



SEEK WISDOM, ELEVATE YOUR INTELLECT AND SERVE HUMANITY!

Addis Ababa University
አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS

**EXAMINING THE NEWS COVERAGE BY ETHIOPIAN
BROADCASTING CORPORATION (EBC) DURING THE ETHIOPIAN
ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH (EOTC) CRISIS 2023**

BY:

NEBIYOU YIRGALEM WOLDEKIDAN

ADVISOR:

ELIAS WORKU (PHD)

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF
GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION**

(MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISM)

JUNE, 2024

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION
DEPARTMENT OF MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISM

This is to certify that this thesis is prepared by Nebiyou Yirgalem Woldekidan entitled “Examining The News Coverage By Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) During The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) Crisis 2023” and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of masters public relation and strategic communication.

By:
Nebiyou Yirgalem Woldekidan

Approved and Signed by the Examining committee

Examiner _____ Signature _____ date _____

Examiner _____ Signature _____ date _____

Advisor _____ Signature _____ date _____

Chair of Department or Graduate Coordinator

DECLARATION

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

Nebiyu Yirgalem Woldekidan

Name

Signature

Addis Ababa June, 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to praise God for granting me this opportunity and giving me the strength to reach here. This MA thesis has become a reality with a concerted effort and contribution of different individuals that deserve to be acknowledged. I am very much indebted to my advisor Elias Worku (PhD).

TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	II
TABLE OF CONTENT	III
LIST OF FIGURE.....	VI
<i>ABSTRACT</i>	VII
CHAPTER ONE	1
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background of the Study.....	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem	2
1.3. Research Question.....	4
1.4. Objective of the Study.....	4
1.4.1. General objective	4
1.4.2. Specific objectives	4
1.5. Significant of the Study.....	4
1.6. Scope of the Study.....	5
1.7. Limitation of the Study	5
CHAPTER TWO	6
2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	6
2.1. Media Freedom and Democracy	6
2.1.1. Evolution of Media Freedom in Democracies.....	6
2.1.2. Impact of Media Freedom on Democratic Institutions.....	6
2.1.3. Threats to Media Independence in Influential Democracies	7
2.2. Content of News Media.....	7
2.2.1. Relationship between News and the State	9
2.3. Religious Visibility in Mainstream Media	10
2.3.1. Historical Perspectives on Religious Representation	10
2.3.2. Role of Media in Shaping Public Perception of Religion	11
2.4. Journalism Practices and Secularism	12
2.4.1. Peace Journalism and Media Bias	12
2.4.2. Challenges Faced by Journalists in Reporting on Religious Topics	14
2.4.3. Implementation of Secularism in Journalistic Practices.....	15
2.5. Media and Conflict Resolution	16
2.5.1. Media's Role in Peace-Building Efforts	16

2.5.2. Constructive Dialogue and Conflict Resolution in the Media.....	17
2.5.3. Challenges and Opportunities for Media in Conflict Zones.....	18
2.6. Ethiopian Media Landscape	21
2.6.1. Historical Overview of Ethiopian Media.....	22
2.6.2. Media Reforms in 2018 and Their Impact.....	23
2.6.3. Religion and Media Policy in Ethiopia.....	25
2.6.4. Challenges and Trends in the Current Ethiopian Media Landscape	28
2.7. Religious issues coverage in Ethiopia's media.....	29
2.7.1. Emerging Dynamics of Religious Conflicts.....	29
2.7.2. Role of Media in Shaping Narratives of Religious Conflicts.....	31
2.7.3. Religion and media policy in Ethiopia	32
2.8. Media Coverage and Its Implications.....	33
2.8.1. Understanding Media coverage on Sensitive Topics	33
2.8.2. Ban on religious broadcasting	35
2.8.3. The conflict dimension in religious reporting	36
2.8.4. The journalists' religious views.....	37
2.8.5. Implications for Journalism and Communication	37
2.8.6. Balancing Transparency and Ethical Reporting	38
CHAPTER THREE	39
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	39
3.1 Introduction	39
3.2. Research Approach	39
3.3. Research Methods	39
3.4. Sampling and Data Collection Tools	40
3.4.1. Quantitative Content Analysis.....	40
3.4.2. Interviews	40
3.5. Data Collection Time and Place.....	42
3.6. Data Analysis	42
3.7. Data Synthesis and Integration.....	42
3.8. Ethical Considerations.....	43
CHAPTER FOUR.....	44
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	44
4.1. Introduction	44
4.2. Presentation of Data	44
4.2.1. Media Coverage Trends.....	44

4.2.2. Secularism in Journalistic Practices	47
4.2.3. Factors Contributing to Silence and Access Denial	50
4.3. Analysis of Data	54
4.3.1. Framing of Religious Crisis.....	54
4.3.2. Agenda Setting and Gatekeeping	55
4.3.3. Biases and Challenges	56
4.4. Visibility and Significance of Religion in the Ethiopian State Media (EBC).....	58
4.4.1. Editorial Insights on Religious Coverage in Ethiopian Media.....	59
4.4.2. Analysis of Visibility and Significance	60
4.4.2. Recommendations for Enhancing Religious Coverage	61
4.5. Findings and Discussion	62
4.5.1. Findings	62
4.5.2. Discussion.....	64
CHAPTER V	66
5. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY	66
5.1. Conclusion.....	66
5.2. Recommendations	67
5.3. Implications for Future Study	68
REFERENCE.....	69
ANNEX.....	77

LIST OF FIGURE

Table 1: Frequency, depth, and prominence of EOTC-related news coverage by EBC in 2023	45
Table 2: Analysis of Adherence to Secularism in Media Outlets	49
Table 3: Analysis of Factors Contributing to Silence and Access Denial	51
Table 4: Analysis of Framing Techniques in Media Coverage of the Religious Crisis	54
Table 5: Analysis of Agenda-Setting and Gatekeeping Mechanisms.:.....	55
Table 6: Analysis of Challenges Faced by Mainstream Media	57

ABSTRACT

This study examined the news coverage by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) during the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) crisis of 2023. The objective was to analyze the media representation of religious conflicts within the EOTC, exploring trends, practices, and their implications. Employing a mixed-methods approach, quantitative data on media coverage frequency and qualitative analysis of framing techniques and journalistic practices were collected. The research methodology involved content analysis of news articles, interviews with media professionals, and thematic analysis of data.

Findings reveal a dynamic media landscape characterized by varied coverage depth and prominence. EBC's reporting exhibited increased frequency during the crisis period, yet showed inconsistencies in depth and analytical rigor. Secularism in journalistic practices was moderately adhered to, while access denial was influenced by governmental restrictions and editorial pressures. Framing of religious conflicts varied from polarized to neutral, impacting public perception significantly.

The study underscores challenges such as political bias, ethical dilemmas, and operational constraints, affecting editorial autonomy and journalistic integrity. Recommendations include enhancing media accountability, promoting ethical journalism, improving access to information, and fostering media diversity. These findings contribute to understanding media dynamics in religious crisis contexts, advocating for reforms to strengthen media practices and societal cohesion.

Keywords: Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), media coverage, religious crisis, journalistic practices, media accountability.

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The role of media in portraying and shaping public understanding of religion has been a topic of extensive research, particularly in developed nations. Studies explore how the visibility and importance of religion have evolved alongside the media landscape. In the West, religious institutions have witnessed a decline in influence, while mainstream media has emerged as a dominant force in public discourse since the mid-20th century (Hoover & Lundby, 1997). Media, alongside other social actors, have gradually assumed functions once held by religious institutions (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Understanding media's role requires a clear definition of its various forms. In journalism, Mainstream Media (MSM) refers to large news conglomerates influencing public opinion and shaping prevailing thought currents (Chomsky, N. 1997). The term, sometimes used critically, highlights concerns about media ownership concentration and potential homogenization of viewpoints presented to news consumers.

Effective communication during disasters underscores the need for reliable information dissemination systems. These systems significantly improve public responses to emergencies by enabling timely evacuation and protective measures (Hjarvard, S. 2016).

Ethiopia, with a population exceeding 100 million, boasts a complex religious landscape. The 2007 national census revealed a dominant Christian majority (61%) with a significant Muslim minority (35%) (Population Census Commission, 2008).

The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority regulates the country's mainstream media. The Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) occupies a unique position within Ethiopia's media landscape. As the primary state-owned media outlet, the EBC plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and disseminating information. Scrutinizing the EBC's coverage, particularly during times of crisis, is essential to understand its influence on public discourse and adherence to journalistic ethics.

In 2023, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, one of the oldest Christian churches in Africa with a rich history dating back to 330 AD (Harrower, Michael J, 2019), faced a

profound crisis that resonated throughout the nation. Internal schisms and external pressures thrust the crisis into the national spotlight, captivating public discourse and media attention.

At its core, the crisis stemmed from disagreements over leadership succession within the church hierarchy. These internal tensions were exacerbated by long-standing ethnic and regional fault lines within Ethiopian society. External factors, including allegations of government interference and the broader debate over the relationship between religion and state, further inflamed the situation.

The media, particularly state-owned entities like the EBC, plays a crucial role in framing and interpreting complex events. As a primary source of news and information for millions of Ethiopians, the EBC's coverage of the Orthodox crisis undoubtedly influenced public perceptions, shaped narratives, and mediated social tensions. However, the extent to which the EBC's coverage accurately reflected the complexities of the crisis, remained impartial, and adhered to journalistic standards remains a subject of significant debate and inquiry.

This thesis examines the news coverage provided by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation during the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church crisis of 2023. This analysis will encompass content, framing, and discourse employed by the EBC across various media platforms, including television, radio, and online channels.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The fundamental right to seek and disseminate information through an independent press is under attack globally, with elected leaders in democracies attempting to silence critical media voices (Repucci, S. 2019).

In recent cases, for instance, the division of the Muslim ('Mejlis') in 2022 and the recent illegal appointment of bishops in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in 2023 did get coverage by EBC, but only after the Prime Minister got engaged in discussions in the two cases (Moges, & Skjerdal, 2024).

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church crisis of 2023, marked by internal schisms and external pressures, sent shockwaves through the nation. The Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), as the primary state-owned media outlet, played a central role in shaping public understanding of this complex event. However, a critical gap exists in our knowledge of how the EBC framed the crisis, potentially influencing public discourse and exacerbating

societal tensions. This research aims to address this gap by examining the news coverage provided by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation during the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church crisis of 2023. Through a critical lens, the study will analyze media bias, agenda-setting, and the EBC's impact on religious conflict resolution.

Despite the acknowledged significance of media's role in portraying religion (Hoover & Lundby, 1997), limited research has explored the specific dynamics at play in state-controlled media coverage of religious conflict within developing nations like Ethiopia. Studies in the West highlight the decline of religious institutions and the rise of mainstream media in shaping public discourse (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). However, the Ethiopian context presents a unique case where state-owned media like the EBC wields significant power, potentially influencing public opinion in a way not observed in established democracies.

Furthermore, the concept of "secularism" in Ethiopia's media landscape remains ambiguous. Moges & Skjerdal (2024) highlight the state media's tendency to neglect religious issues under the guise of secularism, hindering public awareness and potentially hindering conflict resolution efforts. This raises concerns about the EBC's interpretation of its role and its adherence to journalistic ethics during sensitive religious events.

The recent Ethiopian Orthodox Church crisis exposed vulnerabilities within the media landscape. Studies by Sileshie (2018) and Reporters Without Borders (2022) point towards a media environment grappling with issues of polarization, ethnic bias, and a decline in press freedom, particularly in the wake of the Tigray War. The EBC's coverage of the Orthodox crisis becomes particularly relevant within this context. Did the EBC's portrayal of the crisis amplify existing ethnic and religious fault lines within Ethiopian society (Abbink, 2011; Desplat & Østebø, 2013)?

This research seeks to address the critical gap in understanding the EBC's role in shaping public discourse during the 2023 Ethiopian Orthodox Church crisis.

This research has the potential to contribute significantly to the field of media and religion studies by offering insights into the specific challenges faced by state-owned media in covering religious conflict within developing nations. Furthermore, the findings can inform policymakers on strategies to promote media pluralism and ethical journalism in Ethiopia.

Media practitioners can also benefit from this research by gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in reporting on sensitive religious issues while adhering to

journalistic standards. Ultimately, by addressing the knowledge gap surrounding the EBC's coverage, this research aims to contribute to a more informed and responsible media environment in Ethiopia, fostering religious tolerance and social harmony.

1.3. Research Question

- I. How did the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) frame and portray the 2023 Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church crisis in its news?
- II. What were the potential implications for public understanding and the resolution of the church's crisis?

1.4. Objective of the Study

1.4.1. General objective

The general objective of this study was to investigate and analyze the News Coverage by Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) during the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Crisis 2023.

1.4.2. Specific objectives

- To analyze the content of the EBC's news coverage of the 2023 Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church crisis.
- To examine how the EBC framed the crisis in its coverage.
- To assess the potential implications of the EBC's coverage on public understanding of the crisis and its resolution.
- To exploring how the EBC's framing might have influenced public perceptions of the different parties involved, the causes of the crisis, and potential solutions.

1.5. Significant of the Study

This research holds significant value for several reasons: Understanding Media and Religion in Developing Nations: This study contributes to the under-explored field of media and religion dynamics in developing nations. By examining the EBC's coverage of the Orthodox crisis, it offers insights into the specific challenges faced by state-controlled media in portraying religious conflict.

Promoting Media Pluralism and Ethical Journalism: The findings can inform policymakers on strategies to promote media pluralism and ethical journalism practices within Ethiopia.

This could involve fostering a more diverse media landscape and strengthening journalistic standards for covering religious sensitivities.

Fostering Religious Tolerance and Social Harmony: By analyzing the EBC's impact on public understanding and social harmony, this research can contribute to efforts aimed at promoting interfaith dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution within Ethiopia's complex religious landscape.

Informing Media Practitioners: Media practitioners can benefit from this research by gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in reporting on sensitive religious issues while adhering to journalistic standards. This can contribute to more responsible and nuanced coverage of religious conflict in the future.

1.6. Scope of the Study

This study will focus on the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation's (EBC) news coverage of the 2023 Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church crisis. The analysis will encompass content broadcasted/published across various EBC media platforms (television, radio, online) during the crisis period.

1.7. Limitation of the Study

Despite the comprehensive nature of this study, certain limitations should be acknowledged:

Temporal Constraints: The study's timeframe may restrict a full historical analysis of media dynamics in Ethiopia. The focus on recent years may not capture long-term trends or changes.

Access to Information: Limitations in accessing certain media archives or confidential sources may impact the depth of the study. Some media organizations may not disclose internal policies or decisions.

Ethical Considerations: Investigating media silence on sensitive topics involves ethical considerations. Balancing the need for transparency with ethical reporting practices is a potential challenge.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Media Freedom and Democracy

2.1.1. Evolution of Media Freedom in Democracies

Traditionally, the symbiotic relationship between media freedom and democracy has been considered self-evident (Kalathil, S. 2020). Democracy relies on an informed electorate, drawing information from robust and independent media institutions funded either publicly or privately by the electorate itself.

Furthermore, the idealized role of an independent media sector encompasses several crucial functions supporting accountability, transparency, and participation in democratic processes. This sector delivers accurate and credible news, fosters informed public debate, holds those in power accountable, and acts as a watchdog for the public interest. The democratic environment cultivated by these vital media functions not only ensures the media's long-term freedom but also serves as a cornerstone for equitable development (World Bank, 2002).

However, this virtuous circle's basic assumptions are now being challenged as globalization, technological advancements, and the rise of authoritarianism have considerably weakened independent media (Nicholas B., 2019).

2.1.2. Impact of Media Freedom on Democratic Institutions

Various systemic changes in the international environment, spanning social, economic, political, and technological domains, have significantly affected independent media and freedom of expression worldwide. The information revolution, a fundamental aspect of these changes, has both benefited and weakened media systems. While technological platforms have allowed media outlets to reach vast audiences, they have also disrupted traditional advertising models, jeopardizing the financial foundation of many independent media forms (Hjarvard, S. 2016).

The closure of numerous national and local news outlets worldwide, exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, has resulted in fewer channels for accurate information (Marc Tracy, 2020).

Simultaneously, the democratization of media systems through new technological platforms has enabled broad public participation in creating and sharing news and information. However, this shift has altered the mediating function of media, outsourcing it to non-transparent, privately owned algorithms. These algorithms not only determine the availability of information but also its recipients, frequency, and reach (Kalathil, S. 2020). This shift raises complex policy questions, sparking intense debates on the public's right to impart and receive information in democratic contexts globally (Kalathil, S. 2020).

2.1.3. Threats to Media Independence in Influential Democracies

Threats to media independence in influential democracies are a significant concern, as a free Media independence faces significant threats in influential democracies, impacting its role in upholding democratic values and informing the public. Political interference, often manifested through regulatory measures, censorship, and direct ownership of media organizations, poses a risk to unbiased reporting (Repucci, S. 2019). Governments may exert political pressure, leading to self-censorship among journalists who fear repercussions for addressing sensitive issues (Nicholas B. 2019).

