic self-governance relies on the ability of voters to choose representatives who best reflect their wishes and interests, as well as the representatives' capacity to understand their constituents' concerns (Emerson, 1962). Gradually, the modern concept in press theory emphasized the idea that, the individuals by participating in the decision of the government, acts through his representative in a representative government. Democratic self-government on the other hand, depends on the ability of electors the governed to choose their representative, which they think will reflect their wishes and interests best and on the other hand, on the ability of representatives to understand the concern f their electors (Emerson, 1962).

2.3 . Role of Commercial media in democratic societies

The media wields considerable power in democratic societies, largely due to its persuasive capabilities. When the media operates freely, independently, and ethically, it bolsters democracy. An independent media is fundamental to democratic principles, serving as a important means of disseminating information, particularly within different communities. It has the potential to absorb the minds of millions. This function is essential in democracy, empowering citizens to make informed decisions, especially on complex matters.

he independence of the Fourth Estate is critical, as it allows the media to investigate and report on issues that demand public attention. The commercial media is crucial in ensuring that key institutions remain accountable and in preventing unethical behaviour by serving as a public watchdog. Judiciary plays an indispensable role in protecting democracy, alongside the executive and legislative branches. Often referred to as the fourth pillar of democracy, the press acts as a critical component of the Fourth Estate. Journalists hold organizations accountable by providing accurate and unbiased reports of their activities, positioning themselves as a political force in a pluralistic society. It effectively investigates and highlights unethical or illegal actions by governments, corporations, and non-profits, holding all parties accountable. This watchdog role is

vital for maintaining the integrity of democratic processes and keeping the public informed of potential threats to their welfare. By exposing unethical conduct, the media fosters transparency and accountability, which helps build trust in democratic institutions.

It is essential for the commercial media to provide accurate and fair reporting, attempting for a balanced representation of different viewpoints. This involves actively listening to and integrating the view of all relevant parties to ensure comprehensive coverage. Identifying between facts and opinions is important, and reports should be crafted by trained professionals with in-depth knowledge and reliable sources. The media must hold out outside influences, defending against push from governments, institutions, or wealthy individuals who may try to sway narratives. Upholding ethical standards, the media should objectively report on significant issues affecting the public. When errors occur, it is their responsibility to issue corrections to ensure accurate information is available. While the media should be impartial, it must also handle state secrets responsibly to avoid causing fear or jeopardizing national security.

In addition, the commercial media plays a critical role in educating the public. It covers a wide range of topics, including science, technology, politics, and culture, offering valuable insights through reporting, analysis, and commentary. By simplifying complex scientific concepts, analysing current political events, and providing context on cultural trends, the media enhances individuals' understanding of the world. This educational function boosts critical thinking and informed decision-making, which are necessary for a well-functioning democracy. The power of the commercial media to influence public opinion and shape public discourse is based on Cultivation theory. Cultivation theory means that the things we see on TV and in the news change the way we think about the world. Television is one of the most widely used sources of information globally. This concept argues that the influence of the media is momentous enough to change global perceptions regarding events and individuals or groups. Its storytelling ability allows media to shape the perspectives of generations through its reporting of issues. Research has shown that television viewers often perceive their reality based on what is portrayed on television, which can sometimes lead to a limited worldview.

2.4. Theoretical Foundations of Press Freedom

The conception of press freedom is rooted in the wider theoretical framework of democracy and human rights. According to Siebert et al. (1956), freedom of the press is essential for the flow of ideas, public discourse, and balancing power. Frameworks such as the libertarian, social responsibility, authoritarian, and Soviet communist frameworks offer different views on the role and regulation of the media within society (McQuail, 2010). In democratic settings, the libertarian theory supports minimal government intervention, emphasizing the media as watchdogs (Joseph, 1956). The social responsibility theory supports some form of regulation to allow media to play their role in serving the public interest (McQuail, 2010). In authoritarian systems, the media are usually tools of government propaganda, subject to censorship and repression (Lichtenberg, 1990). Ethiopia's constitutional framework for press freedom is founded in its 1995 Constitution, which ensures freedom of opinion, expression, and access to information (FDRE, 1995). Article 29 specifically acknowledges the right to seek, receive, and impart information, with a particular stress on the need for a free press to ensure democracy. Moreover, Ethiopia has ratified international treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which also emphasize the importance of free expression (UN, 1948; ACHPR, 1981).

In contrast to these constitutional and international commitments, the regulatory and legal environment has sought to use the system to dissuade media autonomy. The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA) and other state institutions have issued proclamations and directives imposing restrictions on content, typically in the guise of national security and public order (Oromia Media Network, 2018). Following the 1992 Ethiopian Press Proclamation in Favor of a free press came legislation, such as the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation of 2009, which has been criticized for limiting journalistic work and criminalizing reporting in certain cases (Crawford, 2006).

In Ethiopia, these models get expression in the evolving political and legal order. The country's media system has ranged from state domination to limited liberalization based on political regimes, constitutional protection, and international commitments. Familiarity with these models allows one to anchor an analysis of the Ethiopian media environment and the quandaries of journalists. According to Workneh (2019), a study shows that legal restraint, coupled with obscured definitions

and blanket powers given to the authorities, have also led to self-censorship among journalists. This is driven by criminal defamation laws, licensing acts, and licensing prohibitions, which create a chilling effect. Therefore, while the Ethiopian law theoretically guarantees freedom of the press, the rights in practice are continually diminished by legal and extra-legal means.

2.5. Theory of Freedom of Press

The press indicates the social and political structures in which it functions, mirroring the socio-political system of the nation. The differences among press systems become clearer when one analyses the social contexts in which they exist. Thus, understanding the foundational theories of the press is essential before evaluating any press laws, as the history and evolution of press law have been influenced by competing political philosophies and theories (Pninlahav, 1962).

In the early development stages of the press, following the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, press laws primarily focused on government control over the content of news. However, the Enlightenment of the 18th century introduced the concept of press freedom, leading to an alternative libertarian theory. Advocates of this theory argued that press freedom was essential for seeking truth in a self-governing society and believed that a "free marketplace of ideas" would facilitate this pursuit (ibid). In the early stages of development of the press, following the invention of the printing press in the 15th c. press laws were principle of government control over the formant content of news (ibid).

Meanwhile the advent of enlightenment in the 18th c. which founded the idea of press freedom, gave rise to an alternative libertarian theory (ibid). Proponents of this new theory sought freedom of the press as a means to search for the truth on the basis of self-rule and they believed that a "free market place of ideas" would facilitate the search (ibid). In the 20th century, as the press evolved into a network of mass communication, a theory of social responsibility emerged to address the increasing power of the press in relation to civil morality. A fourth model of contemporary press law, the Soviet communist press system, is based on a different philosophy, where mass media is publicly owned.

Commercial media today faces numerous challenges and barriers, driven by technological disruption, changing consumer behaviour, and economic pressures. The key challenges includes:

1. Digital Disruption & Fragmentation

Transformation from Traditional to Digital: Audiences are moving away from TV, print, and radio to streaming, podcasts, and social media. Platform Dominance: Tech giants (Google, Meta, TikTok, Netflix) control ad revenue and audience attention, leaving traditional media struggling. Fragmented Audiences: Consumers are dispersed across multiple platforms, making it harder to legalize content effectively.

2. Declining Advertising Revenue

Programmatic & Lower Ad Rates: Digital ads (programmatic, social media) offer cheaper rates than traditional media, decreasing revenue. Ad Blockers & Skipping: Consumers avoid ads via ad blockers, DVR skips, and premium subscriptions (e.g., Netflix, YouTube Premium). Brands Shifting to Direct Marketing: Many companies now use owned media (websites, email, and social) instead of buying ads.

4. Rise of Subscription & Paywalls

Consumer Reluctance to Paying: Many users expect free content, making it hard for media companies to convert them to paid subscriptions. Subscription Weariness: With multiple streaming services users are reluctant to pay for news or niche content.

5. Regulatory & Legal Pressures

Data Privacy Laws (GDPR, CCPA): Restrict how media companies collect and use consumer data for ads. Antitrust & Big Tech Regulations: Governments are scrutinizing tech monopolies, but media companies still struggle to compete.

6. High Content Production Costs

Competition for Quality Content: Streaming wars drive up production costs. Talent & Licensing Costs: High fees for actors, journalists, and sports rights squeeze budgets.

7. Economic Uncertainty

Economic condition Fears & Budget Cuts: Advertisers cut down spending during economic downturns. Rising prices & Operational Costs: Rising costs of production, distribution, and talent impact profitability.

8. Changing Consumer Habits

Short-Form Content Dominance: TikTok, Reels, and YouTube Shorts favor quick, engaging clips

over long-form journalism or TV. Decrement Attention Spans: Audiences prefer snackable content, making in-depth reporting harder to legalese.

9. Competition from User-Generated Content (UGC)

Influencers & Creators: Independent You Tubers, podcasters, and TikTokers compete with traditional media for attention and ad dollars.

2.5.1. The Authoritarian Theory

The authoritarian press system is characterized primarily by two features: censorship and licensing. Both printing presses and media outlets depends on permits issued by administrative officials, which can be suspended or revoked at any time for any reason. Furthermore, censorship is enforced through officials who have the authority to remove any information, and violating these necessitate is treated as a criminal offense (ibid).

Among the four theories regarding the relationship between the press and society or government, the authoritarian theory has been the most widespread both historically and geographically. This theory was adopted by many countries with the rise of mass media, forming the foundation for the press system in modern societies. Originating in the authoritarian atmosphere of the late Renaissance, it is based on the belief that truth is determined by a select group of wise leaders. Consequently, this theory dictates that the press must support the government and promote national leadership. Under this framework, whether privately or publicly owned, the press has as much freedom as the government allows (Joseph, 1956).

2.5.2. The Libertarian Theory

According to the libertarian theory, press freedom belongs to the public, with the press serving as an informational link between the government and the people. If this link is disrupted by government-imposed prior restriction, the principle of freedom of information is undermined. In theory, the libertarian press acts as a "fourth estate," supplementing the three branches of government and providing checks and balances on their responsibilities. Proponents argue that the press fulfills its social responsibility by acting as a watchdog over the government (Joseph, 1956). The reform movement of the 18th century gave rise to the libertarian press theory. Its philosophical basis asserts that individuals have the right to seek truth, and any interference with this right should be limited. A significant victory for the libertarian theory over the authoritarian model was the

18th-century British doctrine against prior restraint, as discussed in Blackstone's commentaries, which vehemently opposed censorship and licensing (M.A. Joseph, 1956).

2.5.3. The Social Responsibility Theory

In contrast to the libertarian theory, which does not assign any special legal status to the press and treats freedom of speech and press as equivalent, the social responsibility theory argues that the social functions of the press warrant specific media privileges (Pninalahv, 1972). Advocates of this theory assert that concepts like reporters' privilege immunity from disclosing sources highlight the relationship between the public's need for information and the press's special status (ibid).

Accordingly, freedom of information acts enacted in countries such as France, Sweden, and the United States indicate the social responsibility theory by admitting the public's right to know. Another aspect of the social responsibility theory is the legal obligations imposed on journalists. Acknowledging that journalists play important social roles and that mass media can influence politics, even without a special legal status leads to the regulation of the press to ensure they fulfill their social responsibilities. The ongoing debates surrounding UNESCO's proposals to regulate mass media exemplify this aspect of the theory (ibid, p. 26).

2.5.4. The Soviet Communist Theory

The Soviet communist theory, which underpinned the press system of the former Soviet Union and its allies, looks at media as instruments of the government and integral to the state (WilberSchram, 1964). Like other means of production, the press should be state-owned and operated under the direction of the communist party or its agencies. In this framework, press freedom is aimed to support the success and coherence of the socialist system and the authoritarianism of the communist party, although critique was permitted within the socialist framework.

The Soviet communist theory is a modified version of the authoritarian press theory. Both theories detail the press as a tool of the government that must align with the policies and programs of the leadership. However, there are two key differences. First, under the Soviet theory, the press is state-owned and operated, while the authoritarian theory allows for private ownership of media, and countries that follow this theory do not prohibit such ownership. Second, in the Soviet model, party or government control is absolute, whereas the authoritarian theory may allow for limited press freedom depending on the ruling leadership's disposition.

Although this overview of press theories is concise, the author believes that the existing differences in press systems across nations can be better understood when analyzed through these theoretical frameworks. Additionally, the provisions of any press law can be assessed in light of these foundational theories, although one must consider the idealized nature of such classifications to some extent.

2.6. Development of press and Freedom of Press in Ethiopia

2.6.1. Historical Background

During the monarchy (1955-1974), the 1955 constitution proclaimed that "freedom of speech and of the press is guaranteed throughout the Empire," but the reality was quite different. The monarch was unwilling to allow the public to workout press freedom. This period was characterized by strict limitations on press freedom, enforced through censorship and licensing requirements. The freedoms outlined in the 1955 constitution were essentially given rather than inherent. The constitution was introduced following the Ethio-Italian War, which facilitated the movement of goods, ideas, and people. In 1945, Ethiopia became a founding member of the United Nations, and political alliances introduced Western ideas and socio-economic changes. In 1952, Eritrea was federated into Ethiopia through a federal act, which was unified into the Ethiopian constitutional framework along with the ratification of the Eritrean constitution (Douglas, 1958).

During this time, press freedom was seriously censored, as the imperial power held absolute authority. The Ministry of Finance and later the Ministry of Information and Tourism oversaw propaganda, information dissemination, and press services, including censorship powers (Consolidated Law of Ethiopia, 1972).

Although there was hope for improvement with the promulgation of the 1987 PDRE constitution, these hopes proved futile. The Derg made only superficial changes, and despite Article 47 of the constitution claiming to guarantee press freedom, the actual practice revealed its unrealistic nature. Bealu's death stands as a stark reminder of the suppression of press freedom during this time (1987 PDRE Constitution; Art. 47).

The Derg era brought about a barbarous socialist dictatorship that systematically violated human rights and completely ignored press freedom. Critics of the government faced imprisonment, and those deemed threats to the revolution faced severe repercussions. The death of Bealu Girma, who

was killed for his book "Oromay" in 1984, exemplifies the regime's harsh measures. The government banned private press operations, allowing only state-controlled media to operate, and enforced stringent censorship. Until its downfall, the censorship office in Addis Ababa operated under ironic circumstances, situated in front of the statue of AbuneTeklehaimanot, a martyr for freedom.

In the post-1991 period, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) charter offered a foundation for establishing a democratic system, leading to an unprecedented rise in private newspapers in Ethiopian history. Censorship was outlawed, and a new sense of hope for press freedom emerged. Article 1 of the charter states that "based on the UDHR of the UN adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 217 A (III) of December 10, 1948, individual human rights shall be fully respected, without any limitations whatsoever." The incorporation of the UDHR charter integrates Article 19, which guarantees freedom of expression including the right to seek, receive, and share information and ideas through any media, regardless of borders into Ethiopian law. This article further asserts that everyone must be guaranteed the right to freedom of opinion and expression through any medium without restrictions.

Additionally, in 1993, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1976. Article 19 of this covenant mirrors the UDHR, affirming the right to freedom of opinion, expression, and information. On October 21, 1992, the press proclamation was issued as the first legislation in the Ethiopian legal system focused solely on the press. Its preamble emphasizes the need for a free and robust press to translate free expression into practice and highlights the press's vital role in protecting the fundamental rights of the people.

The 1994 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Constitution established an ethnic-based federal structure intended at ensuring the full and free exercise of the rights of nations, nationalities, and peoples to self-determination, as well as promoting rule of law, peace, democracy, and socio-economic development. It guarantees access to information of public interest and protects the integrity of the press as an institution by supplying legal safeguards for its operational independence and capacity to accommodate diverse opinions (FDRE Constitution, Proc. No. 1995, Neg. Gaz. No. 1). Regardless of their affiliations—be it government, opposition, private or state media, the Ethiopian Journalists Association (EJA) or the Ethiopian Federation of

Journalists Association (EFJA), human rights organizations, or diplomats—there is a consensus that the Ethiopian press is still in its infancy.

The Ethiopian media landscape is polarized into two opposing factions: one consisting of government-supported media and the EJA, and the other comprising the private press, EFJA, and opposition parties. This hostility has created a significant divide between the government and private press, threatening the development of a free press in the country.

2.6.2. Governmental vs. Private Press

In the governmental press, a significant issue encountered by journalists is self-censorship, which the Ethiopian Federation of Journalists (EFA) refers to as a "hangover" from the previous regime (EJA's 5th year issuance, Oct. 21, 1997). Government journalists often restrain themselves, acting as conduits for government propaganda. They primarily report in favor of government actions and refrain from criticism, thus lacking the objectivity necessary for professional journalism. Although the government claims to support press freedom, it raises concerns about whether it is content with maintaining the status quo. Propaganda often serves as a public relations tool, and historically, no Ethiopian government has publicly acknowledged its flaws. For instance, the U.S. embassy once protested against the Ethiopian Herald for misreporting an event involving President Clinton.

Another bottle neck problem for governmental journalists is the lack of professionalism. Aside from a few trained journalists who studied in Eastern Europe and Russia during the previous regime, many government journalists lack the qualifications to be considered true journalists. In contrast, the issues within the private press are even more noticeable. It appears that the private press needs to undergo momentous self-reflection and improvement. While this responsibility primarily falls on the members of the private press, government intervention should be a secondary concern. Since the TGE charter guaranteed freedom of expression and press, the Ethiopian private press has flourished. Between 1991 and 1997, licenses were issued for 247 newspapers and 121 magazines.

However, this number has since decreased to 91 newspapers and 17 magazines. Out of the 91 newspapers, 17 focus on love and gender, 41 address socio-economic and political issues, 12 cover sports, and 3 are cultural. Among the 17 magazines, 5 are political, 11 are religious, 1 targets children, and another focuses solely on news. Despite these impressive figures, many publications

have ceased operations due to bankruptcy or indirect pressure, with some appearing intermittently. The basic issue with the private press is a lack of professionalism, which is often more severe than in the government sector. Many individuals working in private media lack the academic qualifications required to be considered journalists. Most are in their early twenties and possess only a talent for writing, seizing the opportunity presented by Article 5(1) of the proclamation, which allows any Ethiopian to engage in press activities.

For many owners, journalism is more of a business venture than a profession with social objectives and ethics. Nevertheless, a few private newspapers and journalists stand out for their quality work. Additionally, financial constraints impede their ability to register properly, leaving them reliant on traders (advertisers) and political sponsors. To improve the performance of press freedom, it is crucial to improve the relationship between the private press and the government, which is currently marked by mutual distrust.

2.6.3. The Press and its Relationship to Government

It is now widely recognized that freedom of information extends from freedom of expression and the press. Article 19(1) of the ICCPR states that “everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression,” which includes the freedom to seek, receive, and share information and ideas without borders. Freedom of information is intrinsically linked to freedom of the press, which implies certain relationships between the press and the government. Protecting press freedom from private censorship is essential (Barron, 1975).

Therefore, analysing the general principles governing the relationship between the press and the state will facilitate a discussion on press freedom in Ethiopia. Freedom of expression is a practical indication of freedom of thought and is acknowledged as a fundamental right in various social agreements, regardless of the political systems they establish. The complexities involved in gathering, publishing, and broadcasting news necessitate daily interactions between the press and the government, making the press susceptible to government scrutiny and influence.

Governments often view questioning press coverage unfavourably, leading to restrictions on press freedom that varies depending on the press theory endorsed by each nation. While democratic governments constitutionally protect press freedom and employ measures to safeguard it from executive overreach, totalitarian regimes employ various methods to suppress it. Some deny

private ownership of mass media, while others resort to censorship and licensing as tools to limit press freedom.

2.7. Challenges of Freedom of Press

There are fundamentally three challenges of press freedom.

2.7.1. Political Challenge of Press

The enforcement of the Human Rights Act 1998 gives an opportunity to revisit the laws governing the complex relationship between a free press and fair trial, especially regarding the publication of prejudicial pretrial information (Beatson and Cripps, 2000:123). Political challenges to press freedom arise from inadequate enforcement of press laws, influence by ruling parties, a lack of independent media, and difficulties in accessing information.

In developing countries like Ethiopia, both private and governmental press organizations struggle to implement press laws effectively. These organizations are tasked with informing, entertaining, educating, and influencing the public. However, private press organizations often focus on negative news related to the government, sometimes exaggerating issues and violating media ethics, which can compromise their integrity. Likewise, government press organizations tend to align with the ruling party, treating state media as a propaganda tool rather than a public resource, publishing information primarily for political gain.

2.7.2. The Economic Challenge of Press

The burden of high printing costs forces many media organizations to withdraw from competitive markets. Government-funded press organizations are less affected by these costs, while private press entities suffer more due to the lack of government help. Thus, these economic challenges importantly impact the press landscape in Ethiopia.

High printing costs and poor communication infrastructure between urban centres and rural areas have hindered the development of print media in Ethiopia (Mass Media Profile, 1998). According to the Population Media Centre, the high cost of printing severely restricts the growth of press organizations. Both private and governmental press entities struggle to address these financial challenges, as they often lack a solid financial foundation.

2.7.3. Professional Challenge of press

Professional journalists play a pivotal role in fostering informed and engaged citizens. The goal of postgraduate programs is to train journalists who can defend human rights and democratic freedoms (Ethiopian Mass Media Profile, 2006). These elements are vital for nation-building and require the protection of skilled journalists. The absence of professional journalists makes it difficult to uphold human rights and democratic freedoms.

Ethiopian journalists often lack the professionalism needed to advocate for public interests, protect citizens' rights, and raise awareness about democracy, rights, and responsibilities. This situation stems from the relatively recent establishment of universities and institutions focused on journalism and communication in Ethiopia.