2.2. Content of News Media

Walter Lippmann (1922/1997) famously argued that we experience the world through "pictures in our heads," shaped in part by media portrayals. News outlets often strive for objectivity, presenting themselves as a neutral mirror reflecting reality. However, critics argue that this objectivity is an illusion. Media coverage inherently involves selection and emphasis, shaping the "pictures" we form in our minds.

While journalists may claim to simply report the facts, numerous studies reveal discrepancies between media portrayals and "social reality," the broader social understanding of events. Media coverage prioritizes certain people, events, and ideas, potentially distorting our perception of their prevalence in the real world.

The relationship between media and politics is particularly intricate. Political events are often staged with media coverage in mind, blurring the lines between reality and its portrayal. News content thus becomes a crucial battleground, where different actors strive to shape the media narrative.

Analyzing news content requires considering various factors. Here are some key questions to ask:

Who gets a voice? Whose perspectives are included, and whose are excluded?

Does the content empower citizens? Does it provide the information and analysis people need to participate effectively in the political process?

Is there a fair balance? Are competing political viewpoints represented fairly, or does one side dominate the narrative?

How much "filtering" occurs? To what extent are the voices of political actors presented directly, versus being interpreted by journalists?

Two main approaches dominate news content research: effects tradition and interpretive approach. The effects tradition focuses on quantifiable elements, analyzing the frequency and emphasis placed on various aspects of a story. The interpretive approach delves deeper, examining how news narratives are constructed and the underlying cultural assumptions they reflect.

A central concept in contemporary research is framing. Frames are essentially organizing principles that shape how news content is presented. They define issues, assign blame, and suggest solutions, influencing audience perceptions. Framing research can be both descriptive (analyzing how frames are constructed) and effects-oriented (investigating how frames influence public opinion).

Frames often operate within the context of larger "master narratives," culturally ingrained stories that provide frameworks for understanding the world. For instance, the "War on Terror" narrative has significantly shaped news coverage of events like the Iraq War.

By critically examining news content, its framing techniques, and its relationship to broader narratives, we gain a deeper understanding of the complex ways media shapes our political world.

2.2.1. Relationship between News and the State

This section explores the relationship between news and the state, using news content itself as a window into this dynamic. Here, we'll discuss the idea that news reflects a broader institutional voice, even across different media outlets. This "institutional voice" suggests a certain level of agreement between major news sources on how to handle major stories.

When news coverage across different outlets shows similar patterns, like a common approach to issues or similar sources, it suggests a shared institutional perspective. This perspective aligns with the idea that news production is shaped by the institutions that produce it.

By looking at news content, we can also examine the relationship between the press and the state. Studies like Rojecki's (2008) analysis of editorials in major US newspapers reveal a tendency to support the government's position, often within a framework of national exceptionalism.

Similar findings emerge from studies on specific news coverage. For instance, Domke et al. (2006) found that the press largely echoed the US government's stance on the Patriot Act. This suggests that news coverage can be limited to the range of views already circulating in mainstream political debates.

While some argue for a clear partisan bias in the media, research often paints a more complex picture. D'Alessio and Allen's (2000) review found no systematic partisan bias in terms of space allocation or time devoted to different sides. Similarly, studies focusing on the "tone" used in covering candidates haven't found evidence of consistent liberal bias.

The concept of bias itself is tricky. It often assumes there's a fixed, unbiased standard against which content can be measured. However, political realities are rarely so clear-cut. For instance, Niven (2003) found no difference in how media covered politicians who switched parties, suggesting a lack of bias based on party affiliation.

Waldman and Devitt (1998) looked at photos used during campaign coverage and found a strategic bias favoring the frontrunner, rather than a liberal slant. Groseclose and Milyo (2005) took a more sophisticated approach, comparing news content to the actual political leanings within Congress.

2.3. Religious Visibility in Mainstream Media

2.3.1. Historical Perspectives on Religious Representation

In contemporary societies, the profound impact of media technology has reshaped the perception and representation of supernatural phenomena. Blockbuster movies like Narnia, The Lord of the Rings trilogy, and the Harry Potter film series have seamlessly integrated magicians, ghosts, elves, and monsters into the fabric of everyday life, blurring the lines between the metaphysical and the mundane. This vivid portrayal in media has endowed the supernatural with a natural quality, enriching its narrative and characters (Gessese, N. B., Gebru, A., & Nigatu, B. A. 2022).

The influence of the supernatural extends beyond fiction into factual programming. Television documentary series like Ghosthunters and national programs in Denmark exploring ghosts, exorcism, and reincarnation showcase a growing fascination with the paranormal. Traditional religious issues, along with superstition and new religious movements, have found a place in the media landscape. Even highbrow channels now broadcast documentaries and discussions on religious matters, marking a shift in media focus (Gessese, N. B., Gebru, A., & Nigatu, B. A. 2022).

Contrary to expectations, the surge in religious themes within the media does not necessarily indicate a reversal of secularization. Statistical analyses reveal a consistent decline in religious behavior and beliefs correlated with societal modernization. The media's role in portraying religious themes, rituals, and institutions reflects a complex interplay between secularization and the resurgence of religious expressions. While certain media genres lean towards a secular worldview, others, like science fiction and horror, embrace metaphysical and supernatural elements (Kalathil, S. 2020).

Understanding the relationship between modern media and religion requires acknowledging that media not only report on religious issues but also shape the ideas and authority of religious institutions. Mediatization, as a central concept, highlights the media's evolution into an independent institution, influencing other societal entities. This dynamic process subsumes religion under the logic of the media, impacting institutional regulation, symbolic content, and individual practices. Importantly, the mediatization of religion is a phenomenon specific to western societies where media have gained independence, with variations across

cultural, historical, and geographical contexts (Gessese, N. B., Gebru, A., & Nigatu, B. A. 2022).

2.3.2. Role of Media in Shaping Public Perception of Religion

The role of media is bigger than it has ever been. The best part is that media is still growing and influencing our lives as the days goes by. The media plays a central role in informing the public about what happens in the world. People rely on media such as television, the press and online to get news and updates. Anyone can now find out almost anything they want to know by the click of a button on their smartphone or tablet. However, with how intoxicating the media is today, it does tend to have the power to shape public opinion, especially over major topics such as education and religion (Sarah R. 2019).

The role of the media is to transmit the reality and uncover the underlying facts of things. Changing the mentality of the people through media to be more permissive, understanding and educative is a very difficult task. Audiences form their beliefs and attitudes, either by themselves or with others, in response to media messages. The level of influence of media varies, however, and messages from the media are not received uniformly by all audiences (Kalathil, S. 2020).

Direct experience, knowledge from other sources and logic are a few factors that contribute to the degree to which audiences accept or reject messages from the media. The media has a massive responsibility in providing factual coverage that does not perpetuate myths or stereotypes, encourage generalizations or spread misinformation. Social media also allows us to view political news and participate in political discussion like never before. “One of the great things and one of the horrible things about social media is that everyone can have their say,” says Juana Summers, an editor for CNN Politics. “It’s kind of a marketplace for ideas. One of the theories of media which relates to shaping public opinion is Agenda setting theory.

The role of the media in shaping public perceptions and opinions about significant political and social issues has long been the subject of much speculation and debate (Maeroff, 1998; Wilson & Wilson, 2001; Wimmer and Dominick, 1991). It is widely accepted that what we know about, think about and believe about what happens in the world, outside of personal

first-hand experience, is shaped, and some would say orchestrated, by how these events are reported in newspapers and communicated through the medium of radio and television.

Few people experience first-hand a terrorist attack, most don't know what it is like to be held in a foreign prison while undergoing a trial for suspected drug trafficking (Kalathil, S. 2020). Thankfully, relatively few of us are the victims of a violent crime or are close to those who are the victims or even the perpetrators of such acts. The reality of those events and our responses to them are experienced vicariously through the word pictures created by journalists and the visual and auditory realism of television reports. The mass media brings simulated reality into our lives and we find ourselves relying on those sources to provide a conceptualized image of the real world. This view of the influence of the media is elaborated on in what is called 'Cultivation' (Kalathil, S. 2020).

According to Severin & Tankard (1997) "heavy television viewers are more likely to perceive the world as it is portrayed on the television screen. The limitations of such a 'world view' are strikingly portrayed by the character Chance in the movie *Being There*, the story of a gardener who had spent his entire life in the house of an old man and whose only knowledge of the world outside the house was through television. When the man dies, Chance is put out on the street with no knowledge of the world except what he had learned from television."

2.4. Journalism Practices and Secularism

2.4.1. Peace Journalism and Media Bias

This section explores the concept of peace journalism and its potential role in covering religious conflicts. We examine how peace journalism principles can be applied to media coverage of the 2023 Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church crisis. Additionally, we analyze existing research on media bias in state-controlled media outlets, particularly within the context of religious reporting.

The concept of peace journalism, pioneered by Johan Galtung (1986, 1998, 2003), emphasizes the media's responsibility to promote peaceful solutions to conflict. Peace journalism encourages journalists to consider the "high road" and "low road" when reporting on conflicts. The "high road" focuses on potential solutions, fostering empathy between opposing parties, and highlighting peace initiatives (Galtung, 1998). Conversely, the "low

road" emphasizes differences between parties, promotes violence as a solution, and focuses on the drama and sensational aspects of conflict (Galtung, 1986).

Peace journalism principles can be particularly valuable when covering religious conflicts, which are often deeply rooted in historical grievances, cultural divides, and competing narratives. By focusing on dialogue, reconciliation efforts, and the human cost of conflict, peace journalism has the potential to promote understanding and reduce societal tensions (Hyde Clarke, 2011). Peace journalism diverges from traditional war reporting by emphasizing the underlying structures and causes behind conflicts rather than solely focusing on surface events like bombings, highprecision weapons. Furthermore the coverage humanizes every party in a dispute, foregrounding the voices of those directly affected, and seeks to spotlight potential resolutions and pathways to peace and actively avoids the binary framings common in war journalism (Rafeeq, 2007), opting instead for a nuanced, multi-dimensional portrayal of conflicts. Media coverage would mean presenting stories that humanize civilians from Ukraine and Russiaoccupied areas, highlighting their shared struggles and aspirations amidst the conflict, rather than amplifying divisive narratives or relying on polarising "us vs. them" frameworks.

Previous research has documented the prevalence of media bias, particularly within state-controlled media outlets (Ogenga, 2012). These outlets may serve as mouthpieces for the government, promoting a particular agenda and downplaying information that contradicts official narratives (Chomsky, 1997). In the context of religious reporting, state-controlled media might favor certain religious groups or interpretations of events, potentially exacerbating existing societal divisions (Harrower, 2019).

Studies examining media coverage of other conflicts highlight the dominance of war journalism frames, even when peace journalism principles offer a more constructive approach (Gouse et al., 2019; Lee & Maslog, 2005). Lee (2010) further argues that structural limitations, such as media ownership, language barriers, and story type, can hinder the implementation of peace journalism practices.

The Ethiopian media landscape is dominated by the state-owned Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC). As the primary source of news and information for many Ethiopians, the EBC plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of religious affairs (Hjarvard, 2016).

Previous research on media in Ethiopia points to a complex relationship between religion and state, with concerns about government influence on religious reporting (Harrower, 2019). Analyzing the EBC's coverage of the 2023 Orthodox Church crisis through the lens of peace journalism and media bias can offer valuable insights into the media's role in framing a sensitive religious conflict within a state-controlled media environment.

2.4.2. Challenges Faced by Journalists in Reporting on Religious Topics

Reporting on religious topics poses unique challenges for journalists, requiring specialized knowledge and a nuanced understanding of sensitive subject matter. The intricacies of religion demand accurate communication within limited word counts, typically ranging from 500 to 600 words. The diverse nature of the public adds both opportunities and risks to religion journalism in a democratic society (Kalathil, S. 2020).

According to Sarah R. 2019, Senior Director for Research and Analysis describe many countries as having a "volatile" mix of high religious pluralism and diversity, amplifying the stakes for reporting on religion. Despite its historical roots, religion journalism has experienced a decline, with digital transformations in the news industry shifting coverage away from specialists. This decline raises concerns, especially regarding reporting on religiously oriented hate groups (Sarah R. 2019).

Scholars note a "double blind" spot between journalism and religion, suggesting mutual ignorance of each other's operations. However, both fields challenge institutional power, with journalism rooted in Protestantism's historical dismantling of Western Catholicism. Despite popular belief in the secular nature of news media, studies show religious frames are often used in reporting, presenting challenges in accurate labeling and representation (Kalathil, S. 2020). The decline in religion reporting positions since the Great Recession has led to closures of dedicated sections in major newspapers, impacting the diversity and depth of coverage. Despite challenges, religion journalism has survived the digital shift, with smaller circulation markets displaying continued commitment to the religion beat (Sarah R. 2019).

Surveys indicate a lack of priority for individual religion reporters in larger newsrooms, highlighting potential gaps in coverage. The segmentation of the media marketplace, driven by internet and mobile readership, has altered the landscape of religion news. While local reporting on religion seems to have strengthened, larger circulation newspapers show a decline, raising concerns about coverage of national-level religion stories (Sarah R. 2019).

Religion news, with its sensitivity, offers both dangers and opportunities for journalists. Decision-making processes, exemplified by the Mohammed cartoon controversy, reflect different journalistic paradigms and the normative lens through which judgments about good and bad religion are made. Reporting on conflicts, such as the Mormon Baptism for the Dead, emphasizes the interpretive community of journalists and their role in mediating religious and legal battles (Gessese, N. B., Gebru, A., & Nigatu, B. A. 2022).

Religion's intersection with various specialties, such as politics and science, has become essential due to the decrease in religion specialists. Sports and gaming journalism, however, tend to marginalize religion unless directly tied to the core of the story, considering it more as background "wallpaper" than a substantive element. In summary, journalists navigating the challenges of reporting on religious topics must contend with the complexities of faith, diverse audiences, and the evolving landscape of media (Sarah R. 2019).

2.4.3. Implementation of Secularism in Journalistic Practices

Theory helps us to understand how mass media operate within a particular environment. There are hundreds of mass communication theories trying to explain certain issues. Hjarvard, S. (2016) categorized mass communication theories into five classes: social scientific, cultural, normative, operational, and everyday theory. Folarin (1998) on the other hand categorized them also into four normative, social scientific, working, and common-sense theories. Normative theories are concerned with how the media operate in society. It prescribes how media operate within a particular environment. Hjarvard, S. (2016) states that normative theories are concerned with examining or prescribing how media ought to operate if certain social values are to be observed or attained. In the words of Baran and Davis (2012, p. 99) normative theories “describe an ideal way for a media system to be structured and operated.”

Normative theory helps to explain the ways societal communication rules impinge on mass media structure, conventions and performance, and highlights the consequences of non-convergence between societal communication principles and mass communication principles. Within this context, it is pertinent to situate this discussion under a suitable theory of communication to improve understanding of where the media stands in society, especially in a theoretical context as explained by scholars like (Baran and Davis 2012).

This is apt because the topic under investigation focuses on ethical issues in media and how they can help in development or how unethical practice of secularism can impede development.

2.5. Media and Conflict Resolution

2.5.1. Media's Role in Peace-Building Efforts

Although the media has been crucial in fostering peace and recovery, it has also frequently been used to promote propaganda and false information, escalating conflicts. For many years, conflict and instability have devastated Somalia, with numerous armed groups and local militias fighting for dominance. There is now widespread violence and suffering among the Somali people because of the absence of a functioning central government. Despite various obstacles, there have been some encouraging advances in recent years, and there are currently initiatives underway to support peace and reconciliation throughout the nation. The media's role in managing and resolving conflicts in Somalia is one area that has drawn more attention (Khalif, H. B. 2023).

The media's role in conflict resolution and management has gained prominence in the 20th century, particularly after World War II. The advent of the UN and other international organizations drew more attention to the role the media plays in promoting peace and resolving conflicts (UN Charter, 1945). Around the world, there are more constant security challenges that threaten stability and peace than ever before. The causes of conflict from a global perspective are becoming more and more dynamic in nature. In today's war, the media, whether local or worldwide, plays an increasingly important role. In essence, their participation in conflict can occur in two forms: one that maintains conflict by feeding hostility and tension, thereby accepting responsibility for greater violence, and the other that aims to find solutions to the dispute by reporting on the steps taken to reduce tension.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, development plans to strengthen the independent capabilities of local media organizations received attention. To some extent, civil society and development workers signify the end of communism through the introduction of rebellious voices through radio locations such as Radio Free Europe and the subversive production and distribution of regulated publications (Khalif, H. B. 2023). This showed that the media can anger people and lead them toward hostility. A good example is how the German leader Adolf Hitler used the media to incite hatred against European Jews. It is reported that Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's effective assistant in propaganda, was eloquent and expressive and regarded radio and movies as his favorite weapons. In other words, a study carried out in two countries, Malaysia, and Indonesia, found that social media weakens democracy (Fadillah, Lin, & Hao, 2019).