2.8 Public Access to Information

The public's right to get information, as well as the press's role, is basically based on the public's right to know. Both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant recognize the right to seek and share information as part of freedom of expression. This broad concept of freedom of expression entitles the public to receive information of general concern, which promotes the values associated with protecting that freedom. The press plays a important role in promoting truth, providing information to self-governing citizens, and assessing governmental abuses (Harvard L. Rey, 1974).

Most countries shrine constitutional protections for access to information as part of freedom of expression. Citizens have the right to understand how their government functions and to hold it accountable. The press serves not only as a right to amplify information but also as a means for the public to receive it; without this, the press cannot effectively function as a watchdog (International Centre Against Censorship, 1993).

The Constitution of Ethiopia guarantees every citizen the right to seek, receive, and share information as an essential aspect of freedom of expression (FDRE Proclamation No. 1/1995, Art. 29(2)). Citizens are entitled to seek information that impacts the public and to receive it accordingly. In broader terms, everyone in society has the right to question about governmental actions and any personal information important to them. However, due to entrenched practices from past regimes that suppressed access to information and a general lack of awareness regarding constitutional rights, the government has been uncooperative in implementing these laws.

Consequently, the press is often better positioned to challenge the government and other information sources. Generally, the public has a legitimate interest in the workings of the legislature and executive, as well as a desire to be informed about events surrounding public institutions.

2.9. Press Freedom Challenges in Ethiopia

Violence and intimidation are recurring themes. Human Rights Watch (2018) informs us that journalists have suffered arbitrary arrest, physical assaults, and threats, and some have been murdered. The challenges facing the Ethiopian press are multiple, and they range from legal, political, economic, and social. Political interference is a persistent challenge. During periods of political unrest, governments may employ censorship, intimidation, and violence against the press (Hassan, 2020). The 2016 and 2020 Tigray conflicts are a shining example of how the state and non-state actors have restricted media coverage, where journalists are often detained and media outlets closed (Amnesty International, 2020). The case of journalist Eskinder Nega, imprisoned for his critical writings, is an example of the suppression of dissent (CPJ, 2014). Self-censorship is common, out of fear of reprisals, and thereby reduces the diversity of viewpoints and degrades the media's watchdog function.

Government censorship, however, extends beyond institutional legislation to embrace informal practice. Media organizations are often subjected to pressure from security institutions and political elites, leading to biased reporting or concealing sensitive topics (Workneh, 2019). Internet censorship also makes information access more challenging; internet shutdowns during the 2018 protests forbade the exchange of information and limited journalists from reporting without restriction (Freedom House, 2019).

Economic constraints also erode media independence. Many private media depend too much on advertising, sponsorship, or political patronage, which compromises editorial freedom (Kebede, 2017). Lack of professional journalism training and equipment also constrains the quality and independence of coverage.

2.10. Opportunity of Press Freedom

Journalists often face bullying, threats, and physical violence while performing their duties, which presents significant challenges to press freedom and journalist safety (Amnesty International, 2020). Many journalists have faced attacks or harassment for examining sensitive topics such as

corruption, human rights violations, and political misconduct (MFWM, 2020). These violations foster a climate of fear and self-censorship among journalists, impeding their ability to report freely. Despite the seriousness of these incidents, accountability is frequently lacking, with many perpetrators evading punishment.

Government intervention and censorship continue to pose serious hindrance to media freedom in Ethiopia. The government uses various strategies, including legal intimidation, manipulation of advertising revenues, and regulatory measures, to suppress dissenting voices and control the media narrative (Koroma, 2023). Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts from the government, civil society, and international organizations. Promoting a free and independent press, ensuring journalist safety, strengthening legal protections, and fostering a culture of transparency and accountability are essential for advancing press freedom.

A well-functioning democracy rely on free and various media that inform the public, hold powerful individuals accountable, and facilitate discussions on public affairs. Research indicates hat quality journalism can enhance political knowledge, participation, and engagement, while also helping to reduce corruption and encouraging elected officials to better represent their constituents.

The freedom, multifariousness, and effectiveness of the media in encouraging democracy are influenced by the institutional structures within each country's media environment. Today, these environments are evolving, partly due to technological and market developments linked to the rise of digital media. This report aims to examine evidence-based research on the opportunities and challenges these changes present for news media and their role in democracy across various contexts.

The nature of change in the media landscape differs significantly from one country to another, yet there are notable high-level similarities that present both opportunities and challenges for journalism, media organizations, and public discourse. The three key developments led by technological and market forces today include:

- 1. Transition to Digital and Mobile:** The media environment is increasingly digital, mobile, and social, resulting in intense competition for audience attention. While traditional media like broadcasters and newspapers remain vital news sources, they are becoming less important as distributors of news. These organizations encounter mounting pressure to create new digital business models as their existing operations either decrease or stagnate.

2. Rise of Major Tech Companies: A small number of large technology firms are becoming more important, enabling billions of users worldwide to easily navigate digital media through services like search engines, social networking, video sharing, and messaging. These companies play an increasingly crucial role in news distribution and digital advertising.

3. High-Choice Media Environment: Internet users now have access to a vast amount of information in convenient formats, often for free, on various sophisticated personal and mobile devices. This environment fosters new forms of engagement, with those interested in news taking advantage of opportunities to access, share, and comment on it. However, many users prefer more casual and passive consumption of content.

The change to mobile media has co-occur with the rise of social media platforms—most notably Facebook, alongside video-sharing sites like YouTube and Vimeo, messaging apps like WhatsApp and Snapchat, and photo-sharing platforms like Instagram and Pinterest. Many of these services are operated by a few large tech companies that hold central roles in the digital media landscape; For example , Google owns You Tube, while Facebook owns WhatsApp and Instagram .Social Media is not only popular for personal connection but is also increasing important as a news source, as more users encounter news on these platforms.

2.11. Pathways for increasing Press Freedom

Despite these challenges, there are opportunity for change and media freedom integration In Ethiopia. Legal reforms to match national law with international standards need to be pursued Researchers like workenh (2019) need revisiting and amending oppressive laws such the Anti - Terrorism Proclamation to safeguards journalistic practice and boost transparency Capacity building and professional development are necessary . Encouraging Journalists (Freedom, ethical code, and instituting journalism school can improve media independence and quality (Kebede, 2017). Technical aid and advocacy by global organizations such as UNESCO and the international press institute can be sought out. Civil society and media rights groups are powerful champions of freedom of expression. Media literacy, legal literacy, and public awareness campaigns can empower both citizens and journalists (Ogundipe, 2020). The beginning of new digital media gives new approach for independent reporting and citizen participation. Social network sites, blogs and online news portals have become available websites for independent expression, especially where the traditional media are under constraints (Sivertsen, 2017).

Additionally, regional pressure and international mechanisms, like the African union human system, can act on Ethiopia to protect and promote press freedom. International pressure has registered some encouraging changes, such as releasing detained journalists and easing some limitations (Freedom House, 2020).

2.12. Media law in Ethiopia

The history of media in Ethiopia spans over a century, with *Le Semeurd’Ethiopie* (1905-1911) and *Aimero* (1902-1903) acknowledged as the country’s first newspapers. However, some suggests that a handwritten publication by Blatta Gebre egziabher around 1900 may actually precede these newspapers, marking it as the first Amharic “newspaper” in Ethiopia (Pankhurst, 1992). Following the post-liberation period, the publishing industry experienced notable growth in both the number of periodicals and their circulation, leading to the emergence of enduring weekly publications like *Addis Zemen* and *The Ethiopian Herald* in 1941 and 1943, respectively (Shimeles, 2000).

Ethiopia's Constitution guarantees all citizens the right to freedom of expression without restriction. This includes the right to seek, receive, and share information through different media (Article 29 (2)). Ethiopia has approved international agreements related to freedom of expression, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. A key aspect of promoting freedom of expression is ensuring legal protection for the press, as stated in Article 29 (4) of the Constitution, which emphasizes the importance of a free flow of information for a democratic society.

The Constitution also allows for limitations on rights, provided these are established by law and do not limit expression based on content or stance (Article 29 (6)). However, the Ethiopian Broadcasting Proclamation (EBP) appears to inflict limitation that exceed constitutional allowances and do not adhere to the principles outlined in Article 29 (6). This raises concerns about the consistency of certain clauses in the Ethiopian Broadcasting Proclamation, No. 178/1999, with constitutional provisions. The study aims to assess the constitutionality of these provisions.

Analysing the legal and regulatory frameworks governing media is critical, as they significantly affect the extent of guaranteed freedom of expression. In many transitional democracies in Africa, the introduction of media laws poses a significant threat to free reporting (Street, 2001). While governments often claim to support freedom of expression, they frequently ignore it through

various laws and regulations. Ogbondah notes that laws lose their meaning if not enforced or if they are contradictory, allowing authorities to act randomly against dissenters (2003).

In the 1990s, numerous African countries enacted constitutional reforms acknowledging freedom of expression, which is important for boosting democratic governance. Although these rights are enshrined in constitutions, many nations have adopted media laws that violate these promises, enabling governments to subdue critical reporting (Nyamnjoh, 2005). For example, Cameroon's media law from the 1990s, while an improvement over previous measures, contained a lot of repressive provisions, dedicating 35 of its 90 articles to sanctions against the press. Nyamnjoh highlights that such laws often portray journalists as threats to state interests and include covert measures that are difficult to expose.

- (1) A consistent or implicit refusal by public authorities to allow journalists access to administrative Documents;
- (2) Frequent confiscation of newspapers without prior written notification from the authorities;
- (3) Repeated unlawful intrusions by law enforcement into newspaper offices and printing facilities without judicial authorization;
- (4) Preventing certain publications shortly before an election campaign (2005).

The Ethiopian Constitution, which protects citizens' right to freedom of expression, forms the foundation of the legal framework. Article 29 (1) states that “everyone has the right to hold opinions without intervention,” proving that all citizens have the right to express themselves freely. This right consists the “freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing, or through any media of their choice” (Article 29 (2)). Article 29 (3) guarantees freedom of the press, other mass media, and artistic creativity, prohibiting any form of censorship and ensuring access to information of public interest. Furthermore, Article 29 (4) stipulates that the press, as an institution, should enjoy legal protection to maintain its operational independence and accommodate diverse opinions.

The Press Proclamation 34/1992 represents the first legislation specifically addressing the private press in Ethiopia. According to the preamble, the proclamation intends to facilitate a free and responsible press. It emphasizes that a free press not only allows citizens to express their opinions but also plays a critical role in protecting individual rights and promoting democratic culture.

Article 4 of the proclamation asserts that the press promotes fundamental freedoms, peace, democracy, justice, and social and economic development.

Additionally, Article 3(1) explicitly recognizes and respects freedom of expression, prohibiting press censorship and similar restrictions. It also affirms the right to access information (Article 3 (2)), allowing any Ethiopian citizen to engage in press activities and outlining the rights and responsibilities necessary for such engagement (Article 5 (1)). Freedom of the press, as defined in Article 2 (1) of the Press Proclamation, includes the right of citizens to establish various mass media outlets, such as newspapers, magazines, and broadcasts, without censorship or prior restraint. Article 10 details the responsibilities of the press, requiring that it avoids disseminating content that could harm state security, defame individuals, provoke conflict, or war.

2.13. Legal and Regulatory Environments Influencing Media Freedom

An underlying determinant pressing media freedom in Ethiopia is the legal environment. Different scholars have disclosed how laws, or a lack of them, affects autonomy of the press and the right to information from the public. According to Kebede (2018), Ethiopia's media law has conventionally been burdensome, with the 2004 Ethiopian Press Law and subsequent regulations giving sweeping authority to authorities to censor and detain journalists. Despite reforms that have since been implemented since the political transition, inconsistencies in the legislative environment continue to erode media independence, with laws being abused to facilitate censorship or prosecute critical reporting (Hailu, 2020).

Moreover, the 2019 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's Media Law aimed at deregulating the sector; nevertheless, some of the provisions are argued to continue endangering press freedom, notably criminal defamation provisions and national security provisions (UN Special Rapporteur, 2020). These legal restrictions offer a space within which journalists fear prosecution, inhibiting investigative journalism and limiting the flow of information to citizens.

2.13.1. Digital Divide and Infrastructure Challenges

While new channels of free social expression are available through new media, there are still many infrastructural and socioeconomic barriers to access in Ethiopia that restrict it for a large number of people. According to the World Bank (2021), the digital divide is entrenched in Ethiopia, with

no or limited access among rural communities as well as among marginalized groups to the internet and digital devices. This leads to restricting equal access to information, particularly in conflict or poverty-stricken areas.

Ethiopia's low internet penetration (about 20% of the population as of 2021) leaves the majority relying on out-dated media, radio, and print, which are both state-controlled or biased (ITU, 2020). This digital divide limits the dissemination of independent and alternative sources of information, cementing state control over the narrative. Besides, infrastructural problems, like unstable electricity, thin broadband coverage, and unaffordability, add to gaps in access. Closing the digital divide is thus important to widening access to different sources of information and empowering citizens to participate fully in democratic life. Policies to extend infrastructure, affordability, and digital literacy are essential steps toward extending accessible media.

2.13.2. Digital Media and Social Media as Platform for Free Expression

The emergence of new media and social media platforms has reconfigured the prototype of information diffusion and public discourse in Ethiopia. The platforms offer citizens a new space for opinion articulation, mobilization of protests, and information airing apart from official state-owned media platforms. Social media has particularly been crucial during periods of political uncertainty and war as tools of civil participation and activism.

However, the Ethiopian government has increasingly sought to control and control online arenas on the pretext of security and counter-disinformation. Cutoffs of the internet at critical points, such as elections or protests, have been common, confining citizens' access to information and constraining online activism (Freedom House, 2019). Content filtering, monitoring, and arrests of online activists further restrict freedom of expression in online environments (Sivertsen, 2017).

These policies wear away the promise of digital platforms in favor of supporting freedom of speech, openness, and civic participation. Suppression of digital media, besides restricting access to several opinions, generates an atmosphere of fear that quenches the arousal of citizens to freely engage in online life. Still, social media remains the epicenter stage for side lined communities and oppositional voices.

2.13.3. Role of Donor Agencies and International Organizations

Global institutions such as UNESCO, the African Union, and NGOs have been actively participated in protecting media freedom and independent journalism in Ethiopia. UNESCO's world reports and activities target strengthening media literacy, journalist standards, and legal reforms supporting journalists' rights (UNESCO, 2018). These global institutions also track disrespect and condemnation when press freedoms are suppressed.

Donor agencies, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union, give finance and technical assistance aimed at enhancing the capacity of the media sector. They help in capacity building programs, independent media institution development, and legal reform to improve the environment for journalists (Ogundiye, 2020).

However, always balanced by the political and sovereignty interests of the Ethiopian state is the influence of external actors? While gradual change may be achieved through push from outside, effective reform hinges on domestic political will and social change. However, international action is a necessary component of the battle to promote media pluralism and accountability in Ethiopia.

2.14. Media Ownership and Independence

Media ownership concentration is the greatest threat to media freedom in Ethiopia. The majority of private media are owned by groups or individuals with political or business affiliations with the ruling regime, leading to a lack of editorial diversity and possibly self-censorship. These types of ownership have a likelihood of transforming media outlets into state-controlled rather than providing unbiased information to the people (Kebede, 2017). Such tightness weakens critical reporting of government policy and squashes alternative views, restricting access to a range of viewpoints. Furthermore, unclear ownership structures make it difficult for the public to hold media power to account and suspicion of lack of transparency and accountability is generated. Where media are viewed as being part of political or economic power, their role as defender is undermined, undermining the cornerstone principles of press freedom and access to unfettered information. Programs to diversify ownership and increase transparency are crucial steps toward creating an autonomous media culture. Implementing solid legal frameworks and instilling pluralism in media can curb the risks of consolidated ownership.

2.15. Societal Images and Cultural Dispositions towards Media and Discontent

Public conceptualization of media and opposition have far-reaching effects on the environment in which free expression is practiced. In Ethiopia, a long legacy of authoritarianism, political repression, and war has built suspicion and mistrust among the population towards independent media. The majority of citizens distrust the media as government propaganda or unreliable journalism and people's access to information.

The context of crisis compounds already existing challenges, such as violence against the media, bullying, and destruction of media infrastructure. Not only does this mute opposition voices but also creates information vacuums that get filled with disinformation and misinformation. Hold back the media during crises weakens accountability and transparency, which are foundational to conflict resolution and democratic governance. Guaranteeing media freedom in times of conflict depends on legal safeguarding, international assistance, and fostering independent journalism. Ensuring the safe operations of journalists and access to the truth is central to fostering peace and stability.

2.16. Factors Affecting Press Freedom and Access to Public Information

A number of interrelated elements shape the position of press freedom and access to information in Ethiopia. Political stability, governance, and the overall democratic context are central. As Hassan (2020) comments, authoritarianism and political centralization tend to result in the suppression of media in order to shore up power. Legal and institutional foundations are also essential. Amorphous laws, broad definitions of national security, and discretionary powers granted to authorities are factors that create a repressive and censoring environment (Workneh, 2019).

The autonomy of the judiciary and its ability to enforce rights of the press are also media freedom determinants. Societal determinants including cultural predisposition towards dissent, public trust in the media, and public awareness of rights impact media operations. Political subjugation in Ethiopia has bred suspicion toward independent media, with state opposition to press freedom less overt but present nonetheless (Sivertsen, 2017). Economic factors, such as government advertising reliance and ownership structure, constrain independent journalism. Lack of resource and training access also impede media capability, reducing diversity and quality of information (Kebede, 2017).

Finally, technological factors, including internet censorship and digital divides, condition information access. Governments limit channels of communication in cases of crises such as conflicts or political unrest, thus expanding information asymmetries (Freedom House, 2019).

2.17. Cultural and Social Factors Affecting Media and Information Access

In addition to legal and infrastructural issues, culture and social dynamics also exert momentous effects on media freedom as well as public information access in Ethiopia. Several studies signal that societal conventional norms, ethnic identity, and political identification affect comprehension and access to media sources (Bekele, 2019). For instance, ethnic loyalties are likely to drive consumption, with audiences preferring content that resonates with group interest, thus perpetuating segmented information spaces.

Furthermore, social perception of critique and dissent is molded by deeply held cultural belief that might discourage open confrontation with authority agents. Upholding respect for authority agents and elderly people is sometimes encouraged in most societies at the cost of critical reasoning or questioning state narratives (Tadesse, 2018). Cultural perceptions might hinder the emergence of an open and critical media sphere because individuals might be afraid of social exclusion or being retaliated against for expressing dissent.

Efforts to foster media literacy and the critical thinking culture are important for enhancing access to diverse and reliable information. School campaigns, mobilization at the societal level, and embedding local languages and sociocultural contexts in media content have the potential to overcome barriers within society and promote an open information environment.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Research Methods

3.1. Introduction

The focus of the study is to investigate the challenges and opportunity of press freedom and access to public information specifically on commercial print media. This chapter discusses the methodology used in the study.

3.2 Research design

Every research study follows a design, whether clearly defined or implied. Researchers intend to employ robust designs to improve the validity of their findings and secure the collected data effectively addresses the research problem (Yin, 2011). As outlined in the first chapter, this study seeks to analyze the challenges and opportunities of press freedom in selected commercial media outlets. To achieve this objective, a mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques.

The qualitative component used methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and content analysis to look into the various challenges media houses face concerning press freedom and access to public information. Interviews with journalists, editors, and key stakeholders from the three studied media outlets:-

1. Capital,
2. Fortune, and
3. Reporter

Provided direct insights into the pressures, influences, and professional hindrances affecting their independence. Additionally, focus groups facilitated collective discussions, depicting shared experiences and differing perspectives that might not have emerged in individual interviews. This approach helped uncover how institutional, societal, and professional dynamics shape press freedom and information access.

3.3. Research approach

Research approaches embrace the overall plans and procedures employed in a research study, including the assumptions, data collection methods, analysis techniques, and interpretation of

findings. The two primary research approaches are qualitative and quantitative, each offering distinct methods and perspectives. Qualitative research focuses on the use of words and open-ended questions, while quantitative research depends on numerical data and closed-ended questions to test hypotheses.

Mixed methods research, on the other hand, is an approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. It combines the two forms of data and may involve different philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. The underlying premise of mixed methods research is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem compared to using either approach in isolation. Therefore, this study employed a mixed methods approach to gather a broader range of insights and perspectives.

In addition, the study used a descriptive study design. A descriptive study design intends to systematically report and analyse the characteristics, behaviours, or attitudes of a specific population or phenomenon. It focuses on providing a detailed account of the research subject, often through surveys, observations, or interviews. The descriptive design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the research topic and provides a foundation for understanding the current state or nature of the subject under investigation.

3.4. Types and Sources of Data

3.4.1. Types of Data

Understanding the different types of data enables us to select the data type that best aligns with our needs and objectives. In this study, both qualitative and quantitative data are used. Quantitative data is often easier to justify and addresses questions such as "how many," "how much," and "how often." It can be expressed as numerical values and can be measured using quantitative variables. Quantitative data lends itself well to statistical analysis and can be presented through various types of graphs and charts, such as line graphs, bar charts, and histograms.

On the other hand, qualitative data cannot be expressed as numerical values or measured in a quantifiable manner. It is more subjective in nature and focuses on capturing the richness and depth of experiences, opinions, and perspectives. Qualitative data is typically collected through methods such as interviews, observations, and open-ended survey questions. It provides detailed

descriptions, narratives, and insights that cannot be easily quantified. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative data in the study, the researchers aim to get a comprehensive understanding of the research topic, complementing the statistical analysis of quantitative data with the nuanced insights and contextual understanding provided by qualitative data.

3.4.2. Sources of Data

Data can be sourced from two main sources: internal and external. The data collected from internal sources is called primary data, while data obtained from external references is known as secondary data. Primary data is collected through methods such as questionnaires, interviews, and observations, directly involving the researcher and participants. Secondary data, on the other hand, is collected from pre-existing sources or documents. Surveys and questionnaires are popular methods for collecting primary data. They allow researchers to directly gather information from respondents, whether through online platforms, mail, or in-person interactions.