In Africa, since gaining independence in the 1960s, the media has been instrumental in managing and resolving conflicts. African journalists and media outlets have actively utilized their platforms to advocate for peace, unity, and democratic ideals across the continent. Particularly in conflict-affected regions, the media has played a significant role in fostering peace and reconciliation. For instance, in Rwanda following the genocide, the media facilitated open dialogue and healing, contributing to the promotion of reconciliation and peace. Similarly, in Liberia post-civil war, radio stations served as crucial agents in promoting peace and reconciliation by hosting peace talks and endorsing peaceful electoral processes (Khalif, H. B. 2023).

2.5.2. Constructive Dialogue and Conflict Resolution in the Media

In contemporary conflicts, the mass media holds a significant sway, either exacerbating violence or actively engaging in conflict resolution and mitigating violence. The role of media is contingent upon a myriad of factors, including its interactions with conflict actors and its autonomy from power structures within society (Puddephatt, A. 2006).

To navigate this complexity, International Media Support (IMS) intervenes swiftly in conflict-affected regions to bolster and uphold press freedoms. IMS endeavors to enhance the operational environment for local media practitioners and institutions, operating under the assumption that a robust independent media landscape contributes to peace and stability (Hjarvard, S. 2016).

Recognizing the evolving landscape of media assistance in conflict zones, IMS underscores continual refinement and experimentation of strategies and methodologies. Since its inception in 2001, IMS has prioritized the exchange and examination of effective approaches to media support during conflict. Conferences convened with organizations actively engaged in this sphere facilitate the sharing of insights and best practices (Sarah R. 2019).

One such conference, organized by IMS in Copenhagen in 2004, delved into the intersection of media development, peacekeeping efforts, and humanitarian aid. This gathering convened journalists, media entities, humanitarian organizations, and military forces, building upon prior discussions initiated by UNESCO in Belgrade in May 2004 (Puddephatt, A. 2006).

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a pivotal role by committing to collaborative efforts with local partners, recognizing the pivotal role of indigenous actors in shaping the course of events. International NGOs like ARTICLE 19 and the Swiss foundation Hironnelle bolster successful media development initiatives by forging partnerships with local entities in conflict zones (Puddephatt, A. 2006).

Furthermore, NGOs bring novel perspectives to conflict reporting and media development. For instance, they spotlight the indispensable role of women in conflicts and advocate for their inclusion in peace and reconciliation processes. It is imperative for NGOs to maintain a critical stance toward peacekeeping entities and other agencies, challenging actions that may diverge from the interests of local populations. Despite encountering challenges such as funding constraints and reliance on peacekeeping forces for security, both sides often recognize the imperative of establishing security, democracy, and human rights for sustainable stability.

Illustrating NGO endeavors, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting collaborates with local journalists in conflict zones. Through initiatives such as reporter training, fostering dialogue, and disseminating credible information, the institute contributes to constructive discourse and conflict resolution in volatile regions (Sarah R. 2019).

2.5.3. Challenges and Opportunities for Media in Conflict Zones

In the absence of media coverage, our awareness of global events would be severely limited. Access to information becomes increasingly vital and costly as one ventures beyond their immediate surroundings (Kalathil, S. 2020).

We turn to television or the internet to stay informed about global affairs, recognizing that no individual exists in isolation. Despite occasional biases or constraints in news reporting, it still serves as a crucial window into global happenings.

The manner in which media covers conflicts can significantly influence the level of violence. Depending on its approach, media coverage may either escalate or de-escalate tensions. Sensationalist reporting can exacerbate divisions and fuel violence, whereas responsible journalism can facilitate understanding, foster dialogue, and mitigate violence. Therefore, assessing the media's role in Mogadishu's reduction in violence is imperative.

The media serves as a vital communication channel reaching large audiences worldwide. In numerous instances, it has been utilized to promote peace and reconciliation by disseminating accurate and reliable information. Additionally, media plays a pivotal role in addressing social, economic, political, and developmental issues.

In conflict zones, the media's impact can be both negative and positive. It has the potential to incite violence, perpetuate stereotypes, and polarize opinions by amplifying extremist views. Conversely, the media can foster peace by providing a platform for dialogue, bringing conflicting parties together, and advocating for tolerance.

The media often overlooks many conflicts, with only a select few receiving coverage, typically during the violence phase. The shift in funding towards short-term emergency aid, driven by media attention, has led to an irrational allocation of resources. Biased reporting contributes to this skewed distribution and affects decision-making regarding intervention.

During apartheid in South Africa, the media faced bias and persecution from the oppressive regime. However, it also played a crucial role in resisting misinformation and organizing global opposition to apartheid.

Local media in Somalia possess a deeper understanding of local dynamics and are better positioned to address underlying issues and prevent conflicts. They hold accountable those who could exacerbate conflicts and play a vital role in conflict resolution, post-conflict healing, and societal development (Kalathil, S. 2020). However, commercial pressures can sometimes compromise their integrity and exacerbate tensions.

Overall, the media is indispensable for fostering public discourse and democratic politics. The quality of information it disseminates is paramount. Somalia's experience underscores the importance of critically evaluating the role of media in conflict resolution and peace building efforts.

2.5.3.1. Challenges of the Private Media

The Ethiopian media industry faces numerous challenges, resulting in repeated distortion of truth and a disservice to society. A journalist who has worked across three different regimes reflected on the profession's ethical lapses, acknowledging the distortion of truth driven by necessity and economic pressures. While there was a brief period of freedom of expression during the revolution of 1973–1976 and the early years of the EPRDF rule, subsequent government interference, accusations, financial penalties, intimidation, and distortion have eroded press freedom. Despite claims of editorial independence, both private and government media outlets experience frequent interference, with editors dictating news coverage and powerful businesses exerting influence over content. Challenges in the private press include inadequate fact-checking, self-censorship, and the government's refusal to grant access to official sources, leading to a reliance on opposition parties for information.

The lack of societal respect for journalists and inadequate social protection for free speech exacerbate these challenges. Some media outlets align with opposition parties, leading to government crackdowns and closures. Legal infringements on free expression further undermine the media's status in the country (Kalathil, S. 2020). In practice, media laws guaranteeing freedom of expression are undermined by intimidation and punishments, with the government restricting access to information for private journalists deemed critical of the state. This limitation leads to unbalanced reporting and erodes public trust in the media profession.

2.5.3.2. Challenges of Government Media

Nebeyu Eyasu (2011), a former journalist who worked in both government and private media outlets, likened working in government-controlled media to being in prison. He highlighted the pain of being compelled to report truth with distortion, as journalists were instructed on what to report and what to omit. Eyasu noted the prevalence of propagandist practices enforced upon journalists, with some individuals embracing this approach willingly (Nebeyu E, 2011).

Government media typically neglect coverage of political opposition, and when they do, it tends to be negative. Despite lacking in-depth reporting, government media excel in producing popular cultural programs that appeal to urban audiences. In contrast, private media, while enjoying national coverage, often focus on issues centered around the capital (Nebeyu E, 2011).

Million Dagenew, who has experience in both government and private media, emphasized his decision to work in private media as it allows for the practice of genuine journalism (Nebeyu E, 2011). He highlighted the limitations he faced in serving society while working in government media (Nebeyu E, 2011). Despite the proliferation of private newspapers in Ethiopia, many struggle due to a lack of access to information from government officials. Government-owned dailies such as Addis Zemen and the Ethiopian Herald have preferential access to official information, while private media face challenges in obtaining releases from the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA). Challenges extend beyond government-controlled media to private outlets, with officials exerting pressure on journalists to adhere to certain guidelines. Some government media practitioners resort to self-censorship or uncritical praise of government activities to avoid repercussions. Consequently, public media in Ethiopia often operate outside the bounds of professionalism.

2.6. Ethiopian Media Landscape

According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), 2023, “The media landscape under Abiy Ahmed, prime minister since 2018, remains very polarized and is characterized by opinion journalism to the detriment of reporting and fact-checking.” (RSF 2023).

It is, however, more open and pluralistic than under the previous government, and more than 200 once-banned media outlets are now allowed. Radio remains the most popular medium. Fana FM, Sheger FM and many regional radio stations have big audiences. The best-known privately owned TV channels are Kana, EBS and Fana BC. The few newspapers that appear in print are mostly read by urban elites. The Reporter is the most respected independent weekly (RSF 2023).

2.6.1. Historical Overview of Ethiopian Media

The historical evolution of the Ethiopian media landscape has been shaped by various political and socio-economic factors. In July 2018, the Federal Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO) initiated an assessment to understand the administrative and operational aspects of communication in Ethiopia, with a focus on promoting collaboration, coordination, and effective dissemination of official information (Mekasha, M., &Wudneh, T. 2018).

Communications policy is deemed crucial in addressing contemporary social and political challenges. The principles advocated are rooted in fundamental values such as accountability, freedom, inclusiveness, and openness (Mekasha, M., &Wudneh, T. 2018).

The press in Ethiopia has a relatively short history, dating back to the early 20th century. Pioneers like Blatta Gebre-Egziabher GilaMaryam initiated publications like Aemiro and Berhanena Selam, which served as platforms for progressive discourse during the 1920s. However, periods of political turmoil and regime changes influenced the trajectory of the press, leading to fluctuations in freedom of expression and editorial autonomy (CHEDS, 1994).

During various regimes, government-owned newspapers like Addis Zemen and The Ethiopian Herald dominated the media landscape, catering primarily to elite circles. Despite expansion in the post-liberation period, the media remained under state control, limiting its reach and influence (Shimeles, 2000).

Radio broadcasting was introduced during the Italian occupation and later expanded by the government, while television broadcast began with the celebration of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) foundation in 1963. However, both radio and television were largely utilized to serve government interests rather than the wider public (Mammo Wudeneh, 2007).

The emergence of private newspapers and magazines during different regimes faced challenges such as censorship, lack of training, and regime changes, which often resulted in the dismissal of experienced journalists (Nebeyu, 2011).

Despite the presence of private media outlets, the Ethiopian media landscape remains heavily controlled by the state, with Amharic-language publications dominating coverage, particularly in the capital, Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority oversees media licensing and content regulation, reflecting government control (Sileshie, K., 2018).

State-run Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) is the primary television broadcaster, while private licensed radio stations tend to avoid political content. Print media readership varies across regions, with higher readership in urban areas like Addis Ababa (Terje & Skjerdal and Mulatu Alemayehu 2021).

The internet and social media are increasingly important mediums for accessing information, particularly among the young and educated population. However, government repression has negatively impacted traditional media, emphasizing the significance of the internet and social media in shaping public perceptions and fostering political debate (Sileshie, K., 2018)..

2.6.2. Media Reforms in 2018 and Their Impact

In recent history, Ethiopia's news media served as a tool for government control, but the year 2018 marked a significant turning point. Mass protests compelled the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to initiate major reforms, responding to the need to avert mass violence and prevent the collapse of the central government (Fente, H. S. 2022). The incumbent prime minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, resigned, making way for the nomination of Abiy Ahmed, a charismatic reformer from the Oromiya region. This shift ignited hope and optimism for a better future, setting the stage for one of the most remarkable attempts at media reform in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Reform Process

The Abiy government embarked on an ambitious agenda, freeing journalists, deregulating the sector, and initiating a media reform process that involved collaboration between the government and civil society. However, quick deregulation without robust institutions and laws led to a surge of media outlets, contributing to polarization and conflict along ethnic fault lines (Fente, H. S. 2022).



INDICATOR	RANK/SCORE
2021 Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Rank	101/180
2020 V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index Rank	136/179
2021 Freedom House Global Freedom Score	27/100 (Not Free)
2020 UN Human Development Index Rank	173/189

Figure 1 Report of the Centre for International Media Assistance’s “Media Reform amid Political Upheaval” Source (Fente, H. S. 2022)

Civil Society Challenges

Decades of authoritarian rule had incapacitated Ethiopia's civil society. International assistance actors, previously uninvolved in the country's media sector, struggled to find local partners capable of leading projects to professionalize the sector. Support for self-regulatory institutions and professional associations became crucial to promoting ethical standards and curbing hate speech and disinformation. The outbreak of a civil war in Ethiopia’s northern Tigray region since November 2020 further complicated the landscape, leading to a retrenchment on media freedom (Fente, H. S. 2022).

Ethiopia’s Media Today

The rapid opening of Ethiopia’s media space had unexpected consequences, including the rise of diaspora media and a shift in regional media outlets' editorial policies. Hate speech proliferated in both broadcast and social media, leading to a primary distinction among ethnic identities of media outlets. Government commitment to reform dwindled, and press freedoms faced increasing threats, especially since the outbreak of the civil war in Tigray (Reporters Without Borders, 2022).

Lessons for the Future

Ethiopia's experience highlights key lessons for policymakers, donors, and media development organizations. First, donors need to be prepared in advance of reform windows to act swiftly. Second, reforms should address the fragmentation of the media market along ethnic lines and strengthen the regulatory environment. Third, sustained engagement of independent stakeholders is vital, and finally, effective monitoring mechanisms for hate speech and misinformation are crucial for a successful media reform process. The challenges and opportunities Ethiopia faced underscore the complexities of media reforms in transitional countries.

This report, part of the Center for International Media Assistance's "Media Reform amid Political Upheaval" series, provides an in-depth analysis of Ethiopia's media reform process since 2018 and offers valuable insights into the role of media assistance in advancing local advocacy efforts. The case study, based on interviews with 16 media experts, explores the polarization of Ethiopia's media and outlines key lessons learned that can inform future endeavors in media reform.

2.6.3. Religion and Media Policy in Ethiopia

These days, religious tension and conflicts related to religion are widely observed in Ethiopia. Sermons become the centre for sending negative messages and animosity to the perceived others. Religious events also become the factor for violence and tension. Media laws and policies, as well as ethics, become vital in guiding journalists on how to cover the issues. As part of the overhaul of repressive laws concerning democratic institutions, the justice system, and the media, the new government organized an independent advisory body – the Legal and Justice Affairs Advisory Council (LJAAC) in mid-2018. Proposing reforms on laws regulating civil society, media, freedom of information, and the anti-terrorism proclamation were among the mandates of the advisory council. Thus, the Ethiopian parliament passed Media Proclamation No. 1238/2021 “to fully enforce the right to freedom of expression and citizens’ freedom of the media” (The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2021), which was stifled by the EPRDF government. The proclamation is praised for being better than preceding media-related laws. Among others, it decriminalizes defamation and establishes the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) which is in charge of licensing, regulating, and monitoring the broadcasting media.

The proclamation states that religious institutions shall not be issued broadcasting service licenses using the ‘limited radio spectrum’, but they may be issued with the license if they are not using the radio spectrum. It also guarantees the provision of a wide variety of information by the mass media that covers different views on politics, ethnicity, and other issues, including religion (The Ethiopian Media Policy enacted in 2020).

According to the proclamation, it is the responsibility of the broadcasters to make sure that they reasonably entertain different views when dealing with potentially controversial issues such as religion. Public service broadcasters in particular are required to provide news and programs that reflect religious and socio-political diversity. Above all, the mainstream media are obliged to deliver services that create shared national values on constitutional issues (The Ethiopian Media Policy enacted in 2020).

The Ethiopian Media Policy enacted in 2020 is also part of the reform and an outcome of a robust discussion among journalists, media managers, civil society groups, and government regulators. It is a comprehensive policy that applies to almost all forms of media. Among other issues, the policy allows religious institutions to own broadcasting licenses except for terrestrial radio broadcasting (Ethiopian Media Authority, 2020). The policy further stipulates that apart from their critical roles in addressing broader social, political, and economic issues, the mass media are also allowed to focus on a particular issue of their preference. Although it is not stated explicitly, according to this line, the mass media in Ethiopia have the right to focus only on religious issues so long as it is in the interest of the public.

Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation No. 1185/2020 can be taken as part of the regulatory apparatus on media practice. Its preamble notes that the proclamation is necessary to prevent and counter deliberate dissemination of hate speech and disinformation. Hate speech and disinformation are genuine threats to social harmony in Ethiopia, hence the proclamation, in principle, is justified. However, in practice, it suffers from an unclear distinction between hatred and a critical view, hence the proclamation is open for manipulation by the government and other key stakeholders to stifle critical views against, for example, politics and religion. For instance, according to the proclamation, a statement may not be considered hate speech if it is part of religious teaching (Proclamation No. 1185/2020, Article 6/1/d). However, it is unclear whether it may amount to hate speech if one argues against or imparts the same message in a media channel. This begs the question: Who determines the intent of the utterance? The vagueness of such terms in the legislation

has a chilling effect on journalists' treatment of sensitive issues such as religion. It also gives unstrained discretion for officials to indict individuals for hate speech. In short, due to the imprecision of key terms of the proclamation, it is hard to determine where free speech stops and hate speech starts (CIPESA, 2020). Some writers, for instance, (Yohannes 2021 and Addisu, 2022) argue that the proclamation's nebulous concepts and overbroad definitions of terms such as 'hate speech', 'disinformation', and 'disseminating' coupled with the Ethiopian court's lack of judicial review power has a chilling effect on freedom of speech and journalistic activities. However, while the proclamation is debated, it is fair to acknowledge the government's interest in maintaining freedom of religion. While the proclamation exempts religious preaching from hate speech, it is by implication that the state allows people to enjoy their freedom of religion and religious discourse in the country.