Surveys are advantageous as they can reach a large audience and efficiently gather quantitative data. However, it is crucial to design clear and unbiased questions to ensure the accuracy and reliability of responses. Observations involve systematically observing and recording events or behaviours as they occur. This method provides real-time data, offering valuable insights into participants' natural behaviours. Interviews and focus groups are qualitative methods that provide in-depth exploration of participants' opinions, beliefs, and experiences. These methods offer a deeper understanding of complex issues and generate rich insights that quantitative data may not capture alone.

3.5. Sampling Design

Sampling design refers to the systematic plan or strategy used to select a subset, or sample, from a larger population for research or survey purposes. It includes applying a mathematical function that assigns a probability to each potential sample, allowing researchers to draw valid conclusions that are representative of the entire group or population.

The goal of sampling design is to ensure that the selected sample accurately indicate the characteristics and diversity of the population under study. By using appropriate sampling techniques, researchers can minimize bias and increase the likelihood of obtaining reliable and generalizable results.

3.5.1. Population and sampling frame

A sampling frame refers to a list or source that comprises all the items or elements of a population from which a sample is to be drawn. This study focused on three prominent commercial print media outlets in Addis Ababa: Capital, Fortune, and Reporter newspapers. These were selected purposively due to their relevance in delivering weekly news on politics, economics, social affairs, and business to a broad audience. Despite their influence, these media outlets encounter challenges to freely report on government-related issues, particularly on political coverage.

Capital Newspaper: A weekly business publication by Crown Publishing Plc., Capital encourages free enterprise and supports private sector growth. It covers news, business, culture, sports, and opinion, available in print (Sunday editions) and online.

Fortune (Addis Fortune): Ethiopia's largest English-language weekly which covers news, finance, politics, technology, and culture. It also publishes a monthly finance magazine.

The Reporter: A bi-weekly Amharic and weekly English newspaper owned by the Media and Communications Centre (MCC). Known for its in-depth reporting, it addresses diverse societal and political issues. By analysing these media houses, the study provides a detailed understanding of the operational and regulatory challenges they encounter in maintaining press freedom.

These media were selected purposively. Purposive sampling includes intentionally selecting specific elements or cases that are deemed most relevant or representative for the research objectives. This sampling approach is often used when researchers aim to focus on specific characteristics, contexts, or cases that are crucial to the study.

3.5.2. Sampling Unit

In the discourse of sampling, a sampling unit mean the individual element or object within a sampling frame that can be selected with a known probability. It is the basic unit from which a sample is drawn and analysed. When selecting sampling units, each unit is considered as an individual and indivisible entity at the time of selection. The sampling units include various groups' chief editor, editor and reporter. These groups represent distinct segments of the population and are considered as separate entities for the purpose of sampling. Each sampling unit within these groups has a chance of being selected to participate in the study, and their individual responses contribute to the overall data analysis.

Determining the appropriate sample size is an important aspect of research. It involves selecting the number of individuals or observations to be included in a sample from a larger population. Researchers consider various factors, including demographics (such as age, gender, education background, and location), when choosing their sample.

The process of sample size determination aims to strike a balance between having a sample that is large enough to yield statistically valid results and accurate estimates of population parameters, while also being manageable and cost-effective. The goal is to ensure that the sample size is sufficient to provide reliable findings and conclusions.

3.6. Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments are essential tools used in research to gather information systematically. They play a crucial role in ensuring the reliability and validity of data. Here's an overview of some common types:

1. Questionnaires

Structured sets of questions designed to gather information from respondents. Questioners can be Closed-ended: Respondents select from predefined options or Open-ended: Respondents provide their answers in their own words.

2. Interviews

Description: Direct, personal interaction between the researcher and the participant. Interview can be Structured: Predefined questions with no deviation or Semi-structured: Guided questions but allows for flexibility. On other hand, content analysis was also used to get more certain data on issues pertaining public information. Content analysis of media reports on public information issues typically involves analysing how these reports address transparency, access to information, and the role of government or organizations in disseminating information. It is a foundational method in media research, offering valuable insights into how media communicates with its audience. By systematically examining media messages, you can explore underlying patterns, trends, and symbols. This technique provides a lens through which you can assess the impact and effectiveness of media communications. Three of the above mentioned instruments are used in this study.

3.7. Data Validity and Reliability

Reliability means the consistency or stability of results gained from a test when it is administered multiple times. It measures the degree to which the test produces consistent and dependable results. A reliable test will produce similar results when administered to the same individuals on different occasions.

Validity, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which a test measures what it is intended to measure. It assesses the degree to which the test accurately captures the construct or variable it is designed to assess. Validity is determined by comparing the test results with a reference standard or criterion that is considered to be an accurate measure of the construct being assessed.

Both reliability and validity are assessed using correlation coefficients. A correlation coefficient measures the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. The coefficient ranges from -1 to 1, where the absolute magnitude reflects the strength of the relationship. A value close to 1 show a strong positive correlation, meaning the variables increase together. A value close to -1 indicates a strong negative correlation, where one variable increases while the other decreases. In the context of testing instruments, the correlation coefficient can be interpreted as either the reliability coefficient (reflecting the consistency of results over repeated administrations) or the validity coefficient (reflecting the association between the test and a reference standard).

3.7.1. Validity

Validity is the extent to which a test accurately measures the characteristic it is intended to assess, as judged by external criteria or standards. It evaluates the accuracy or external consistency of the test in capturing the construct of interest. Validity assesses the degree to which the test measures the specific construct it claims to measure and examines the meaningfulness of the inferences made based on the test scores. It goes beyond reliability by addressing the non-random, systematic error that may be present in the measurement instrument. A valid test should measure what it intends to measure and provide meaningful and accurate results.

In the context of your study, the validity will be measured based on the objectives set for the research. The study aims to investigate the quest for press freedom: challenge and opportunity of selected private commercial print media. The validity of the study will be evaluated by examining how well the research instrument: questionnaires and interviews captures and assesses the key

aspects of press freedom and its impact on access to public information. The coalition between the research instrument and the research objectives will decide the validity of the study.

3.7.2. Reliability

Reliability is the test's consistency with repeated trials, and shows the extent to which differences in measurement of data are attributable to random variability inherent in the testing method rather than to actual differences in the variable being studied. Reliability is also referred to as the precision or internal consistency of a test, and does not require comparison with an external standard. The reliability of the study was measured using correlation.

3.8. Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis in research involves the systematic collection, modelling, and investigation of data using various statistical and logical methods. Its purpose is to extract meaningful insights and reduce a large amount of data into manageable fragments that can inform decision-making. Researchers utilize data analysis to transform collected data into a coherent narrative and interpret it in order to gain valuable insights. The process of data analysis helps researchers understand complex information by breaking it down into smaller, more meaningful components. This, in turn, aids in making informed decisions based on the findings.

Data analysis embraces several key steps. Initially, data is collected through various means such as surveys, interviews, or experiments. The collected data is then cleaned and prepared to assure accuracy and consistency. Subsequently, the dataset is reduced or summarized to focus on relevant variables and key information, facilitating the identification of patterns and relationships. Statistical and logical methods are applied to the reduced dataset, enabling researchers to model and analyse the data. This involves utilizing techniques such as descriptive and inferential statistics, and qualitative analysis, depending on the nature of the data and research questions. The analysed data is then interpreted to derive meaningful insights. Researchers contextualize the findings within the scope of their research objectives, establish connections between variables, and identify significant patterns or trends. Based on the insights gained from data analysis, researchers draw conclusions and make informed decisions. These conclusions contribute to the overall understanding of the research topic and may guide future actions or interventions.

During the data analysis process, descriptive techniques were engaged. This involved examining

the data to generate summary statistics using Likert scale. Likert scale is ordinal Scale which is a scale where data can be ranked or ordered in the intervals responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree. Data were analysed using SPSS version 25 and summarized then Tables were created from the data gathered. Representations using tables used to ensure easy and quick interpretation of data. In order to examine respondents' opinion descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean standard deviation, T value and P-value respectively thoroughly used.

3.9. Ethical considerations

This research study was approved by the department. The researcher adhered to and follow all ethical guidelines, ensuring that the study guarantees anonymity and privacy of participants and that all data collected are handled with confidentiality and used for research purposes only. Participation in the study is voluntary, with no form of coercion used against participants. Participants are assured of confidentiality and anonymity and informed of their right to withdraw at any stage and for whatever reason. Permission is sought to record the interviews. Participants in the survey are asked to sign consent forms prior to participating and their names are disclosed.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

4.1. Introduction

This chapter intends to reveal the findings and statistical analysis used to evaluate the research question that has been established in earlier chapters. Subsequent to the data screening process and also the chapter reports the results of the screening for errors in the sample and the procedural check on the instruments utilized. With the help of the preliminary and analysis of the results, try to the quest for press freedom: challenges and opportunities on selected private commercial printing media.

Therefore, this chapter has two parts: the first part deals with the characteristics of the respondents and the second part presents the analysis and interpretation of the main data.

To this end, dominantly quantitative data obtained through questionnaire was used to answer the basic research questions. Due to their large size, respondents were selected randomly and included in the sample. Accordingly, 22 sample respondents were participated in the study.

The number of participants involved in the study and sampling proportion was statistically representative and adequate to make the analysis and inference as well. The respondents were provided with 26 questionnaires. Accordingly, 22 (88.0 %) of them scientifically selected from the sample respondents and returned the questionnaire just in time while the remaining 3 (12.0 %) of the respondents did not returned back the questionnaire for various reasons.

The collected data were analysed by both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, T value and P-value, respectively were also undertaken by using the “Statistical Package for the Social Sciences” (SPSS) version 25 software. Since the objective of this study was to understand the issues related to examine the quest for media freedom and access to public information in Ethiopia. Initially the responses to questionnaire with the sample respondents were quantitatively analysed whereas data obtained through interview was analysed qualitatively.

Table1: Case processing Summary

Statistics					
		Sex	Age	Qualification	Experience
N	Valid	22	22	22	22
	Missing	0	0	0	0

Source: Survey data 2025

The data in Table 1 indicate that the sample contains 22 valid cases with no missing data for the sex, age, qualification, and experience variables, which present a complete and trustworthy dataset for examination. The uniformity in the quantity of valid responses between these occupational and demographic variables implies that the sample is representative and exhaustive of the population under investigation, which maximizes the validity of any ensuing statistical inferences. The exhaustiveness lends itself to robust analysis of potential relationships or contrasts between these variables, and potentially insights on how demographic variables like sex, age, qualification, and experience influence the phenomenon under study. The absence of missing data also cut down concerns associated with bias or data imputation, thereby increasing the validity of the research outcome and implications of these results for policy, practice, or future research in the concerned area.

4.2 Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2: Gender Compositions of Respondents

Gender		
Variable	Frequency	Percent
Male	14	63.6
Female	8	36.4
Total	22	100.0

Source: Survey data 2025

The data indicate that out of 22 respondents, 14 are males, which is 63.6%, and 8 are females, which is 36.4%. This shows that the males constitute the largest number of the respondents, suggesting a higher rate of participation among the males in the study population. The gender distribution provides a clear explanation of the population of the respondents, showing the proportionate number of each gender in the sample.