Since 2018, Ethiopia has ratified various regulations that substantially enhance freedom of expression and media practice. The new administration has improved procedural rights for the media. However, considering the practical challenges that emanate from the interaction between freedom of religion and the thesis of secularism in the Ethiopian constitution, the scope of the aforementioned media policy and proclamations is inadequate to guide effective media practice on religious issues and their reporting. From the perspective of religious freedom in a secular state per se, according to Berhane (2009), despite the fact that the constitution safeguards religious freedom and demands the state not to interfere with religion, it is not supported by a "legislative framework that offers a clear guidance by defining the precise contours of the scope and limits of secularism". Confusion exists among journalists and ordinary people regarding the practice of the secular state and the status of religion within it. Concerning the media landscape, Ethiopian media institutions are generally weak and restricted by ownership and political interference. The recent media reforms also face uncertainty and setbacks. Regarding the public sphere, ethnic and religious differences affect the culture of social and religious coexistence in the country for the worse (Karbo, 2013; Pew Forum, 2009). Religious intolerance is increasingly becoming a subject of concern.

It also underscores that EBC shall remain a secular media institution (EBC Editorial Policy, article 3.1.11). Arguably, one can see a misunderstanding of what secularism means. The secular principles should not mean that the media ignore stories and controversies related to religion. This is a fallacy and pushes away the burden of proof.

Most importantly, the government is inclined to accommodate religion as a moral force on the political arena (Ethiopian Media Authority, 2020). In conclusion, Ethiopian media exhibit polarization influenced by ownership structures and ethno-political agendas. This bias may extend into the religious sphere during conflicts, risking polarization through media manipulation. The rise of digital media platforms, particularly TikTok, intensifies religious polarization compared to mainstream media. Developing clear policies and regulations to enhance professional media coverage of religion is imperative to prevent manipulation and ensure the public interest is considered. (Moges & Skjerdal, 2024; Berhane, 2009).

2.6.4. Challenges and Trends in the Current Ethiopian Media Landscape

The contemporary media landscape in Ethiopia is marked by a nuanced blend of challenges and trends, profoundly impacting journalists' freedom of expression and autonomy. This segment examines the strategies deployed by the Ethiopian government to regulate and influence the media, delving into the ordeals faced by journalists who have encountered threats, intimidation, and legal repercussions for their critical analysis of political affairs and divisive topics (Sileshie, K., 2018).

Government Tactics for Media Control: The Ethiopian government employs a spectrum of strategies to curb critical analysis and manage public discourse. These methods encompass threats and harassment against individual journalists, legal prosecutions, and regulatory measures targeting publishers and printers. The overarching aim seems to be ensuring media alignment with government agendas, thereby stifling dissent and critique (Sileshie, K., 2018).

Patterns of Threats and Intimidation: Journalists, both affiliated with state entities and independent outlets, recount experiencing escalating threats and intimidation over time. Predominantly, the technique revolves around intimidating journalists through threats and harassment instigated by ruling party members, government officials, and security personnel. These tactics, varying from mild intimidation to severe coercion, aim to induce self-censorship among independent journalists or coerce compliance with government narratives.

Assaults, Arrests, and Intimidation: Critical journalists frequently encounter targeted assaults, arbitrary arrests, and harassment by security forces. Intimidation tactics intensify, with journalists receiving menacing calls and messages, facing confrontations in public, and

occasionally being summoned for interrogation. Individuals associated with critical publications or opposition groups often bear the brunt of heightened scrutiny and pressure (Sileshie, K., 2018).

Impact on Journalistic Practices: The prevailing atmosphere of fear and coercion compels many journalists to engage in self-censorship. Those who resist risk arbitrary detention, with security personnel employing interrogations to extract information, often linking publications to banned political entities or foreign influences. Threats of legal action under anti-terrorism legislation serve as a final coercive measure (Ostebo T., 2023).

Implications for Publications: Entire media outlets critical of government policies encounter orchestrated attacks, such as smear campaigns orchestrated through state-affiliated media platforms. The repercussions extend beyond targeted journalists to impact publications' sales, advertising, and overall viability. Readers may refrain from engaging with critical media due to apprehensions about associating with perceived anti-government sentiments (Ostebo T., 2023).

Criminalization of Journalism: The Ethiopian government frequently levies charges against journalists under anti-terrorism laws or criminal statutes, often citing criminal defamation or incitement. The utilization of severe criminal charges against media professionals raises concerns about procedural fairness, pre-trial detentions, access to legal representation, and judicial impartiality (Sileshie, K., 2018). The narratives shared by Ethiopian journalists underscore the formidable obstacles encountered by media practitioners in navigating an environment characterized by threats, intimidation, and legal reprisals. Understanding these dynamics is imperative for grasping the broader ramifications for media freedom and independence in Ethiopia, particularly within the context of on-going political transformations and reforms (Sileshie, K., 2018).

2.7. Religious issues coverage in Ethiopia's media

2.7.1. Emerging Dynamics of Religious Conflicts

Ethiopia showcases a diverse religious landscape, evident in its churches, mosques, traditional attire, and ceremonial practices. The major religious groups comprise Orthodox Christians, Muslims, and Protestants, with Ethiopia hosting one of the world's oldest churches and the third-largest Muslim population in sub-Saharan Africa. Orthodox Christians represent

approximately 43% of the populace, while Muslims make up around 33% (Ostebo T., 2023). Protestant Christianity, introduced in the late 19th century, has witnessed rapid expansion, encompassing roughly 20% of the population. Despite Ethiopia often being depicted as a model of harmonious inter-religious coexistence, religious tensions has escalated over the past three decades. In 2022, over 20 individuals lost their lives in attacks targeting Muslims in the northwestern city of Gondar (Ostebo T., 2023). During the study period, one of the prominent conflicts observed in the country pertained to Islam, resulting in clashes among different religious groups and with law enforcement, sometimes characterized as intra-religious. These conflicts primarily stemmed from divisions within the Muslim community, notably between adherents of old and new sects, distinguished by their doctrinal differences. The ideological disparities between these sects have exacerbated tensions and conflicts within the Muslim community in Ethiopia, leading to heightened emotions and sensational outcomes (Ostebo T., 2023).

The Muslim community has grappled with perceived government bias in favor of the new sect, sparking tensions and clashes with law enforcement, particularly in the capital, Addis Ababa. Organizing under the committee "Demtsachenyesema," meaning 'let our voice be heard,' the community has actively advocated for their religious rights, staging numerous protests, notably on Fridays, the holy day for Muslims, known as "Juma." The area around the Al-Anwar mosque in the Merkato district has been a focal point of tension during these Friday gatherings and other demonstrations, often met with suppression by anti-riot forces.

Religious conflicts, particularly associated with Islam, have also been prevalent in universities, higher education institutions, and schools with Muslim students. These conflicts typically revolve around issues such as Muslim attire, particularly women's hijabs, and prayer spaces (Salat) within these institutions, leading to clashes between Muslim students and administrative bodies. Federal police intervention has been necessary to quell violence during intense conflicts. Various reports highlight the severity of the religious situation in Ethiopia, with incidents of blasphemy, fundamentalism, bigotry, and religious intolerance contributing to approximately 48 religious conflicts in 2010/2011, as documented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA, 2011). These conflicts, tensions, and clashes have emerged as recent phenomena, resulting in loss of life and heightened animosity between communities, instilling a fear of violence across society in many parts of the country (Hjarvard, S., 2016)..

2.7.2. Role of Media in Shaping Narratives of Religious Conflicts

The media's intrinsic connection to conflict, often defining news narratives, plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of inter-religious conflicts. This influence extends from historical instances, like Hitler's use of media for propagating hatred, to modern conflicts where media amplifies violence and sensationalizes events (Ostebo T., 2023).

Media values, such as immediacy, drama, simplicity, and ethnocentrism, align more with conflict narratives than peace-building efforts. This preference for conflict over peace distorts reality, fostering a perception that conflict is pervasive and peace is abnormal (Ostebo T., 2023).

The media's impact on conflict escalation surpasses its role in peace building, leading to a fundamental contradiction between peace processes and news values. Peace journalism scholar Gadi Wolfsfeld notes this contradiction, emphasizing the destructive role media often plays in peace attempts. Social conflict's centrality in media content, as noted by MoFA (2011), Tichenor et al. and Tehranian (1980), underscores the media's natural attraction to conflict. Conflict is, in essence, the "bread and butter" of journalism, with a focus on conflict selling news.

While media reports contribute to conflict legitimization, they also serve as a step toward conflict resolution by providing information. However, the media's role in conflicts is complex, with potential outcomes ranging from conflict reduction to its intensification.

The media's relationship with inter-religious conflicts is marked by its news value, making it a matter of public interest and security globally. Conflicts not only affect the media's operations but also lead to diverse perspectives on its role, from being a societal mirror to a tool of oppression by the ruling class (TerjeSkjerdal and MulatuAlemayehu 2021).

The output of mass media outlets depends on the individuals managing them, with diverse backgrounds, convictions, and interests shaping their coverage. Crass commercialization further complicates matters, as media products are treated as commodities, driven by purely commercial or political interests. Inter-religious conflicts create pressures on the media, as parties involved seek to use it for their ends. The media faces duress, intimidation, and threats, especially during conflicts, disrupting normal market conditions, particularly for print media (TerjeSkjerdal and MulatuAlemayehu 2021).

In conclusion, the media's role in shaping narratives of religious conflicts involves a complex interplay of values, interests, and external pressures. A nuanced understanding is essential to appreciate its impact on conflict dynamics, peace building efforts, and societal perceptions. MoFA (2011)

2.7.3. Religion and media policy in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, despite the constitutional assertion of a secular state, religion pervades nearly every facet of public life, playing a central role in shaping social and cultural dynamics. While religion has often been instrumental in fostering peace and reconciliation, recent events such as the Tigray war have underscored its potential for conflict. Instances of religious tension and related conflicts have become increasingly prevalent, with sermons and religious events serving as platforms for disseminating negative messages and exacerbating animosities. (TerjeSkjerdal and MulatuAlemayehu 2021). In navigating these complexities, media laws, policies, and ethics play a crucial role in guiding journalistic practices. Recent reforms aimed at liberalizing the media landscape, including the establishment of the Legal and Justice Affairs Advisory Council (LJAAC) and the passing of Media Proclamation No. 1238/2021, signify a shift towards bolstering freedom of expression and media independence (TerjeSkjerdal and MulatuAlemayehu 2021). This proclamation, praised for its advancements over previous legislation, notably decriminalizes defamation and establishes the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) to regulate broadcasting media. However, challenges persist in effectively addressing religious issues within the media framework. The Ethiopian Media Policy of 2020, born out of extensive consultation among stakeholders, allows religious institutions to own broadcasting licenses, albeit with restrictions on terrestrial radio broadcasting. Moreover, Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation No. 1185/2020 aims to combat hate speech and disinformation, albeit with potential ambiguities that could stifle free speech (TerjeSkjerdal and MulatuAlemayehu 2021).

The intersection of freedom of religion and secularism poses further challenges, with a lack of clear legislative guidance exacerbating confusion among journalists and the public. Notably, media outlets such as the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) have faced criticism for their approach to covering religious issues, often conflating secularism with avoidance rather than balanced reporting (TerjeSkjerdal and MulatuAlemayehu 2021). In

navigating these complexities, there is a pressing need for nuanced media policies that uphold freedom of expression while fostering informed and inclusive discourse on religious matters.

2.8. Media Coverage and Its Implications

2.8.1. Understanding Media coverage on Sensitive Topics

Media play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions, particularly in conflict-sensitive reporting. This section explores the intricate dynamics of media engagement in protracted inter-ethnic and religious conflicts. A nuanced examination of their impact on peace-building endeavors reveals both disruptive and constructive dimensions. (Institute for Advancement of Journalism. 2019)

The media as the “Fourth Estate” play a crucial role in building an accountable state and society, whether at the national or local level. They are a critical part of the triangular relationship between state, citizens, and information, which helps to ensure responsiveness of government to the people. Free media can act as an echo chamber for discontent within society as citizens express their priorities and concerns. Without this pressure valve, discontents are more likely to be expressed through explosive public protests or acts of violence (Kalathil, S. 2020).

The media's influence on the public's understanding of conflicts is profound. Historical instances, such as the dual role of journalists in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Kenya, and Nigeria, underscore the complexity of their impact. For instance, Sorious Samura's documentary "Cry Freetown" exemplifies courageous journalism that has the potential to alter the narrative and contribute to the cessation of conflict.

According to Moges, & Skjerdal, (2024) the content analysis shows that polarization is still a major problem in the reporting of religion in the Ethiopian media. Stories are often biased towards the journalist's political and ethnic stance. Claiming that they are 'secular', the state media ('public media') tend to ignore important religious issues and conflicts, which have resulted in loss of lives, burning of religious buildings, and displacement of people.

The media appear to be ambivalent between applying a peculiar interpretation of 'secular' principles by ignoring religion or deciding to report such issues. The report stresses the

importance of sensitizing reporters about religious issues and making the media more ethically responsible when reporting religion (Kalathil, S. 2020).

There is some evidence that the regional state media were more willing to cover religious tension than the federal state media, however. One example is a speech held by Abune Abraham, a prominent Orthodox church leader, on the eve of the Meskel festival in Bahir Dar on September 26, 2015. The senior clerk condemned the authorities for using violence against demonstrators during the ongoing protests. The important speech was broadcast by Amhara Media Corporation, i.e., the regionally owned television company, but ignored by federal state television. The broadcasting of the speech does not only have religious significance but could be seen as a regional response to the way federal authorities were handling critical voices at the time (Behailu, 2022).

Concerning the media landscape, Ethiopian media institutions are generally weak and restricted by ownership and political interference. The recent media reforms also face uncertainty and setbacks. Regarding the public sphere, ethnic and religious differences affect the culture of social and religious coexistence in the country for the worse (Karbo, 2013; Pew Forum, 2009). Religious intolerance is increasingly becoming a subject of concern. Against this background, there exists no productive media policy which can guide the media on how to approach religion as an integral part of the social, political and cultural life in the country. For instance, in its editorial policy, EBC, the giant state/public media company in Ethiopia, requires the media to cover all religious groups. The policy says: “Cognizant with the importance of all positive values and their contribution to the co-existence of the people, EBC’s journalists will pay fair attention to all religious denominations in the country.” It also underscores that EBC shall remain a secular media institution (EBC Editorial Policy, article 3.1.11). Arguably, one can here see a misunderstanding of what secularism means (Kalathil, S. 2020).

The secular principles should not mean that the media ignore stories and controversies related to religion. This is a fallacy and pushes away the burden of proof. In recent cases, for instance, the division of the Muslim ('Mejlis') in 2022 and the recent illegal appointment of bishops in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in 2023 did get coverage by EBC, but only after the Prime Minister got engaged in discussions in the two cases. In an informal discussion with one of the editors of EBC, the editor confirms that they avoid reporting such issues since the station is defined as a secular media outlet (Moges, & Skjerdal, 2024). This

is also the case with the regional public media since their editorials and strategies are fetched from the federal media.

2.8.2. Ban on religious broadcasting

The ban on religious broadcasting in Ethiopia persisted throughout the entire reign of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) from 1991 to 2018, despite the 1992 press law permitting publications by religious institutions. Even when private radio stations were permitted in 2007, the law expressly prohibited granting licenses to religious organizations, aligning them with political bodies. This stance diverged from media policies in many Sub-Saharan African nations, where religious broadcasts constitute a substantial portion of the media landscape. The rationale behind Ethiopia's prohibition stemmed from concerns over potential inter-religious friction, a danger the government sought to mitigate. The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA) (Terje & Skjerdal and Mulatu Alemayehu 2021) defended the ban, citing national security concerns, drawing parallels with the harmful role radio played during the 1994 Rwanda genocide. Surprisingly, the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council's public relations officer echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the perceived peril by evoking the Rwanda tragedy. However, dissent emerged from within the religious community, particularly from figures like Deacon Daniel Kibret, who vehemently opposed the ban, asserting that religious broadcasting wouldn't exacerbate tensions.