Table 3: Age Compositions of Respondents

Age		
Variable	Frequency	Percent
Below 25 years	6	27.3
26-40 years	10	45.5
41-50 years	5	22.7
51 & above	1	4.5
Total	22	100.0

Source: Survey data 2025

The age dispersion of the respondents indicates different representation across age groups, with most (45.5%) being 26-40 years, indicating that the study has contributions from a relatively young and vibrant population. The significant contribution by respondents aged under 25 years (27.3%) also indicates the contribution of voices of early careerists, while those contributing mid-career respondents (41-50 years at 22.7%) contribute experience-based perspectives. Though the respondents 51 years and above are few in number (4.5%), including them lends richness to the data with mature insights. The broad age band improves the study's strength by allowing precise analysis of trends by different stages of life so that focused interventions, policy, or strategy can be designed as per different age groups. Overall, the diversity of ages ensures a balanced assessment that can lead to more elaborate and productively recommendations.

Table 4: Qualification Compositions of Respondents

Qualifications		
Variable	Frequency	Percent
BA/BSC	15	68.2
MA/MSc	7	31.8
Total	22	100.0

Source: Survey data 2025

The result of the research shows that a very majority, 68.2%, have a Bachelor's degree (BA/BSC) and a wide majority, 31.8%, have a Master's degree (MA/MSc). This mixture of qualifications reveals that the population of the sample is highly educated, mainly at an undergraduate level, with a significant presence of postgraduate respondents. Such a split has good effects on the credibility and depth of study since it shows that the respondents are an informed group with good knowledge that can offer valid and in-depth responses and sophisticated views. The availability of respondents with higher qualifications adds to the chances of overall understanding and deeper analysis in the research, which makes the findings more reliable and valid, and helps to achieve stronger and more meaningful conclusions.

Table 5: Service Year Compositions of Respondents

Experience		
Variable	Frequency	Percent
Below five years	11	50.0
6-10 years	3	13.6
11-15 years	3	13.6
Above 16 & above Years	5	22.7
Total	22	100.0

Source: Survey data 2025

Table 5 information shows that a very high proportion of respondents (50%) have fewer than five years' service, indicating a predominantly relatively junior workforce. However, the presence of respondents with more extensive service 22.7% with over 16 years and 13.6% in the 6-10 and 11-15 year bands indicates a considerable range of service tenures. This heterogeneity holds the significant positive implications for organizational growth as the mixture of new and old workers can generate fields for mentorship, knowledge-sharing, and innovative practice. This balanced composition enhances the training capability, succession planning, and ongoing service provision capacity, ultimately resulting in organizational growth and better service delivery through the integration of fresh thinking and seasoned expertise.

4.3. Press Freedom versus Media Environment, Media Independence and Media Practices in Ethiopia

Table 5: Issues Related to Press Freedom and Media in Ethiopia

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value = 3				
				T	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
1	22	1.5909	.90812	8.217	.000	1.59091	1.1883	1.9935
2	22	1.2727	.63109	9.459	.000	1.27273	.9929	1.5525
3	22	2.2273	.97257	10.742	.000	2.22727	1.7961	2.6585
4	22	1.2727	.63109	9.459	.000	1.27273	.9929	1.5525
5	22	1.6364	.72673	10.561	.000	1.63636	1.3141	1.9586
6	22	1.2727	.63109	9.459	.000	1.27273	.9929	1.5525
7	22	1.8182	.73266	11.640	.000	1.81818	1.4933	2.1430
8	22	1.6364	.65795	11.665	.000	1.63636	1.3446	1.9281
9	22	1.2727	.63109	9.459	.000	1.27273	.9929	1.5525

Source: Survey data 2025

The mean score for this issue is 1.59 with a standard deviation of 0.91, which is significantly higher than the test value of 3 ($t(21) = 8.217, p < 0.001$). The mean difference of approximately 1.59 (95% Confidence Interval: 1.188 to 1.993) indicates that respondents perceive this issue as being less problematic than the neutral midpoint (3). The high t-value and significant p-value suggest strong evidence that this issue is viewed as less critical or problematic concerning press freedom and media environment in Ethiopia.

The mean score is 1.27 with a standard deviation of 0.63, also significantly below the test value of 3 ($t(21) = 9.459, p < 0.001$). The mean difference of about 1.27 (95% CI: 0.993 to 1.552) further supports that respondents largely disagree with the notion that this issue is problematic, indicating a perception of relative freedom or adequacy in this area within the media environment.

The mean score here is 2.23 (SD = 0.97), which is again significantly lower than 3 ($t(21) = 10.742$, $p < 0.001$). The mean difference of approximately 2.23 (95% CI: 1.796 to 2.658) suggests that respondents perceive a moderate level of concern or issues in this area, but still below the neutral midpoint, implying some challenges but not to a critical extent.

The mean of 1.27 (SD = 0.63) with a highly significant t-value ($t(21) = 9.459$, $p < 0.001$) and a mean difference of 1.27 (CI: 0.993 to 1.552) indicates that respondents generally do not see this issue as problematic, reflecting a perception of relative freedom or lack of restrictions in this aspect of media practice.

The mean score is 1.64 (SD = 0.73), significantly less than 3 ($t(21) = 10.561$, $p < 0.001$), with a mean difference of 1.64 (CI: 1.314 to 1.959). This indicates that respondents tend to perceive this issue as less problematic, though slightly higher than Items 1, 2, and 4, suggesting some moderate concerns but overall a perception of manageable challenges.

The mean score is 1.27 (SD = 0.63), with a t-value of 9.459 ($p < 0.001$) and a mean difference of 1.27 (CI: 0.993 to 1.552). Similar to other items with low means, respondents perceive this issue as not particularly problematic, implying a relatively open media environment in this aspect.

The mean is 1.82 (SD = 0.73), significantly below 3 ($t(21) = 11.640$, $p < 0.001$), with a mean difference of 1.82 (CI: 1.493 to 2.143). This suggests that respondents generally perceive fewer problems related to this issue but acknowledge some concerns, as it is closer to the midpoint than previous items.

The mean score is 1.64 (SD = 0.66), with a t-value of 11.665 ($p < 0.001$) and a mean difference of 1.64 (CI: 1.345 to 1.928). Consistent with other items, this reflects a perception that issues in this area are less problematic, although some moderate concerns may exist.

The mean is 1.27 (SD = 0.63), with a t-value of 9.459 ($p < 0.001$) and a mean difference of 1.27 (CI: 0.993 to 1.552). This aligns with the pattern seen in earlier items, indicating that respondents generally do not view this issue as severely problematic in Ethiopia's media landscape.

1.Overall Implication of the analysis

On all scales combined, the mean values are systematically far below the neutral point of 3 on all questions, and all t-values are < 0.001 . This reveals that there is a consensus among the respondents regarding issues pertaining to press freedom and practices within the Ethiopian media that these

issues are viewed as less problematic than if mean values were closer to 3. It is evident that there is a substantial negative mean difference and that t-values are significant at < 0.001 , as follows: respondents view the media as relatively free and less constrained; however, issues pertaining to Item 3 and Item 7 are viewed as moderate. Such findings depict a cautiously optimistic view regarding press freedom within Ethiopia.

Table 6: Press Freedom and Media Independence in Ethiopia

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value = 3				
				T	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
1	22	3.5909	1.22121	13.792	.000	3.59091	3.0495	4.1324
2	22	4.0455	1.21409	15.629	.000	4.04545	3.5072	4.5838
3	22	1.2727	.63109	9.459	.000	1.27273	.9929	1.5525
4	22	2.4545	1.14340	10.069	.000	2.45455	1.9476	2.9615
5	22	1.2727	.63109	9.459	.000	1.27273	.9929	1.5525
6	22	3.2727	1.03196	14.875	.000	3.27273	2.8152	3.7303
7	22	1.2727	.63109	9.459	.000	1.27273	.9929	1.5525

Source: Survey data 2025

The average score on Item 1 is 3.5909 with a standard deviation of 1.22121. This is considerably higher than the test value of 3 on the scale. This is evident from the t-value of 13.792 and the p-value of 0.000. A positive difference of about 0.5909 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 3.0495 to 4.1324 indicates that respondents consider the concept of press freedom or the freedom of the media from this particular aspect in a relatively favouring way compared to the neutral middle. The highly significant statistics indicate that this favouring impression is consistent and not random. This impression might indicate areas where the freedom of the media is relatively maintained or viewed better in Ethiopia.

The mean score for Item 2 is 4.0455, with the standard deviation being 1.21409, which is well above the test value of 3, having a t-value of 15.629 and $p = .000$. The mean difference of about 1.0455 reflects a significantly positive attitude towards this aspect of press freedom/media independence, with the confidence interval falling between 3.5072 and 4.5838 at the 95% level of confidence. This would mean that respondents see this aspect as favourable rather than taking a neutral stance, although the mean difference is an indication that media independence or press freedom within this aspect appears strong or on the improve in Ethiopia, possibly owing to favourable changes occurring within Ethiopia.

The mean score recorded here is 1.2727, and the standard deviation is 0.63109, which is remarkably lower than the test value of 3, with the t-value set at 9.459 and the p-value set at .000. The negative mean difference, symbolized by -1.7273, with a confidence interval ranging from 0.9929 to 1.5525, clearly points toward the view that this aspect of press freedom or media independence is weak or non-existent. The view presented here reveals the belief that the identified area is a significant weakness or a problem area, reflecting prominent constraints here related to media independence in Ethiopia.

The mean for item 4 is 2.4545 with a standard deviation of 1.14340, which is below the neutral value of 3. Its t-value is 10.069, and the p-value is .000. The mean difference is approximately -0.5455, suggesting that the respondents have viewed this particular aspect less favourably. It shows either concerns or dissatisfaction, suggesting that there are perceived drawbacks or limitations in this respect to media independence and may indicate that problems still exist, such as insufficient journalistic freedom, pressure from outside sources, or legal restrictions impeding the work of the media. The average score has a mean of 1.2727 and a standard deviation of 0.63109, again well below zero and having a t-value of 9.459 and p-value of 0.000. The negative mean difference of approximately -1.7273 highlights a perception of very low or inadequate media independence in this area. There would appear to be a strong perception among respondents that this aspect of media freedom has been strongly constrained or impaired in Ethiopia. The average result is 3.2727 with a standard deviation of 1.03196 slightly above the measurement of 3, having a t-statistic of 14.875 and a p-value of 0.000. The positive difference of the mean value of 0.2727 depicts a fairly positive sentiment, not as strong as Items 1 and 2. It clearly states

that there is a certain level of freedom being enjoyed by the media in this sector, though it might not be completely free.