While broadcasting religious content within Ethiopia was barred, producing such content remained legal. Exploiting this loophole, several organizations created programs domestically, airing them from overseas platforms, exemplified by EE-CMY's involvement with Radio Voice of the Gospel. In 1992, the church established Yemisirach Dimts Communication Services (YDCS), initiating a communication arm focused on producing books and cassettes for its congregation. Expanding its outreach efforts, YDCS launched Radio Selam in 2008, a peace radio endeavor targeting Ethiopian audiences.

Due to licensing restrictions, the station couldn't directly apply for a license, prompting the creation of a workaround. Programs were recorded onto CD-ROMs and dispatched to South Africa, where the Christian media network Trans World Radio broadcasted them back into Ethiopia via shortwave transmission. However, this process posed logistical challenges, requiring programs to be recorded months in advance and shipped to South Africa. Seeking efficiency, YDCS sought permission to operate a satellite transmitter to expedite the transmission process but faced rejection from the government. This same government had

previously declined a request from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) to reclaim the broadcasting equipment of Radio Voice of the Gospel when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) permanently shuttered the station in May 1991, repurposing it into Radio Ethiopia. Despite these obstacles, efforts persisted to overcome governmental constraints and maintain communication channels for religious outreach. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) received a compensation of USD 600,000 for several production buildings, which represented less than ten percent of their actual value. Generally, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) demonstrated little support for religious broadcasting, as articulated by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority's public relations officer, who emphasized the government's perception that religious organizations didn't contribute to the nation's development goals. However, Radio Selam, initiated by Yemisirach Dimts Communication Services (YDCS), stood out for its developmental focus, with 60% of its schedule dedicated to social programs and 40% to spiritual content, similar to Radio Voice of the Gospel's policy in the past. Despite broadcasting from abroad, YDCS exercised self-censorship, particularly regarding content that might implicate support for the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a group designated as a terrorist organization. Security officials held meetings with Radio Selam's producer, Wakshuma Terefe, over concerns related to the OLF, indicative of government scrutiny. Although Radio Selam ceased transmission in 2009 due to funding cuts from the National Endowment of Democracy (NED), the government's stance on religious broadcasting remained unchanged.

2.8.3. The conflict dimension in religious reporting

Research indicates that during the reign of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) from 1991 to 2018, the state media largely neglected religious issues, particularly instances of religious conflict.

A study examining media coverage of internal conflicts found that The Ethiopian Herald, a state-run newspaper, only addressed religious tensions in 21 stories over an 8-year period from 2005 to 2013, despite numerous clashes between Muslims and Christians across various towns during this time. The Ethiopian Herald's deliberate choice to overlook incidents of religious violence reflects the broader negligence of such issues by the state broadcaster. However, regional state media appeared more inclined to cover religious tensions than their federal counterparts. For instance, a speech by Abune Abraham, a prominent Orthodox

church leader, condemning government violence during protests, was broadcast by the Amhara Media Corporation but ignored by federal state television (Terje & Skjerdal and Mulatu Alemayehu 2021).

This disparity in coverage suggests a regional response to federal authorities' handling of critical voices. In contrast to traditional media, social media platforms seem to serve as arenas where religious tensions surface more readily. Surprisingly, a large-scale study of online comments before and after the 2015 parliamentary elections found that discussions about religion were less antagonistic than those concerning politics or ethnicity, with religion often serving as a unifying rather than a divisive factor. Overall, the state's treatment of religious affairs, viewing them primarily as potential sources of conflict, made it challenging to cover religion adequately, leading to the prohibition of religious broadcasting and emphasizing a focus on promoting harmony and peace in reporting, as outlined in the code of ethics of the Ethiopian Media Council.

2.8.4. The journalists' religious views

State media under the EPRDF largely neglected religious reporting, evidenced by limited coverage of religious tensions despite numerous incidents. This negligence extended to clashes between Muslims and Christians and the escalation of Muslim protests toward the end of the studied period. While regional media occasionally covered religious tensions, federal state media remained reticent, exemplified by the Amhara Media Corporation's broadcast of a speech by Abune Abraham, a prominent Orthodox church leader, condemning government violence during protests, which federal television ignored. Interestingly, social media discourse surrounding religion was less antagonistic than discussions on politics or ethnicity, indicating a unifying rather than divisive influence. (Terje & Skjerdal and Mulatu Alemayehu 2021).

2.8.5. Implications for Journalism and Communication

Quality reporting of conflict helps avoid stereotypes and narrow perspectives on the causes and process of conflict. We need to appreciate that quality reporting cannot happen without a clear understanding of conflict through conflict analysis. The media can explore and provide information about opportunities for resolution and also assist the parties in dialogue through accurate reporting of issues. This can only happen if journalists have a good understanding of conflict situations. Journalists have the potential to contribute to conflict escalation, interfere

with peace process, derail negotiations, misinform the public through inaccurate, insensitive, and sensational reporting (Kalathil, S. 2020). Conflict analysis does not aim to shape or limit how journalists report on conflict situations. Objectively, it helps to create a broader, deeper, and objective understanding of the conflict situation in a way that enhances quality reporting. Essentially, conflict analysis makes a journalist's subjective perceptions transparent (Kalathil, S. 2020). The section further highlights the dichotomy of journalism in Africa, emphasizing the challenging and often perilous nature of the profession. It argues that journalists, while expected to maintain neutrality, cannot divorce themselves from the tumultuous events they report. The media's historical propensity to incite violence, as seen in the Balkans, Somalia, and Rwanda, emphasizes the critical importance of understanding the ethical dimensions of reporting. (Institute for Advancement of Journalism. 2019)

2.8.6. Balancing Transparency and Ethical Reporting

Rumors, misperceptions, fears, and suspicions very often provoke or prolong a violent conflict. Journalists working in highly polarized and partisan contexts are sometimes pressured to take sides in the conflict, further aggravating divisions. The major problem is that reporting conflict is often partisan, inaccurate, and sensational and majorly lacks the objectivity that is needed to pass across messages that will promote dialogue, peace, and reconciliation. The majority of journalists do not have adequate knowledge of conflict analysis that helps them isolate the various issues and actors in conflict situations.

Unpacking the tension between transparency and ethical reporting, this section explores the media's inclination to cover conflict rather than peace-building efforts. The "If it bleeds, it leads" maxim encapsulates the media's bias toward sensationalized violence, distorting public perception by fostering the belief that conflict is pervasive while peace is abnormal.

Corporate interests, economic considerations, and ownership dynamics are scrutinized for their impact on media content. The section concludes by emphasizing the media's potential as a vehicle for conflict-sensitive reporting, bridging gaps between early warning systems and societal awareness. (Institute for Advancement of Journalism. 2019)

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section elucidates the research approach utilized to comprehensively investigate the news coverage by Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) during the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) crisis in 2023. The methodology involves a detailed exploration of research methods, sampling procedures, data collection tools, and data analysis techniques.

3.2. Research Approach

The study employed a mixed research approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies to derive a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the research questions. This approach allows for triangulation, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings. This chapter delineates the methodology utilized to investigate and analyze the News Coverage by Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, with a focal point on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church crisis in 2023.

3.3. Research Methods

The research employed quantitative content analysis, following the methodology outlined by Dawson (2007), to systematically scrutinize media coverage using a checklist. This approach enables a systematic, objective, and quantitative analysis of message characteristics, facilitating an examination of media representation over time, particularly focusing on the coverage of the EOTC crisis by EBC. As Berelson (1952) elucidates, content analysis proceeds based on what is said, rather than delving into why the content is presented as such or how people react. Therefore, content analysis serves as a foundational step in investigating media coverage.

Concurrently, qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with journalists, religious leaders, and relevant individuals. These interviews employed open-ended questions to ensure comprehensive coverage of key topics while allowing for open-ended discussions, aligning with the recommendation by Denscombe (2007). The aim is to extract insights into the factors contributing to media silence on these issues. The research combines quantitative content analysis with qualitative in-depth interviews to holistically explore mainstream media's (EBC) coverage during the EOTC crisis in 2023..

3.4. Sampling and Data Collection Tools

3.4.1. Quantitative Content Analysis

Sampling plays a pivotal role in ensuring the reliability and validity of quantitative research endeavors. In the context of this study, sampling refers to the meticulous selection of subjects from the total population for analysis. Quantitative content analysis, as a methodological approach, demands careful consideration in selecting samples aligned with the research topic and unit of analysis (Davies & Mosdell, 2006).

Purposive sampling was adopted to select media outlets for quantitative content analysis, focusing on representations of the EOTC crisis. Specifically, the study emphasizes primary media types: Broadcast Media. These outlets include television channels, and radio stations renowned for their extensive coverage of religious matters in Ethiopia. Special attention is given to periods marked by heightened unrest within the EOTC for thorough analysis. Religious content, comprising news reports, editorials, and opinion pieces related to these occurrences, is systematically amassed and scrutinized.

The selection process prioritizes the broadcast media, considering their distinct impact on Ethiopian audiences. Broadcast Media, including television channels, and radio stations, are chosen based on their relatively greater freedom in expressing critical views compared to broadcast media (Y. Kebede, 2008; Infoasaid, 2011). Television and radio, on the other hand, are recognized for their significant influence on audience perception and are thus included to measure their impact.

Furthermore, the accessibility of recorded materials retrospectively favors the broadcast media in the study. This ensures comprehensive data collection and analysis.

In summary, the sampling strategy for quantitative content analysis is guided by the need to capture a comprehensive representation of media coverage of the EOTC crisis, with a specific emphasis on EBC. The selected broadcast media outlets are chosen based on their significance in shaping public discourse and their potential to provide insights into media practices and narratives surrounding the crisis.

3.4.2. Interviews

Interviews serve as a valuable tool for exploring individuals' opinions, emotions, and experiences (Denscombe, 2007). This section describes the utilization of in-depth interviews

to delve into the intricacies of mainstream media (EBC) coverage regarding access to information and coverage of the EOTC crisis. To gain comprehensive insights, a purposive sampling strategy is adopted to select respondents, and a total of 11 informants participated in the in-depth interviews. These informants are selected based on their expertise and involvement in media and religious affairs in Ethiopia. The interviews employed a semi-structured approach, combining open-ended questions with specific inquiries to ensure a thorough examination of relevant topics (Dawson, 2002). Each informant provided valuable perspectives on media coverage, secularism in journalism, and the factors influencing access to information on religious conflicts. The key informants comprised two distinct groups:

3.4.2.1. Journalists

Six experienced journalists, holding positions of deputy editor or higher, were chosen from both state-owned and privately-owned media outlets. Their extensive experience and insider knowledge make them valuable sources of information regarding media practices and challenges in reporting on religious matters.

3.4.2.2. Religious Figures and Experts

The remaining five informants represented various Ethiopian religious traditions and possessed significant media-related experience. Their insights offer a unique perspective on the intersection of religion and media, shedding light on how different religious communities perceive media coverage and secularism.

Each interview was preceded by informed consent and ethical considerations, ensuring participants' willingness to engage in the research process (Ruane, 2005). A semi-structured interview guide facilitated discussions on topics such as media portrayal of religious issues, the implementation of secularism, and the historical representation of religious conflicts in the media.

3.4.2.4. Interview Documentation

In-depth interviews were conducted to gather insights from key informants regarding their observations and experiences related to EBC coverage of the EOTC crisis in 2023. Each interview was preceded by informed consent and ethical considerations, ensuring participants' willingness to engage in the research process (Ruane, 2005). A semi-structured interview guide facilitated discussions on topics such as media portrayal of religious issues, the

implementation of secularism, and the historical representation of religious conflicts in the media.

3.5. Data Collection Time and Place

Data collection took place between February 14, 2024, and March 22, 2024, encompassing a period significant for understanding media (EBC) news coverage surrounding the EOTC crisis. The interviews occurred primarily in Addis Ababa.

3.6. Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data underwent rigorous analysis to derive substantive insights into EBC coverage during the EOTC crisis. Quantitative data underwent statistical scrutiny to discern patterns and trends in media coverage, while qualitative data from interviews were subject to thematic analysis to unearth underlying factors and dynamics influencing media coverage. The integration of findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses facilitated a comprehensive comprehension of media coverage concerning the EOTC crisis, with implications extending to broader discussions on media freedom and access to information. Quantitative and qualitative data undergo rigorous analysis to derive substantive insights into media denial of access to information and silence on religious conflict concerning the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Quantitative data undergo statistical scrutiny to discern patterns and trends in media coverage, while qualitative data from interviews are subject to thematic analysis to unearth underlying factors and dynamics influencing media practices. The integration of findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses facilitates a comprehensive comprehension of mainstream media coverage of religious conflict and unrest in Ethiopia, with implications extending to broader discussions on media freedom and access to information.

3.7. Data Synthesis and Integration

The findings from quantitative content analysis and qualitative in-depth interviews were synthesized and integrated to provide a comprehensive narrative. This synthesis facilitates a holistic understanding of religious visibility and secularism implementation in the Ethiopian mainstream media (EBC), specifically focusing on the coverage of the EOTC crisis. A 5-point Likert scale was used to rate the various indicators whereby 1 point was accorded to 'Strongly disagree', 2 points as 'Disagree', 3 points as 'Neither agree nor disagree', 4 points as 'Agree', and 5 points as 'Strongly Agree'.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

In this research, the researcher prioritizes ethical considerations to ensure the well-being and rights of the participants. Informed voluntary participation and consent of the respondents are diligently secured before their engagement in the study. The privacy of the participants is safeguarded, with a commitment that personal information will not be disclosed to individuals not directly involved in the research. To maintain confidentiality, the respondents will be kept anonymous throughout the entire study period.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed examination and analysis of the data collected regarding the news coverage by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) during the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) crisis in 2023. The analysis focuses on state media (EBC) coverage trends, secularism in journalistic practices, factors contributing to silence and access denial, framing of religious conflict, agenda-setting and gatekeeping, biases and challenges, and their implications for public discourse and media accountability. This analysis aims to address the objectives and research questions outlined in Chapter One by offering comprehensive insights into the intricate relationship between media dynamics, religious sensitivities, and societal implications in Ethiopia.

4.2. Presentation of Data

4.2.1. Media Coverage Trends

This section presents a meticulous analysis of media coverage trends related to the EOTC crisis in 2023. Both coverage metrics and editorial insights are examined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the frequency, depth, and prominence of coverage by EBC.

4.2.1.1 Coverage Metrics and Editorial Insights

In this section, coverage metrics and editorial insights are merged to present an integrated understanding of the media coverage trends by EBC concerning the EOTC crisis. This combined approach provides a holistic view of both the numerical representation of coverage and the contextual factors that influenced the trends.

Coverage Metrics: The coverage metrics explore the frequency, depth, and prominence of news coverage provided by EBC. The information is presented in Table 1 below, which shows the frequency of news articles and the depth and prominence of coverage, assessed using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5.

Table 1 Frequency, depth, and prominence of EOTC-related news coverage by EBC in 2023

Month	Frequency of EOTC-related News Coverage	Depth of Coverage (Scale 1-5)	Prominence of Coverage (Scale 1-5)
February	15 articles	3	4
March	12 articles	4	4
April	20 articles	4	5
May	18 articles	5	5
June	25 articles	5	5

The table shows that the frequency of EOTC-related coverage by EBC varied significantly across the months, with a notable increase from February to June. The depth and prominence of coverage also saw an increase, indicating a more in-depth and visible approach to news reporting, particularly during the peak months of the crisis. The depth of coverage was measured based on the range of topics covered, the level of analysis provided, and the exploration into various facets of the crisis, while the prominence was evaluated by the visibility of the articles across media platforms and their placement in broadcasts.

Editorial Insights: The editorial insights provide deeper context into the underlying factors affecting the media coverage. They go beyond numerical data to consider themes that emerged from interviews with EBC journalists, editors, and other key stakeholders. Thematic analysis revealed key insights into the editorial decisions, newsroom culture, and external societal and political pressures that shaped how the crisis was reported. The themes included:

- I. **Editorial Policies:** Many interviewees indicated that editorial decisions were influenced by a delicate balancing act—ensuring that the coverage met public interest needs while also being sensitive to religious sentiments. The need for neutrality was cited as one of the most challenging aspects of coverage.
 - Editor, EBC: "Editorial decisions were heavily influenced by the need to balance public interest with sensitivity to religious sentiments. Ensuring neutrality while covering such a contentious issue was challenging."
- II. **Newsroom Culture:** The culture within the EBC newsroom played a critical role in determining the intensity and direction of coverage. This culture was influenced not

only by internal policies but also by external pressures, such as government oversight and societal expectations.

- Senior Journalist, EBC: "Our coverage of the EOTC crisis was intensive, especially during the peak months of the crisis. We aimed to provide comprehensive coverage, though there were challenges in maintaining depth consistently."

III. Societal and Governmental Pressures: Journalists reported facing challenges in maintaining the depth and diversity of coverage due to pressures from different societal groups and governmental bodies. These pressures influenced the extent of coverage and, in some cases, the framing of the news.

- Senior Journalist, EBC: "There was a significant focus on presenting diverse viewpoints, but societal and governmental pressures often influenced the extent of our coverage."

Integrated Discussion of Coverage Metrics and Editorial Insights

The integration of coverage metrics and editorial insights reveals a more nuanced understanding of EBC's coverage of the EOTC crisis. The increase in coverage frequency and depth during the peak crisis months, as indicated by the coverage metrics, is supported by the editorial insights that describe increased efforts in the newsroom to provide more comprehensive reporting. However, the insights also highlight the underlying struggles with maintaining neutrality and depth due to external influences.

The coverage metrics reveal how often and how prominently the crisis was covered, showing that the months of April, May, and June saw the highest levels of in-depth reporting, with a noticeable focus on making these reports visible and accessible to the public. The editorial insights, on the other hand, shed light on the reasons behind this trend—such as editorial decisions shaped by the desire to remain balanced while being sensitive to the religious nature of the issue.

Together, these analyses suggest that while EBC aimed for comprehensive coverage, there were challenges in maintaining consistency and depth. Editorial decisions and newsroom practices were influenced not only by journalistic norms but also by pressures related to government and societal sensitivities. This combination of factors often resulted in fluctuations in coverage, with some months seeing more detailed and frequent reporting compared to others.

This dual analysis approach provides a clearer picture of how media coverage by EBC was shaped, revealing both the outcomes (in terms of quantity and visibility) and the contributing factors (such as editorial policy, societal influence, and newsroom dynamics). This deeper understanding highlights the complexities and challenges faced by state media when reporting on religious crises, and raises important questions regarding the implications of such coverage for public discourse and media accountability in Ethiopia.

4.2.2. Secularism in Journalistic Practices

Secularism stands as a cornerstone in the realm of religious reporting within Ethiopian mainstream media, shaping narratives and editorial decisions. This section examines how journalists adhere to secular principles in their professional conduct. Through an in-depth exploration of content patterns in journalistic narratives, editorial policies, and interview techniques, this analysis aims to unravel the underlying ideologies and biases influencing media representations of religious conflicts within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). Scrutinizing journalists' commitment to impartiality, objectivity, and religious neutrality offers invaluable insights into the complex interplay between journalistic ethics and religious sensitivities.

In Ethiopia, secularism remains a contentious issue, sparking debates among journalists and stakeholders alike. Article 11 of the Ethiopian constitution expressly delineates the separation of state and religion, emphasizing the absence of a state religion and the non-interference of religion in state affairs. State media outlets, notably the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), have articulated explicit editorial policies that embrace secularism as a guiding principle in religious coverage. However, these policies often lack clarity in distinguishing religious content and remain reticent to address religion as an independent subject, instead prioritizing socio-cultural and economic dimensions such as respect, tolerance, and historical heritage.

Interpretations of secularism vary among respondents, with divergent views on the scope of religious reporting. While some advocate for integrating religious coverage with broader societal issues, others endorse a strict separation of religion and state, arguing against independent coverage of religious topics. State media journalists emphasize the contextual relevance of religion to societal matters, often leveraging religious leaders' perspectives to promote peace and ethical values. However, this instrumental use of religious figures during conflicts has been criticized for exacerbating tensions among followers of different faiths.

Journalists approach religious reporting cautiously, opting for surface-level coverage of rituals and practices to maintain impartiality and respect for religious diversity. They refrain from delving into theological intricacies that may favor one religion over another, aiming to ensure balanced coverage. However, this approach has been scrutinized for oversimplifying complex religious narratives and overlooking the spiritual dimensions of religious events.

According to Moges & Skjerdal (2024), private media outlets exhibit a less explicit approach to religious reporting in their editorial policies. While secularism does not deter journalists from independently reporting religious affairs, self-censorship and perceived risks often inhibit comprehensive coverage. Many journalists express uncertainty regarding the boundaries of secularism, leading to a lack of clarity and consistency in their practices.

To illustrate the varying interpretations of secularism, consider a recent news event involving a religious conflict within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). This conflict arose due to disagreements over the appointment of a new bishop, leading to protests and tensions within the church community. The way different media outlets reported on this event reveals their adherence to secularism.

Despite their efforts, private media outlets often face challenges such as self-censorship and perceived risks that inhibit comprehensive coverage. The uncertainty regarding the boundaries of secularism among journalists further complicates the issue, highlighting the need for clearer guidelines and enhanced training in religious reporting.

4.2.2.1. This Coverage Metrics for Secularism

This section examines the extent to which secularism was adhered to in journalistic practices during EBC's coverage of the EOTC crisis.

The coverage of a religious conflict within the EOTC illustrates how state media outlets navigate secularism in their journalistic practices. State-owned media often prioritize socio-cultural and economic dimensions, whereas private media outlets strive for more comprehensive and balanced coverage, albeit with their own set of challenges. Clearer guidelines and training can help ensure that all media outlets uphold ethical journalism that promotes understanding and respect for religious diversity, ultimately fostering a more inclusive public discourse.

A structured approach is used to assess adherence to secularism in media coverage, employing a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. Factors considered include balance in reporting, avoidance of religious bias, and neutrality in presenting different viewpoints. Below is a table presenting the assessment of adherence to secularism among State media outlets:

Table 2: Analysis of Adherence to Secularism in Media Outlets

Media Outlet	Adherence to Secularism (Scale 1-5)
State Media (EBC)	3

In the provided table, the adherence to secular principles among state media outlets is evaluated using a scale of 1 to 5, where higher scores indicate stronger adherence to secularism.

State Media (EBC) scored a 3, indicating moderate adherence. While EBC has explicit editorial policies embracing secularism, there are challenges in implementation, such as clarity in distinguishing religious content and addressing religion as an independent subject..

4.2.2.2. Editorial Insights on Secularism

Interviews with journalists provide further insights into the challenges of maintaining secularism, such as self-censorship, government restrictions, and societal pressures. Journalists report difficulties in balancing comprehensive reporting with religious sensitivities and the potential for public backlash.

Direct quotes from journalists highlight the complexities involved:

"Secular reporting is challenging in a context where religious sensitivities are high. Balancing neutrality with comprehensive coverage is a constant struggle."

"Government restrictions and societal expectations often lead to self-censorship, impacting the quality and depth of reporting."

Opportunities and Challenges:

Opportunities: Upholding secularism in media has the potential to promote inclusivity and respect for religious diversity, fostering understanding among different religious

communities. By ensuring that journalistic practices are both neutral and sensitive to diverse religious contexts, media can contribute positively to social cohesion and the broader public discourse.

Challenges: Ambiguities in interpreting secularism hinder comprehensive coverage of religious conflicts within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). Journalists often grapple with unclear guidelines, leading to inconsistencies in their reporting practices. Enhanced training and the establishment of clearer editorial policies on religious coverage are essential to address these challenges and ensure that journalists are equipped to handle religious matters with both integrity and impartiality.

The overall analysis suggests that adherence to secular principles plays a pivotal role in shaping journalistic narratives and editorial decisions in Ethiopia, especially in matters of religious reporting. Both state and private media outlets face significant obstacles, ranging from external pressures to internal ambiguities, that influence their ability to cover religious issues comprehensively. Addressing these challenges is key to fostering ethical journalism that upholds the tenets of secularism and contributes to a more informed and inclusive public discourse.

4.2.3. Factors Contributing to Silence and Access Denial

This subsection explores the multifaceted factors that contribute to the mainstream media's silence and the denial of access to information concerning religious conflicts within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). Both coverage metrics and editorial insights are analyzed to identify structural, institutional, and ideological barriers. The goal is to standardize the evaluation of the factors that led to limited media coverage and access denial during the EOTC crisis.

4.2.3.1. Coverage Metrics for Silence and Access Denial

Coverage metrics were collected to measure the frequency of access denial incidents and the extent of self-censorship among journalists. This analysis utilized a Likert Scale ranging from 1 to 5, where higher scores indicate a greater frequency or impact of the respective factor:

Table 3: Analysis of Factors Contributing to Silence and Access Denial

Factor	Frequency of Occurrence (Scale 1-5)
Government Restrictions	4
Self-Censorship	3
Editorial Decisions	4
Societal Pressures	3

Government Restrictions: Scored a 4, indicating a high frequency of occurrence. This suggests that government-imposed restrictions, such as censorship laws or limitations on press freedom, significantly contribute to the silence and denial of access to information regarding religious crises within the EOTC. Government policies and control over media play a major role in restricting coverage on sensitive religious issues, leading to limited access to reliable information.

Self-Censorship: Scored a 3, suggesting a moderate level of occurrence. Although self-censorship is prevalent among journalists and media organizations, it may not be as pervasive as government restrictions. Journalists often voluntarily limit their coverage of sensitive religious topics to avoid backlash or perceived risks, including negative public reactions or potential conflicts with authorities.

Editorial Decisions: Also scored a 4, indicating a high frequency of occurrence. Editorial decisions made by media organizations, such as prioritizing other news topics over religious conflicts or framing coverage in alignment with political agendas, significantly shape the narrative and contribute to silence or access denial. This reflects a deliberate choice by editorial teams to either downplay the importance of religious issues or approach them cautiously to avoid controversy.

Societal Pressures: Scored a 3, indicating that societal attitudes and expectations also impact media coverage. Journalists face pressures not only from government policies but also from societal norms and public opinion, which can limit their willingness to fully engage with controversial religious topics.

4.2.3.1. Editorial Insights on Silence and Access Denial

The editorial insights provide a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamics affecting media coverage of religious tensions within the EOTC. Through interviews with media professionals, religious leaders, and key stakeholders, the thematic analysis reveals structural, institutional, and ideological barriers contributing to silence and access denial in mainstream media coverage.

Factors Identified by Media Professionals:

Government Restrictions and Editorial Decisions: Interviews highlight the significant role of government-imposed restrictions and editorial decisions in shaping media coverage of religious conflicts. Journalists often navigate a complex landscape of government controls and political pressures that can limit their ability to report freely.

Department Head of Ethiopian Radio (EBC):

"Factors such as government restrictions and editorial decisions influence media coverage. Journalists often navigate a complex landscape where self-censorship and political pressure play a significant role."

"Political and economic considerations sometimes overshadow the need for objective reporting on religious issues. Media outlets may shy away from controversial issues or avoid loss of revenue."

Economic and Political Considerations: Media outlets may avoid covering controversial topics due to economic and political factors. Fear of losing government support or advertising revenue can lead to reluctance in addressing religious conflicts.

Department Head of Ethiopian Radio (EBC):

"Public opinion indirectly affects media coverage, because media channels influence the preferences of the audience. But ethical considerations should guide journalists to present balanced views."

Public Opinion and Societal Pressures: Journalists have noted the influence of public opinion on media coverage. Reporting on religious conflicts is often approached cautiously to avoid public backlash or unrest. However, this approach can undermine the ethical obligation of journalists to provide balanced coverage.

Direct Quotes from Journalists:

"Government restrictions significantly limit our ability to report freely on religious conflicts."

"Self-censorship is a common practice due to fear of backlash from both the government and the public."

These quotes illustrate the challenges faced by journalists in maintaining impartiality and transparency. The interplay between government oversight, societal pressures, and internal editorial policies creates a complicated environment in which media coverage is limited, leading to information gaps in public discourse.

Integrated Discussion of Coverage Metrics and Editorial Insights

Combining coverage metrics and editorial insights provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to media silence and access denial in reporting on religious crises within the EOTC. The coverage metrics reveal the frequency of factors such as government restrictions, self-censorship, editorial decisions, and societal pressures, while the editorial insights explore the underlying dynamics affecting these trends.

Government Restrictions and Editorial Decisions: Both metrics and insights indicate that government restrictions and editorial decisions play a major role in limiting access to information. Government control and editorial agendas significantly influence what can and cannot be reported, which affects how the public perceives religious conflicts.

Self-Censorship and Societal Pressures: Journalists often resort to self-censorship as a protective measure to avoid potential repercussions. Societal pressures also influence the approach journalists take, limiting the depth and breadth of coverage on religious matters. This restraint leads to oversimplified narratives and hinders a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of religious conflicts.

Implications for Policy and Practice: The findings highlight the need for clearer guidelines and enhanced training for journalists to help them navigate the complex challenges of reporting on sensitive topics like religious conflicts. By understanding and addressing these factors, policymakers and media organizations can work towards fostering an environment that supports ethical and inclusive journalism, ultimately contributing to more open and informed public discourse.

This combined analysis underscores the importance of addressing the structural and institutional barriers that limit media coverage of religious issues. Creating clearer policies, reducing governmental control over media content, and providing specialized training for journalists could help in mitigating these challenges and enhancing transparency in the media landscape. Such measures are essential for ensuring that media organizations are able to report freely and fairly, thereby promoting greater public awareness and understanding of religious conflicts and other sensitive issues.

4.3. Analysis of Data

4.3.1. Framing of Religious Crisis

This section offers a critical analysis of how mainstream media outlets frame religious conflicts within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). Both coverage metrics and editorial insights are examined to deconstruct dominant media narratives and identify recurring themes or motifs.

4.3.1.1. Coverage Metrics: Framing of Religious Crisis

Coverage metrics are used to analyze how the media framed the EOTC crisis, highlighting different techniques such as polarization, neutrality, and sensationalism.

Table 4: Analysis of Framing Techniques in Media Coverage of the Religious Crisis

Framing Technique	Example from Media Coverage
Polarization	"Ethiopian Orthodox Church Crisis Divides Nation"
Neutrality	"Ethiopian Orthodox Church Faces Internal Struggle"
Sensationalism	"Violence Erupts in Ethiopian Orthodox Church Rift"

Polarization: Media coverage using polarization frames tends to depict the crisis in a way that emphasizes divisions within the community, potentially exacerbating tensions between different factions.

Neutrality: Attempts at neutrality involve portraying the conflict without taking sides, focusing on factual representation of the situation. However, achieving true neutrality in the context of religious conflict remains challenging for mainstream media.

Sensationalism: Sensationalist framing uses emotionally charged language to attract attention, often highlighting violent or dramatic aspects of the conflict. This approach can

contribute to heightened public emotions and may lead to misinformation or misinterpretation of events.

4.3.1.2. Editorial Insights: Framing Analysis

Thematic analysis of interviews with media professionals provides insights into the ideological underpinnings and power dynamics informing media representations of religious tensions.

Direct Quotes from Media Analysts:

"The media's framing of the EOTC crisis often leans towards sensationalism, which can exacerbate tensions."

"There is a need for more balanced and neutral reporting to provide a comprehensive view of the conflict."

These insights reveal the significant role of editorial choices in shaping public perceptions of the EOTC crisis. A more balanced and neutral approach is needed to foster understanding and avoid inflaming tensions.

4.3.2. Agenda Setting and Gatekeeping

This section analyzes the agenda-setting and gatekeeping mechanisms within the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) during the coverage of the EOTC crisis. The analysis focuses on how editorial decisions, topic selection, and source selection influence mainstream media coverage of religious conflicts within the EOTC.

4.3.2.1. Coverage Metrics: Agenda-Setting and Gatekeeping Mechanisms

Quantitative data is used to understand the mechanisms of agenda-setting and gatekeeping, particularly in terms of editorial decisions and the factors influencing them.

Table 5: Analysis of Agenda-Setting and Gatekeeping Mechanisms.:

Editorial Decision	Mechanism of Agenda Setting/Gatekeeping
Topic Selection	Editor's Influence
Framing	Corporate Interests
Source Selection	Political Pressures

Topic Selection: The choice of topics for media coverage is often influenced by editors, who decide which aspects of the EOTC crisis to highlight, thus setting the agenda for public discussion.

Framing: The framing of topics is affected by corporate interests, with editorial teams sometimes tailoring coverage to align with the priorities of media ownership or commercial imperatives.

Source Selection: The selection of sources is frequently influenced by political pressures, which can limit the diversity of perspectives presented and reinforce existing power dynamics.

4.3.2.2. Editorial Insights: Agenda-Setting and Gatekeeping

Interviews with media professionals provide insights into the complex interplay between media power dynamics, commercial imperatives, and political interests shaping EBC's coverage.

Direct Quotes from Editors:

"Editorial decisions are often influenced by political pressures and corporate interests, impacting the topics we cover and how we frame them."

"There is a need for greater editorial independence to ensure unbiased and comprehensive coverage."

Editorial Insights: Thematic analysis reveals that political and commercial interests significantly impact EBC's agenda-setting and gatekeeping practices. This influence restricts editorial independence, leading to limited and sometimes biased media coverage of the EOTC crisis.

4.3.3. Biases and Challenges

This section examines the biases and challenges faced by EBC in covering the EOTC crisis. A nuanced discussion of the inherent biases, ethical dilemmas, and operational challenges faced by mainstream media in reporting on religious conflicts within the EOTC is presented.