The average score for Item 7 is 1.2727 with a standard deviation of 0.63109, which is considerably lower than the test value of 3, and the t-value and p-value are 9.459 and 0.000 respectively. The average difference of around -1.7273 suggests once again that the factor is perceived as being under considerable restriction and lack of independence. The factor is once again similar to other low-scoring items inasmuch as it suggests that this factor is perceived to be a serious obstacle in the way of media freedom. Overall Implication of the analysis

2.Overall Implication of the analysis

The results obtained from statistics demonstrate a mixed feeling of press freedom and media independence in Ethiopia. Some questions or items (Items 1, 2, and 6) demonstrate a positive attitude significantly higher than the midpoint, suggesting areas where press freedom is recognized or where progress is noted. On the contrary, other questions or items (Items 3, 4, 5, and 7) score below the midpoint significantly, suggesting areas of concern about restrictions or challenges experienced with regard to media independence. These results therefore confirm a perception where, despite an independent area or areas, challenges exist to limit the realization of press freedom in Ethiopia.

Table 7: Assessment of Press Freedom and Media Practices in Ethiopia

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value = 3				
				T	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
1	22	3.1818	1.46828	10.164	.000	3.18182	2.5308	3.8328
2	22	1.2727	.63109	9.459	.000	1.27273	.9929	1.5525
3	22	3.6364	1.25529	13.587	.000	3.63636	3.0798	4.1929
4	22	3.8182	1.29601	13.818	.000	3.81818	3.2436	4.3928
5	22	1.2727	.63109	9.459	.000	1.27273	.9929	1.5525
6	22	1.2727	.63109	9.459	.000	1.27273	.9929	1.5525

Source: Survey data 2025

The average value for this question is about 3.18, with a standard deviation of 1.47. The t-calculated value is 10.164, which is significantly different from 0 (p-value= 0.000). The difference between the measured value and the test value of 3 is about 3.18 with a 95% confidence interval of (2.53, 3.83). It is seen that the positive deviation is significant, indicating that this particular aspect of the press freedom or the way the press operates is considered significantly above the neutral position (if the scale chosen is a 7-point scale where 3 is the neutral position).

The average score in this case is approximately 1.27, with a standard deviation of 0.63. The t-value is 9.459, which is again highly significant (p = 0.000). The mean difference is about 1.27, with a 95% confidence interval ranging between 0.99 and 1.55. Since the mean is considerably below the test value of 3, and this difference is highly significant, it reveals that the respondents view this dimension as being considerably below the ideal or neutral levels. This may suggest a deficiency or concern with respect to this press freedom or media practice issue, which may suggest certain constraints or negatives in this respect.

The average for this item is around 3.64, and the standard deviation is 1.26. The t-calculated value is 13.587, which is again highly significant (p = 0.000). The average difference is approximately

3.64, and the confidence interval is (3.08, 4.19). The fact that the average is quite far from the neutral position implies that individuals rate this dimension very positively, which can be seen as evidence of good performance in this respect of media practice. The results are highly significant and reflect the robustness of this appraisal, indicating this is a strength of press freedom in Ethiopia. With a mean of approximately 3.82 and a standard deviation of 1.30, the t-value is 13.818 ($p = 0.000$). The mean difference is approximately 3.82, with the confidence interval ranging between 3.24 and 4.39. Like Item 3, this indicates a very positive view regarding this media practice related area. The very high score and the t-value indicate a general agreement among the respondents that this area is being done well or is viewed very favourably.

Items 5 & 6, for both items, the means are the same with approximately 1.27, with standard deviation of 0.63. The t-statistics are 9.459, with p-values of 0.000. The mean differences are reflective of Item 2, with the confidence intervals ranging between 0.99 to 1.55. These indicate that the response to such aspects of media practice or the issue of freedom of the press is clearly below the desired or neutral point. The extreme negative deviation also points to serious concerns or problems with such aspects.

3. Overall implication of the analysis

From the statistical results, it emerges that there is a polarized perception by the respondents on press freedom and media practices in Ethiopia. Items whose means are above 3 suggest those areas perceived to be positive or strong, while those below 2 indicate significant negative perceptions or perceived deficiencies. High significance levels undergird these perceptions, indicating clear points of strength and concern within the media landscape.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis

Findings from interviewee the following section, the data secured through interview questions and the row data were thematically, organized in themes and analyzed in the form of narration. Key informants from selected media house were asked to answer or give their suggestion for the following interview and open-ended items.

4.3. Overview

The media environment in Ethiopia has gone through tremendous changes in the last two decades. In spite of enduring challenges emanating from political, economic, and social spheres, newspapers remain crucial sources of information sharing, public debate, and accountability. The observations obtained through interviews with Fortune Newspapers, Capital Newspaper, and Reporter Newspapers representatives are revealing about their evolution, operational strategies, and adaptation to technology, challenges, opportunities, and views on press freedom.

This review aims to bring these perspectives together, identifying convergences, divergences, and systemic determinants influencing the sector. It highlights the resilience of Ethiopian newspapers despite restrictions and offers recommendations for a freer, more professional, and sustainable press environment.

4.4.1. Historical Background and Development Trajectory

I. Fortune Newspapers

Fortune Newspaper was established in May 2000, Fortune Newspapers is a relatively older company in the Ethiopian media industry. It is difficult for the interviewee to recall the exact number of employees at inception but estimates that there were around 45-50 employees at inception, currently fluctuating between 40-50 employees. The newspaper began to be issued weekly every Sunday, reflective of the monopoly of traditional print media during its early Years. The venture into digital media exemplifies Fortune's adaptive responses. It has pioneered the construction of a website, mobile applications initially in Ethiopia and active engagement on other social media outlets such as Instagram, LinkedIn, Telegram, What Sapp, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. This move is aligned with global trends in recognizing the role played by digital media in expanding reach and engagement, especially against the backdrop of limitations of print distribution.

II. Capital Newspaper

Founded in December 1998, Capital Newspaper has over two decades of history. It began with approximately ten journalists and expanded to over 150 staff at its highest point. The staff number has since reduced to about 49, in line with the general challenges confronting the industry, such as financial constraints, market saturation, and shifts in media consumption habits. Capital comes out weekly with a circulation of between 8,000 and 10,000 copies per week. Its

area of operation has been maintaining clout among policymakers, NGOs, and diplomatic communities. The paper boasts of its wide network of distribution, which spreads not just within Ethiopia but also in the neighbouring nations of Kenya, Djibouti, and Sudan.

III. Reporter Newspapers

Established in September 2005, Reporter Newspapers is a relatively newer company in the Ethiopian media industry. It started off with five journalists and, over time, grew to some 20 journalists and supporting staff of about 250 individuals. It publishes three times weekly, and it appears in Amharic and English versions to cater to various segments of people. Reporter also has unique operational issues, specifically being constrained by the printing capacity of its printer, Birihan Ina Selam Printing Enterprise. The policies of the publisher tend to limit the number of pages (typically some 100 pages), and external factors such as paper shortages and costs influence the publication volume and quality. Despite these issues, Reporter has strong online presence, with online media being favoured as the window to reaching the public.

4.4.2. Operational Strategies and Digital Transformation

Each of the three newspapers demonstrates an acknowledgment of the importance of digital media as a means of staying relevant and more accessible to a broader audience. Fortune has led with special websites, mobile apps, and a prominent presence on all social media. Their digital strategy allows for real-time communication of news, bypassing traditional distribution limitations, and accessing a global audience.

Similarly, Capital and Reporter recognize the necessity of exploiting social media. They have both established profiles on the big sites Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, and YouTube and are trying to put these media to good use. Interviewees concede, nonetheless, that their use of social media is still work in progress, occasionally limited by resource limitations, lack of trained personnel, and audience appetite for sensationalism.

4.4.3. Challenges in Digital Adoption

Skilled human resources, financial resources, and technological infrastructure are needed to develop and sustain digital platforms and are usually in short supply. Younger audience preferences tend toward sensational and entertainment-based content, and traditional or serious news sources may struggle to gain followers.

And

Trained digital content producers, social media managers, and cyber security professionals are in critical demand and usually in short supply. Online content monetization remains a challenge, and advertising revenue is insufficient to cover operational costs, especially in a competitive market. Despite these hurdles, the efforts of the newspapers at digital transformation demonstrate a strategic necessity to remain relevant in Ethiopia's evolving media market.

4.4.4. Challenges Facing the Ethiopian Newspaper Industry

A recurring theme throughout all the interviews is the shortage of professional, trained journalists, photographers, marketers, and digital media experts. The shortage affects content quality, investigative reporting, and the ability to develop innovative and engaging content. The underdeveloped institutionalization of the industry exacerbates the problem, with limited training programs, professional associations, or regulating agencies to develop talent.

The interviewees clearly indicated that there is a shortage of trained journalists and media professionals. Many graduates lack practical training, which affects the quality of reporting and storytelling. Skilled journalists often seek opportunities abroad or in other sectors, leading to high turnover rates and a lack of continuity in news organizations.

4.5. Opportunities and Resilience

Rapid growth in internet penetration and smartphone usage provides a platform for reaching out to diverse audiences, especially youth. Newspapers are increasingly adopting digital media, cognizant of their potential to reach beyond traditional boundaries.

The constitution of Ethiopia and access to information laws offer a foundation for press freedom advocacy. While the provisions within the laws are weak on enforcement, their utility as tools for advocacy by journalists and civil society for greater transparency is significant.

Fortune's mobile apps and Reporter's online presence are instances of innovation-driven resilience that enable continued relevance. The increasing consciousness and demand for accountability on the part of the people offer a fertile field for ethical journalism, although societal culture and political compulsions typically tend to choke this potential.

4.6. Images of Press Freedom and Recommendations

It is the unanimous agreement of all the interviewees that press freedom in Ethiopia remains tenuous and waxes and wanes with political developments. The pendulum analogy describes the oscillation between comparative openness and suppression. Constraints include legal restrictions, social attitudes, and government interference, more frequently than not causing self-censorship and an absence of investigative reporting.

These steps can help create a more conducive environment for press freedom to flourish.

4.7. Researcher

The situation in the Ethiopian newspaper industry is quite robust in the face of many challenges in the system. The reactions of the Fortune, Capital, and Reporter newspapers show how the industry is grappling with matters of professionalism, adapting to change, and sustainability. Online media is crucial in helping to overcome the limitations of the press in the country and in developing its reach. Despite this, many problems are hindering the freedom and development of the press in the country. These include interference, lack of clarity, limitations, and attitudes.

Creating the institutional environment, developing the media as professionals, and developing the institutional guarantees are crucial towards the development of a strong and independent media that can play a positive role in the development of the Ethiopian democracy. It is important to note that the findings from the conducted interviews establish the need for multifaceted efforts that are geared towards ensuring that the Ethiopian media is free, responsible, and sustainable.

Table 8: Reliability Analysis

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.796	26

Source: Survey data 2025

The reliability analysis output indicates Cronbach's Alpha of 0.796, which is based on 26 items, showing high internal consistency between the items of the measurement instrument. This is very close to the widely accepted standard of 0.8, and it reveals that the items are strongly converging on a unidimensional concept, though perhaps with slight possible potential for improvement. This high level of internal consistency ensures that it is yielding consistent outcomes, and indeed the instrument is reliable, thus endorses the validity of the inferences and interpretations of the data, implying it is reliable enough to be utilized in research and practice

4.8. Content Analysis of the Newspapers Understudy

This analysis examines the coverage of press freedom in selected newspapers under study from February 1/2025 - April 30/2025. The objective is to identify trends, themes, and the overall tone of articles on press freedom, highlighting the challenges faced on journalists and the media landscape.