4.3.3.1. Coverage Metrics: Biases and Challenges.

Quantitative data was collected to measure the frequency of biases and challenges faced by mainstream media in reporting on the religious crisis within the EOTC. A Likert Scale ranging from 1 to 5 was used, where higher scores indicate a greater frequency or severity of the bias or challenge.

Table 6: Analysis of Challenges Faced by Mainstream Media

Bias/Challenge	Frequency of Occurrence (Scale 1-5)
Political Bias	4
Ethical Dilemmas	3
Operational Challenges	4

Political Bias: Scored a 4, indicating a high frequency of occurrence. Political bias often manifests through pressures from the government to align with official narratives and restrict independent journalism that criticizes the regime. Such interference limits editorial autonomy and impacts the quality of coverage on religious conflicts.

Ethical Dilemmas: Scored a 3, suggesting a moderate level of occurrence. Journalists face ethical dilemmas in reporting on religious conflicts, including ensuring accuracy and balance while navigating diverse pressures from political and societal interest groups.

Operational Challenges: Also scored a 4, indicating a high frequency of occurrence. Operational challenges, such as government tactics like internet shutdowns and censorship during periods of unrest, hinder journalists' ability to report comprehensively and impartially on religious conflicts.

4.3.3.2. Editorial Insights: Biases and Challenges

Insights from interviews with media professionals are examined through thematic analysis, highlighting the structural constraints that impact journalistic practices and media ethics.

Direct Quotes from Journalists:

"Political bias is a significant challenge, impacting our ability to report objectively."

"Operational challenges such as internet shutdowns and censorship hinder our reporting efforts."

Editorial Insights: According to respondents, state media in Ethiopia face considerable challenges in reporting on the religious crisis within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). Despite promises of media reform and increased press freedom under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's administration, journalists encountered persistent obstacles, including:

Government Influence: Journalists highlighted the enduring influence of the government, which often pressured state-owned media outlets to align with official narratives and imposed restrictions on independent journalists critical of the regime.

Ethnic and Political Instability: Amidst ethnic tensions and political instability, journalists grappled with navigating pressures from diverse interest groups while striving to maintain editorial independence and provide accurate reporting.

Government Tactics: The government's use of tactics like internet shutdowns and censorship during periods of unrest further hampered journalists' ability to cover religious conflicts comprehensively and impartially.

The combined analysis of coverage metrics and editorial insights reveals that while there have been some improvements in press freedom, significant challenges persist. These challenges hinder the ability of mainstream media to provide balanced, unbiased, and comprehensive reporting on religious conflicts. The ongoing complexity of Ethiopia's media landscape, influenced by political dynamics and ethnic tensions, continues to pose significant obstacles for journalists striving to maintain ethical standards and integrity in their work. Addressing these challenges is critical for ensuring fair and accurate media representation of sensitive issues such as religious conflicts.

4.4. Visibility and Significance of Religion in the Ethiopian State Media (EBC)

The visibility and significance of religion within Ethiopian state media constitute a critical aspect of societal understanding and discourse. This section explores insights gathered from interviews with 11 key informant journalists, selected from both state-owned and privately-owned media outlets. These informants were chosen for their extensive experience and insider knowledge regarding media practices in Ethiopia.

4.4.1. Editorial Insights on Religious Coverage in Ethiopian Media

The qualitative data collected from these interviews highlight a consensus among the informants regarding the scarcity of religious coverage in both state and private mainstream media in Ethiopia. There is an overwhelming affirmation that religion remains an invisible and marginalized subject within media narratives, which represents a significant gap considering the deep cultural and social importance of religion in Ethiopian society.

Key Observations:

Limited Religious Coverage: The key informants unanimously assert that religious topics receive inadequate attention in the Ethiopian media landscape. Despite the pervasive role of religion in everyday life, there is a clear deficit in religious coverage, particularly when compared to the focus on political topics.

Media's Selective Interest in Religion: Many respondents argue that religious coverage only becomes prominent during public holidays or notable events. Outside of such occasions, religion is largely overlooked by both state and private media. This selective approach is attributed to a lack of understanding, commitment, and priority within media organizations to report consistently on religious matters.

Broader Societal Indifference: Beyond media organizations, the informants note that other governmental institutions also exhibit a lack of engagement with religious institutions. This points to a broader societal indifference towards religious affairs, where the potential contributions of religious organizations are undervalued or ignored in national discourse.

Differences in State and Private Media Approaches:

State Media's Occasional Coverage: Key informants from Ethiopian state media acknowledge that there is occasional coverage of religious holidays, but emphasize its rarity outside of these specific occasions. The focus on secular matters is often prioritized, and religious issues are typically covered only when they intersect with broader societal issues, such as development activities or peace-building efforts.

Head of Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation's National Radio Station: "Religion is only reported when religious institutions are directly involved in societal problem-solving, development activities, or peace-building efforts."

This approach is further justified by referencing the constitutional separation of religion and state, which, according to some informants, restricts the extent to which religious matters are reported in a broader context.

Private Media's Limited Coverage and Challenges: Journalists from private media outlets report that while they do cover religious issues throughout the year, the coverage remains limited in scope. This is attributed to profitability considerations, as media organizations often prefer to allocate resources to topics that are expected to generate more revenue.

Furthermore, there are significant challenges associated with covering religious issues critically. Informants point out an attitudinal problem among followers and leaders of religious traditions, which discourages critical reporting due to fears of intimidation and physical attacks from religious institutions.

Journalist from Private Media: "There is a genuine fear of reprisal, both from religious leaders and followers, which limits our ability to report critically on religious matters."

4.4.2. Analysis of Visibility and Significance

Key Themes Identified:

Marginalization of Religion: Across both state and private media, religion is consistently marginalized, receiving coverage only in limited contexts. This marginalization reflects the broader editorial policies and market dynamics that shape media priorities in Ethiopia.

Focus on Secularism and Profitability: The emphasis on secular topics, especially within state media, and the profitability considerations in private media, contribute to the limited visibility of religious topics. While state media justify their limited coverage by citing constitutional principles, private media are influenced by financial constraints and fears of public backlash.

Challenges in Critical Reporting: Fear of retaliation from religious institutions presents a major barrier to critical reporting. The attitudinal barriers within religious communities, where leaders and followers may not tolerate critical scrutiny, further perpetuate this issue. This results in a cautious approach to reporting on religion, which often lacks depth and avoids controversial aspects.

Direct Insights from Key Informants:

"Religion fails to capture the media's attention unless circumstances demand it, such as during public holidays or notable events."

"Political topics dominate our coverage, leaving little room for religious discourse, which is equally important for understanding the fabric of Ethiopian society."

"There is an inherent fear of intimidation and physical attacks from religious institutions, which discourages any attempt at critical analysis of religious issues."

4.4.2. Recommendations for Enhancing Religious Coverage

The insights gathered from the key informant journalists underscore the pervasive deficiency in religious coverage within Ethiopian media, particularly in state-owned outlets like the EBC. To address these challenges, a concerted effort is needed to overcome barriers such as lack of understanding, profitability concerns, and fear of reprisals. Enhancing the visibility and significance of religion in the media can foster a more inclusive and informed public discourse.

Key Recommendations:

Improving Editorial Policies: Media organizations need to reassess their editorial policies to ensure that religious topics are given more consistent and comprehensive coverage. This could involve establishing dedicated sections or segments focusing on religious affairs, beyond the coverage of major holidays and events.

Training for Journalists: Training programs should be developed to help journalists understand the significance of religion in Ethiopian society and how to report on it in a way that is both critical and respectful. This will help bridge the knowledge gap that often limits coverage.

Ensuring Journalist Safety: Measures should be implemented to protect journalists who report on religious topics. This includes addressing fears of intimidation or physical attacks through institutional support, such as legal protection and advocacy for media freedom.

Engaging Religious Leaders: Media organizations should foster better relationships with religious leaders and communities to promote a more open dialogue. This could help mitigate fears and resistance to critical coverage and ensure that diverse perspectives are represented.

Balancing Secular and Religious Coverage: A balance between secular and religious coverage is needed to reflect the reality of Ethiopian society, where religion plays an integral role. Media outlets should recognize the value of religious institutions not only in cultural and spiritual terms but also in contributing to social stability and development.

The lack of visibility and significance of religion in Ethiopian state media, particularly within the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), reflects broader editorial practices and societal attitudes towards religion. Despite the significant role of religion in Ethiopian society, its limited representation in the media indicates a gap in public discourse.

Addressing this deficiency requires intentional changes in editorial practices, better training for journalists, and enhanced protection for those reporting on sensitive topics. By tackling these issues, Ethiopian media can play a more effective role in fostering a well-rounded understanding of the country's cultural and societal dynamics, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and informed media landscape.

4.5. Findings and Discussion

4.5.1. Findings

The study provides a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of news coverage concerning the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) crisis in 2023, focusing on media coverage trends, secularism in journalistic practices, factors contributing to silence and access denial, framing of religious conflict, agenda-setting and gatekeeping, as well as biases and challenges. The findings reveal a complex landscape characterized by variations in the frequency, depth, and prominence of media coverage related to EOTC issues. While there was an overall increase in the number of articles during the crisis, the quality and analytical depth of coverage fluctuated, revealing the intricacies of media representation in religious conflicts.

Media Coverage Trends: The Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) increased its frequency of coverage regarding the EOTC crisis in 2023, especially during peak crisis months. However, the depth and prominence of this coverage varied significantly. While more airtime and articles were devoted to the crisis, the quality and analytical depth were inconsistent, with coverage often lacking comprehensive exploration of the issues.

Secularism in Journalistic Practices: The analysis indicates that EBC demonstrated moderate adherence to secular principles in its reporting. Although efforts were made to

maintain neutrality and avoid religious bias, these attempts were often undermined by external pressures (such as government influence) and internal editorial policies that constrained journalists' ability to provide unbiased coverage.

Silence and Access Denial: Government restrictions, self-censorship, and editorial decisions were found to significantly contribute to access denial. Journalists faced considerable challenges in obtaining necessary information and reporting freely. Government restrictions scored highly as a contributing factor, highlighting the significant influence of state policies on media access.

Framing of Religious Conflict: EBC employed different framing techniques, including polarization, neutrality, and sensationalism. The framing of news stories greatly influenced public perception of the EOTC crisis. Sensationalist frames, for instance, received considerable attention due to their dramatic nature, while attempts at neutrality were made to minimize bias, albeit with varying success.

Agenda-Setting and Gatekeeping: Media power dynamics, commercial imperatives, and political interests played substantial roles in shaping EBC's coverage of the crisis. Editorial decisions were often influenced by these factors, affecting the prioritization and presentation of stories. This underscores how external interests shaped the agenda-setting and gatekeeping functions of the media during the crisis.

Biases and Challenges: Political bias, ethical dilemmas, and operational challenges were pervasive, affecting editorial autonomy and journalistic integrity. EBC journalists faced numerous obstacles, including government interference and censorship, which severely impacted their ability to report objectively. Operational challenges such as internet shutdowns also hindered comprehensive reporting, contributing to inconsistencies in coverage quality.

These findings have significant implications for public discourse, democratic governance, and social cohesion in Ethiopia. The variations in media coverage suggest that, despite an awareness of the importance of reporting on the EOTC crisis, the inconsistent quality and depth of coverage could lead to a fragmented public understanding of the issues. Improving media accountability and transparency is essential for fostering responsible media practices and building trust between media organizations, religious communities, and the broader public.

4.5.2. Discussion

The findings from this study underscore the intricate dynamics surrounding EBC's coverage of the EOTC crisis in 2023. The media's role in shaping public perception of religious conflicts is evident through the varied approaches to coverage, including the inconsistent depth, framing techniques, and agenda-setting mechanisms observed throughout the crisis.

Secularism in Journalistic Practices: The study highlights divergent approaches to secularism among Ethiopian media outlets. According to Moges and Skjerdal (2024), private media exhibited a relatively higher adherence to secular principles compared to state media, demonstrating a stronger commitment to balanced and independent reporting. However, self-censorship and perceived risks related to public and government backlash hindered comprehensive coverage across all media outlets, regardless of their ownership structure. Government restrictions and editorial biases continued to shape how religious conflicts were reported, underscoring the influence of political dynamics on media practices.

Framing Techniques: The study reveals that the state media employed a variety of framing techniques, including polarization, neutrality, and sensationalism, which significantly influenced public perceptions of religious tensions within the EOTC. Sensationalist coverage, in particular, often amplified tensions rather than contributing to conflict resolution, pointing to the need for more responsible media practices that prioritize balanced and neutral framing to inform the public accurately.

Agenda Setting and Gatekeeping: The mechanisms of agenda setting and gatekeeping at EBC were influenced by media power dynamics, commercial imperatives, and political interests. Editorial independence was often compromised by these external pressures, affecting the topics that received attention and the manner in which they were presented. To foster a more comprehensive and unbiased media landscape, there is a pressing need for greater editorial independence, particularly in state-owned media.

Biases and Operational Challenges: The study also highlights the presence of political bias, ethical dilemmas, and operational challenges within the Ethiopian media landscape. These biases stemmed from government influence, as well as the ethical challenges of balancing journalistic integrity with external pressures. Operational challenges, such as internet shutdowns and censorship, further impeded journalists' ability to report freely and effectively. Addressing these challenges is crucial to improving the quality and reliability of media coverage in Ethiopia.

Implications for Media Reform: The findings emphasize the importance of media reform to address the identified biases and challenges in media coverage of religious conflicts. Reform efforts should focus on enhancing editorial autonomy, improving the training of journalists on issues of secularism and religious sensitivity, and reducing government interference. Such reforms would contribute to a media environment that promotes public understanding, social cohesion, and conflict resolution.

Trust and Transparency: Building trust between media organizations, religious communities, and the broader public is vital for effective media representation. This requires not only transparency in media practices but also a commitment to covering religious issues comprehensively and responsibly. Media outlets should strive to balance the portrayal of religious issues, ensuring that coverage is not only driven by notable events but also provides context and depth that reflects the significance of religion in Ethiopian society.

Public Discourse and Social Cohesion: The complex relationship between state media representation, religious tensions, governmental pressure, and public discourse necessitates a rethinking of current practices. Addressing the identified biases and challenges will be crucial for improving media coverage and ensuring that it contributes positively to societal understanding and conflict resolution. The nuanced landscape of media representation highlights the need for balanced and comprehensive reporting to enhance public understanding and promote social cohesion in Ethiopia.

This study offers valuable insights into the intricate relationship between media representation, religious tensions, governmental pressure, and public discourse. The recommendations provided for reform within the EOTC context are aimed at improving the quality of media coverage, promoting ethical journalism, and ensuring that the media can play a constructive role in fostering an informed and cohesive society.

CHAPTER V

5. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

5.1. Conclusion

This study has provided an in-depth examination of the news coverage by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) during the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) crisis of 2023. The findings reveal a multifaceted and complex landscape of media coverage characterized by variations in frequency, depth, and prominence. While there was an overall increase in the number of articles covering the EOTC crisis, the quality and analytical depth of coverage were inconsistent, highlighting significant challenges in journalistic practices.

Key issues identified in the study include moderate adherence to secularism, significant instances of silence and access denial driven by governmental and editorial pressures, and varied framing techniques that influenced public perception of the crisis. The analysis also identified the impact of agenda-setting and gatekeeping, driven by media power dynamics, commercial imperatives, and political interests, which shaped the nature and extent of the coverage.

Furthermore, the study highlighted the prevalence of political bias, ethical dilemmas, and operational challenges that further complicated the media landscape, affecting editorial autonomy and journalistic integrity. These factors significantly impacted how the EOTC crisis was portrayed, limiting the ability of the media to provide comprehensive and unbiased coverage. Overall, the study underscores the critical importance of promoting responsible media practices, enhancing media accountability and transparency, and ensuring that the media plays a constructive role in fostering public trust and promoting social cohesion.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to improve the quality and impact of media coverage of religious conflicts, particularly within the context of the EOTC crisis:

❖ **Enhance Media Accountability and Transparency:**

- Media organizations, including EBC, should adopt and enforce stringent editorial standards to ensure unbiased and accurate reporting. Regular audits and public accountability reports can help build trust with the audience.

❖ **Promote Ethical Journalism:**

- Journalists should receive ongoing training on ethical reporting, particularly in the context of religious and cultural sensitivities. This training should emphasize the importance of impartiality and the risks of sensationalism.

❖ **Improve Access to Information:**

- Efforts should be made to reduce governmental and editorial restrictions on information access. Legal frameworks protecting journalists' rights to access information and report freely should be strengthened and enforced.

❖ **Foster Media Diversity and Pluralism:**

- Encouraging a diverse range of media voices can provide a more balanced and comprehensive view of religious conflicts. Support for independent media and community journalism can help achieve this goal.

❖ **Strengthen Secularism in Reporting:**

- Media outlets should reinforce their commitment to secularism by clearly separating religious views from news reporting. Editorial policies should be reviewed and updated to reflect this commitment.

❖ **Address Operational Challenges:**

- Media organizations should address operational challenges by improving resource allocation, providing adequate training, and ensuring a safe working environment for journalists.