To this end, the researcher made thorough analysis pertaining the content of the three media houses under study on press freedom. The analysis covers publication of the three newspapers for three consecutive months from February 1/2025 - April 30/2025. Each of the newspapers published different issues pertaining press freedom. Example, The Fortune with its publication on April 26/2025 entitled 'Freedom under fire: New media law walks back years of progresses.

The coverage of the three media house during the three consecutive months from February 1- April 30/2025 is presented as flows.

Methodology

Newspapers Analysed

1. The Reporter
2. Capital
3. Fortune

Categories for Analysis

Positive coverage of press freedom

Negative coverage, including instances of censorship or legal threats

Opinion pieces or analyses

Findings

Overview of Coverage

Total Articles Analysed: 13 articles from the three newspapers

Positive Coverage: 5

Negative Coverage: 6

Opinion pieces or analysis: 2

1. Positive Coverage:

Reports celebrating journalists' efforts to uphold press freedom, such as investigative pieces leading to policy changes or public awareness about press freedom citing Ethiopian constitution.

2. Negative Coverage:

Key Issues:

Censorship: articles reported incidents of government-imposed restrictions on journalist activities. For instance, an article in fortune highlighted a crackdown on independent media following the its publication regarding human right violation such extra judicial killing in the country.

Legal Threats:

Journalists facing lawsuits or criminal charges were frequently mentioned, often linked to government critique.

3. Opinion Pieces:

The opinion sections addressed the importance of press freedom for democracy. Notably, authors urged readers to consider the implications of media laws that stifle dissent. In general, the analysis highlights a concerning trend towards negative coverage of press freedom, with over half of the articles illustrating the challenges faced press freedom. While there are positive stories of resilience and advocacy, the overarching narrative suggests a troubling environment for media professionals. Recommendations for media organizations include strengthening legal protections for journalists and fostering public discourse on the importance of a free press.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter deals with the summary of major findings of the study, the conclusion drawn based on the major findings and recommendation that forwarded based on the conclusions arrived at.

5.1. Summary

This study was conducted aiming at investigating the quest for press freedom: challenges and opportunities on selected private commercial printing media in Focus.

This study endeavoured to explore for press freedom as well as challenges and opportunities on selected private commercial printing media. Issues were analysed with the intention to understand the ground facts from the sample respondent's perspectives. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research design with the assumption that reality is socially constructed by participants and there are many truths. This research approach was appropriate as the researcher was trying to understand the complexity of the issue under investigation through the lived experience, perceptions and perspectives from a holistic standpoint.

For the purpose of this study, survey method was employed to disclose the understanding of respondents on the issue under study. This method was chosen with the assumption that it helps to conduct data as it exists and to gather several data related to the problem under study. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. Data were generated via Questionnaire and interview. The respondents were provided with 26 closed ended questionnaires. Accordingly, 22 (84.61 %) of them scientifically selected from the sample respondents and returned the questionnaire just in time while the remaining 4 (15.39 %) of the respondents did not return back the questionnaire for various reasons.

The data secured through questionnaire was analysed quantitatively. The study was conducted on the quest for press freedom as well as challenges and opportunities on selected private commercial printing media in Focus. Questionnaire was developed and data also gathered based on the review of related literature. The collected data were analysed by descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, T value and P-value respectively using the "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences" (SPSS) version 25 software.

The outcome of the study have showed that, the flexibility and adaptability of Ethiopian newspapers in responding to systemic obstacles such as political involvement, access to resources, and societal attitudes. The patterns of historical development of the most important media institutions show a conscious shift towards digitization, with digital media becoming increasingly necessary in transcending traditional distribution limitations. But the interviews also uncover persistent issues regarding human capital shortages, financial difficulties, and regulatory vagueness that limit the growth and independence of media institutions. These issues are symptomatic of underlying systemic problems that are entrenched in the political and socio-cultural context of Ethiopia and affect both the operational methods and mindsets of media practitioners.

5.2 Conclusion

The following conclusions were made based on the findings of the study and the evidences allow us to conclude that, assessing the quest for press freedom as well as challenges and opportunities on selected private commercial printing media were analysed and concluded in the following way. To this end, the result of the study have depicted that, the multifaceted reality of media in Ethiopia, noting accomplishments alongside persisting challenges. Quantitative research findings signals to a relatively positive perception of media practice and moderate evaluation of press freedom, more particularly relating to media independence, which is sensed more positively than experienced in reality. Yet the impressions are counter-weighted by shared concerns over political intervention, legal ambiguity, and societal attitudes that continue to constrain media freedom and investigative journalism. The different demographic representation of respondents and observations of media practitioners through interviews also underscore the promise that digital transformation holds for expanding reach and engagement, systemic constraints in the form of resource limitations, professional shortcomings, and regulatory prohibitions hinder the full attainment of a free and independent press.

The outcome of the finding have shown that, illustration of the resilience and adaptive strategies of Ethiopian media organizations amidst the persistence of restrictions. Media brands like Fortune, Capital, and Reporter newspapers have demonstrated active interest in adopting digital media technologies and researching new business models for staying pertinent and reaching audiences. Yet, entrenched political and institutional weaknesses, including censorship, legal limitations, and cultural approaches to information transmission, continue to undercut media professionalism and independence. These structural issues are compounded by infrastructural and economic challenges, which limit the capacity of media organizations to produce quality investigative journalism and expand their audiences across traditional lines.

The study disclose a media sector at a crossroads, marked by significant success in digital take-up and cautious optimism about future media practice, but still hamstrung by fundamental challenges to press freedom and autonomy. These issues must be addressed through a multi-pronged approach of legal reforms, institutional consolidation, capacity building, and cultural change. Strategic engagement such as repealing draconian legislation, establishing independent media regulatory authorities, and strengthening a culture of professionalism and media literacy are necessary to creating a more open, accountable, and sustainable media landscape. Lastly, the full realization of Ethiopia's media potential matters in advancing democratic development, enhancing transparency, and empowering citizens through accessing credible and diversified information.

5.3. Recommendations

The findings of this study are believed to have some recommendations for practice. The implication might show areas of intervention to understand the quest for press freedom as well as challenges and opportunities on selected private commercial printing media. As we think of improving the quest for press freedom, challenges and opportunities on commercial printing media and the following recommendations are made on the basis of the research findings and the conclusion.

- ❖ Reform existing media legislation to align it with constitutional provisions for freedom of the press and provide protection for journalists and access to information. Establish open, clear legal guidelines protecting media autonomy and restricting arbitrary censorship or government intervention.

- ❖ Establish and maintain autonomous media councils and professional associations for the development and maintenance of ethical values, self-regulation, and accountability in the media sector. The institutions need to carry out training, advocacy, and support functions to enhance professionalism and immunity from political interference.
- ❖ Invest in periodic training programs for journalists, media professionals, and digital media specialists with a focus on investigative reporting, digital literacy, cybersecurity, and ethical reporting. Training is essential to improve the quality of content and encourage responsible journalism.
- ❖ Promote and support media companies to fortify their digital presence through investments in technological infrastructure, human capability, and creative content strategies. Fair access to digital tools will make it easier to eradicate the barriers of traditional distribution and reach more people, especially young people.
- ❖ Launching nationwide campaigns to increase media literacy among citizens, instilling a culture of responsible reading of news and civic engagement. An informed populace will better be able to hold the media and the administration accountable, firming up the demand for independent and free journalism.
- ❖ Implement reforms to protect journalists from censorship and legal challenges.
- ❖ Finally, encouraging transparency, respect, and appreciation of transparency by citizens. This can be achieved through civic education, community activities, and promoting cultural change that reduces societal taboos and apprehensions towards the sharing of information, thereby creating a medium for investigative journalism and media freedom.

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Appendix I

Questionnaires

Addis Ababa University

College of Humanities Language Studies Journalism and Communication

Questionnaires to be filled by sample respondents

Dear Participants

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation, in advance, for taking time to fill out the questionnaire. My Name is Tesfaye Solomon and I am currently studying MA degree in School of Journalism and Communication at Addis Ababa University. I am conducting research into ‘The Quest for Press Freedom: Challenges and Opportunities on selected private commercial printing media. Thus, I am requesting you to complete research questionnaires prepared for collecting relevant information pertaining the research underway. Be confident that the information you provide will be kept and used only for academic research purpose. So you are kindly requested to give your genuine answer and respond to each of the information by writing or putting an “X” mark in the space provided.

Section 1. General Information

1. Sex Male Female

2. Age

- (1). below 25 years
- (2). 26-40 years
- (3). 41-50 years
- (4) 51 and above

3. Education and Training

1. Certificate 2. Diploma
 3. BA/BSC 4. MA/MSc & above

4. year of service

- (1) Below 5 years
 (2) 6-10 years
 (3) 11-15 years
 (4) Above 15 years

Part II- Questions related to the study

No.	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
B1	There is press freedom challenge in Ethiopia					
B2	citizens have access to diverse and independent news sources in Ethiopia					
B3	there are laws that restrict press freedom in Ethiopia					
B4	Ethiopia is among top countries with number of journalists in jail					
B5	journalists face legal harassment for their reporting against government					
B6	Political reform is needed to improve press freedom and access to public information					

	in Ethiopia					
B7	Compared to seven years ago, press freedom is declined in Ethiopia					
B8	Government highly influences media content and press freedom					
B9	There are topics that journalists avoid due to political pressure					
B10	Private owned media operate independently of government influence					
B11	You can get any public information up on request from a public authority.					
B12	Political issue is top barrier to press freedom in Ethiopia					
B13	Journalists usually face physical violence or intimidation in Ethiopia due to what they reported					
B14	Crimes against journalists properly investigated and prosecuted					
B15	Social media helped press freedom in Ethiopia					
B16	Public authorities are less interested to provide information for private media					
B17	There is clear policy for press freedom in Ethiopia					
B18	Private media more focus on disseminating provocative information than educative					

	and entertaining					
B19	Private media lacks competent professionals					
B20	Private media fail to adhere to the existing rule and regulation of the country					
B21	Private media faces threat from government for reporting criticizing government					
B22	Constitutional press freedom is practical in Ethiopia					

Appendix II

Interview questions for the three media houses (the Reporter, Fortune and Capital Newspapers)

1. When your media house was established and started operation?
2. Can you tell me your staff number during the company establishment and at this time?
3. How many times do you publish news outlet per month?
4. Do you have many readers across the country?
5. How do you express your accessibility to the society with relevant information?
6. What are the challenges and opportunities in the contemporary media house?
7. What are the positive and negative responses you get from the community while asking for information?
8. What do you expect the challenges of Ethiopian press freedom?
9. What is your recommendation to improve the challenges of existing press freedom in Ethiopia?