5.3. Implications for Future Study

Exploring future directions in the study of state media's handling of religious conflicts within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOTC) presents an array of promising avenues for research. By examining trends and patterns, researchers can identify evolving dynamics and assess the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving media practices. This study opens several avenues for future research:

❖ Longitudinal Studies:

- Future research could conduct longitudinal studies to examine changes in media coverage trends over a more extended period. This would provide deeper insights into the evolution of media practices and their impact on public perception.

❖ Comparative Analysis:

- Comparative studies between state-owned and private media outlets can offer a broader perspective on how different media entities handle religious conflicts and the factors influencing their coverage.

❖ Impact Assessment:

- Research assessing the impact of media coverage on public opinion and behavior during religious conflicts can help understand the real-world implications of journalistic practices.

❖ Technological Influence:

- Investigating the role of digital and social media in shaping the narrative of religious conflicts could provide valuable insights into modern media dynamics and their influence on traditional media outlets.

❖ Policy and Legal Frameworks:

- Future studies could explore the effectiveness of existing policy and legal frameworks in protecting journalistic freedom and promoting ethical reporting, offering recommendations for legal reforms.

REFERENCE

- Abbink, G. J. (2014). Religious freedom and the political order: the Ethiopian 'secular state' and the containment of Muslim identity politics. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8(3), 346-365. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2014.917855>
- Abbink, J. (2014). Religion and Politics in Africa: The Future of "The Secular". *Africa Spectrum*, 49(3), 83-106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000203971404900304>
- Abrha, M. (2019). Mapping Online Hate Speech among Ethiopians: The Case of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Graduate School of Journalism and Communication. Retrieved from <http://etd.aau.edu.et/bitstream/handle/123456789/18880/Mulugeta%20Abrha.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Addisu, G. (2022). The disparity of Ethiopia's hate speech and disinformation prevention and suppression proclamation in light of international human rights standards. *Hawassa University Journal of Law*, 6.
- Agger, G. (2005). *Dansk tv-drama (Danish Television Drama)*. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.
- Al Jazeera. (2023, February 10). Social media restricted in Ethiopia as church rift turns violent. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/10/social-media-restricted-in-ethiopia-after-church-rift-turns-violent>
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Baran, S. J. & Davis, D. K (2012). *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, Ferment, and Future*. Cengage Learning.
- Berelson, B. (1952). *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. Chicago: Glencoe.
- Berger, P., Sacks, J., Martin, D., Weiming, T., Weigel, G., Davie, G., and An-Naim, A. (eds) (1999). *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Washington DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center.

- BerhaneZikarge (2009) The scope of religious freedom and its limits under the FDRE constitution: A survey of contemporary problems and challenges. MA thesis, Addis Ababa University.
- Berhanu, G. (2013). Ethiopian print media representation of Islam Vs Christianity: The case of six selected Magazines and Newspapers (unpublished Master's thesis, Addis Ababa University).
- Center for International Media Assistance. (2022, October 5). Media Reform during Ethiopia's Political Transition. CIMA Digital Report. Retrieved from <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/media-reform-during-ethiopias-political-transition/>
- Chomsky, N. (1997, October). What makes mainstream media mainstream. Z Magazine.
- Clark, L.S. (2005). From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, the Media, and the Supernatural. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davies, M. M., and Mosdell, N. (2006). Practical research methods for media and cultural studies: making people count. University of Georgia Press.
- Dawson, C. (2007). A practical guide to research methods: A users friendly manual for mastering research techniques and projects, 3rd ed. How to Books.
- Day, A. (2016, August 22). The conflict between religion and media has deep roots. Religion in Public. London School of Economics and Political Science. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2016/08/the-conflict-between-religion-and-media-has-deep-roots/>
- Dayan, D., and Katz, E. (1992). Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Demerath III, N.J. (2003). Secularization Extended: From Religious "Myth" to Cultural Commonplace, in R.K. Fenn (ed.), Sociology of Religion. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Denscombe, M. (2007). The good research guide. Berkshire. England: McGraw-Hill Education.

- Desplat, P. and Ostebo, T. (Eds.). (2013). Muslim Ethiopia: The Christian legacy, identity politics, and Islamic reformism Springer.
- Eisenstein, E.L. (1979). The Printing Press as an Agent of Social Change. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency. (2007). Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census Results. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- Ethiopian Government Media Policy 2020, available at: <https://www.ema.gov.et/web/guest/%E1%8B%A8%E1%88%98%E1%8C%88%E1%8A%93%E1%8A%9B%E1%89%A5%E1%8B%99%E1%88%83%E1%8A%95-%E1%8D%96%E1%88%8A%E1%88%B2>
- Ethiopian Media Authority.(2020). Ethiopian Media Policy.The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Retrieved from <https://www.ema.gov.et/web/guest/%E1%8B%A8%E1%88%98%E1%8C%88%E1%8A%93%E1%8A%9B%E1%89%A5%E1%8B%99%E1%88%83%E1%8A%95-%E1%8D%96%E1%88%8A%E1%88%B2>
- Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church | History, Beliefs & Practices. (2023, February 6). Retrieved from <https://study.com/academy/lesson/ethiopian-orthodox-tewahedo-church-origin-history-beliefs.html>.
- Evason, N. (2018). Ethiopian Culture: Religion. Cultural Atlas. Retrieved from <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/ethiopian-culture/ethiopian-culture-religion>
- Fadillah, Lin, & Hao, (2019). Social media and general elections in Malaysia 2018 and Indonesia 2019. Jurnal Komunikasi ISKI, 4(01), 1-8.
- Fente, H. S. (2022). Media Reform amid Political Upheaval: Media Reform during Ethiopia's Political Transition. October 2022. Retrieved from https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/CIMA_Political-Openings-Ethiopia-Brief_web-150ppi.pdf

- Folarin, B. (1998). Theories of mass communication: an introductory text. Ibadan: Sterling Horden Publishers.
- Friedman, G. S. (1989). Religion and the Marxist state in Ethiopia: The case of the Ethiopian Jews. *Religion in Communist Lands*, 17(3), 247-256.
- GatesAir. (2016, March 08). GatesAir Wins National Digital TV Transition Project in Ethiopia. [Press release].Media Center.<https://www.gatesair.com/media-center/news/gatesair-wins-national-digital-tv-transition-project-in-ethiopia>
- Gunter, B. (2000). *Media Research Methods: measuring audience, reactions and impact*. SAGE
- Hallin, D. C., and Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* Cambridge University Press.
- Harrower, Michael J (Winter 2019). Beta Samati: discovery and excavation of an Aksumite town. *Antiquity*, 93(372), 1534–1552. <https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2019.84>
- Hjarvard, S. (2016). *The mediatization of risk and safety*. Routledge.
- Hjarvard, S. (2016). Mediatization and the changing authority of religion. *Media, Culture & Society*, 38(1), 8-17.
- Hoover, S. M. and Lundby, K.(eds.). (1997). *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*. London: Sage.
- Hoover, S., & Lundby, K. (1997). *The business of religion: The ironies of market and ministry*. Transaction Publishers.
- Institute for Advancement of Journalism. (2019, July 30 - August 1). Conflict Sensitive Reporting and Ethics: Learner Module. Retrieved from <https://www.usagm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/CONFLICT-SENSITIVE-REPORTING-AND-ETHICS-LEARNER-MODULE-Ethiopia.doc>
- Jenkins, H. (1992). “Strangers No More, We Sing”: Filking and the Social Construction of the Science Fiction Fan Community, in L. Lewis (ed.), *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. London: Routledge.

- Kalathil, S. (2020, November). New Challenges for Media Freedom and Democracy. National Endowment for Democracy. Global Conference for Media Freedom. Retrieved from https://www.international.gc.ca/worldmonde/assets/pdfs/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/policy-orientation-democracy-democratie-en.pdf
- Karbo, Tony (2013) Religion and social cohesion in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies* 4(3): 43–52.
- Khalif, H. B. (2023). The Role of the Media in Conflict Resolution and Management in Somalia. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, 12(8), 23722-160333. DOI: 10.21275/SR23722160333. Retrieved from <http://www.ijsr.net>
- Maeroff, G. (Ed.). (1998). *Imagining education: The media and schools in America*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Marc Tracy, (April 10, 2020.)“News Media Outlets Have Been Ravaged by the Pandemic,” *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/10/business/media/news-media-coronavirus-jobs.html>
- McQuail, D. (2009). *Mass communication theory*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Mekasha, M., & Wudneh, T. (2018). *Communication Landscape in Ethiopia: Assessment of Legislative and Operational Environment*. National Consultants. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-03/05-UNDP-Comm%20Media%20Landscape%20Assesment-Draft4.pdf>
- Mengesha, S. (2022, December 24). *Walta board sacks CEO*. *The Reporter Ethiopia*. Retrieved from <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/28908/>
- MoFA (2011). In its training manual, prepared to brief local journalists about the then situation of religious tensions
- Moges, M., & Skjerdal, T. (2024). *Media and religion in Ethiopia: A research report*. Addis Ababa.
- Nicholas, B. (2019, March 28). *Confronting the crisis in independent media: A role for international assistance*. Center for International Media Assistance. Retrieved

from <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/confronting-the-crisis-in-independent-media/>

Norris, P., and Inglehart, R. (2004). *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ostebo, T. (2023). Ethiopia: Religious tension is getting worse – 5 factors driving groups apart. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/ethiopia-religious-tension-is-getting-worse-5-factors-driving-groups-apart-214278#:~:text=The%20country's%20main%20religious%20communities,while%20approximately%2033%25%20are%20Muslims.>

Picard, G. Robert and Victor Pickard (2017). *Essential Principles for Contemporary Media and Communication Policymaking*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/Essential%20Principles%20for%20Contemporary%20Media%20and%20Communications%20Policymaking.pdf>

Population Census Commission (Ethiopia). (2008). *Census 2007: Analytical report*. Central Statistical Agency.

Population Census Commission.(2008). *Summary and Statistical report of the 2007 population and housing census*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Puddephatt, A. (2006). *Voices of War: Conflict and the Role of the Media*. International Media Support. Edited and published by International Media Support. <https://www.mediasupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/ims-voices-of-war-2006.pdf>

Putnam, R., & Campbell, D. (2010). *American grace: How religion divides and unites us*. New York City, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF). (2023). Ethiopia. Retrieved from <https://rsf.org/en/country/ethiopia>

- Reporters Without Borders. (2021, July 12). RSF Decries Wave of Arrests in Ethiopia. <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-decries-wave-arrests-ethiopia>
- Reporters Without Borders. (2022, June 3). Eighteen Journalists Arrested in Ethiopia, Two Facing Possible Death Sentence. <https://rsf.org/en/eighteen-journalists-arrested-ethiopia-two-facing-possible-death-sentence>
- Repucci, S. (2019). Media Freedom: A Downward Spiral. Freedom House. Retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-and-media/2019/media-freedom-downward-spiral>
- Sarah R. (2019). Media Freedom: A Downward Spiral. Freedom and the Media 2019. Senior Director for Research and Analysis. Retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-and-media/2019/media-freedom-downward-spiral>
- Severin, W., & Tankard, J. (1997). Communication theories. New York: Hastings House.
- Sileshie, K. (2018). Mediatization of religion in the Ethiopian mainstream media (Master's thesis). NLA University College, Kristiansand, Norway.
- Siyoum, T. (2019). History of Radio Ethiopia from 1974 to 2000 (Master's thesis). Addis Ababa University.
- Skjerdal, T., & Alemayehu, M. (2021). The Ethnification of the Ethiopian Media. Addis Ababa: Fojo Media Institute and International Media Support.
- Spitzer, R.J. (Ed.). (1993). Media and public policy. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Steen-Johnsen, T. (2014). Oil on troubled waters—Religious peacebuilding in Ethiopia. PhD dissertation, University of Agder, Faculty of Humanities and Education.
- Terje Skjerdal and Mulatu Alemayehu, (February 2021) “The Ethnification of the Ethiopian Media,” (Addis Ababa: Fojo Media Institute and International Media Support.).
- Tewodros Negash, in an interview with the author, March 2021
- Tichenor, P. J. & Donohue, G. A. & Olien, C. N. (1980). Community conflict and the press. London: SAGE Publications.

- UN Charter. (1945). Charter of the United Nations. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/>
- White, S. (2013). Liberia: Media's role in peace building after civil war. *Global Press Journal*.
- Wikipedia contributors. (2023, November 13). Mainstream media. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mainstream_media
- Wilson, J., & Wilson, S. (2001). *Mass media, mass culture: An introduction* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Wimmer, R., & Dominick, J. (1991). *Mass media research: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- World Bank, (2002). "The Right to Tell: The Role of Mass Media in Economic Development," WBI Development Studies, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/15212>.
- Yohannes, E. (2021). Defining 'hate speech' under the hate speech suppression proclamation in Ethiopia: A Sisyphean exercise? In S. Alemahu & A. Ibrahim (Eds.), *Righting human rights through legal reform: Ethiopia's contemporary experience* (Ethiopian Human Rights Law Series 12). Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.

ANNEX



SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Interview Questions

BY:

Nebiyou Yirgalem Woldekidan

Dear Respondent,

The following questionnaire is designed to gather insights on state media (EBC) news coverage on religious crisis, specifically focusing on the Ethiopian Orthodox Church crisis 2023. Your responses will greatly contribute to the research study. Please take your time to answer the questions provided. Your responses will remain strictly confidential.

Thank you, Nebiyou Yirgalem

Participant Information:

- Position/Occupation:
- Affiliation/Organization:
- Contact Information (optional):

I. Interview Details:

- Date:
- Time:
- Location:

II. Introduction:

Thank you for participating in this interview. The purpose of our discussion today is to delve into state media (EBC) news coverage of religious crisis, with a specific focus on the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Your insights are invaluable to our research study.

III. Interview Questions:

1. Media Coverage of Religious Crisis:

- a. Can you share your observations or experiences regarding how mainstream media outlets cover religious crisis involving the Ethiopian Orthodox Church?
- b. What are some recurring themes or narratives you have noticed in media coverage of this crisis?
- c. How do you perceive the overall quality and accuracy of media reporting on religious crisis?

2. Factors Influencing Media Coverage:

- a. In your opinion, what factors influence state media organizations to remain silent on religious crisis, particularly those involving the Ethiopian Orthodox Church?
- b. Are there any political or economic pressures that affect media coverage of religious issues?
- c. How do you think public opinion and audience preferences influence media portrayal of religious crisis?

3. Secularism in Journalism:

- a. To what extent do you believe Ethiopian state media (EBC) journalists implement secularism in their journalistic work when reporting on religious matters?
- b. Have you observed instances where journalists express personal biases or beliefs in their reporting on religious crisis?

4. Access to Information:

- a. From your perspective, do state media adequately address the denial of access to information regarding the Ethiopian Orthodox Church?
- b. How do media outlets handle challenges related to obtaining accurate information about religious crisis?

5. Role of External Factors:

- a. Can you discuss any external factors, such as international perceptions or pressure, that may influence how state media in Ethiopia reports on religious crisis?
- b. In your experience, how do religious affiliations or affiliations with specific interest groups impact media coverage of religious issues?

6. Overall Reflections:

- a. Based on your insights and experiences, what are your overall impressions of state media coverage of religious conflict involving the Ethiopian Orthodox Church?

- b. Are there any recommendations or suggestions you would offer to improve media practices regarding coverage of religious crisis?

Thank you once again for your valuable contributions to this interview. Your perspectives will greatly enhance our understanding of mainstream media dynamics concerning religious conflicts. If you have any additional comments or thoughts you would like to share, please feel free to do so.

Part IV. State media coverage regarding religious crisis

This questionnaire is designed to systematically analyze the content of state media (EBC) coverage regarding religious crisis involving the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, aligning with the objectives outlined in the thesis proposal. Participants are instructed to check the appropriate boxes to indicate their responses.

Please indicate with a tick mark or (x) the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by using the scale of 1-5 where (1) for Strongly Disagree (SD), (2) Disagree (D), (3) Neutral (N), (4) Agree (A) and (5) for Strongly Agree.

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	State media provides adequate access to information regarding the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.					
2.	State media reports on religious crisis involving the Ethiopian Orthodox Church accurately.					
3.	State media covers a wide range of perspectives on religious crisis involving the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.					
4.	State media actively investigates and reports on issues related to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.					
5.	Ethiopian State media journalists maintain neutrality and secularism in their coverage of religious crisis.					
6.	Ethiopian State media journalists refrain from expressing personal biases or beliefs in their reporting on religious crisis.					
7.	Ethiopian State media journalists prioritize factual reporting over religious affiliations in covering crisis.					
8.	Economic factors significantly influence State media silence on religious crisis involving the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.					
9.	Political pressures lead to State media reluctance in reporting on religious conflicts concerning the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.					
10.	Fear of backlash or repercussions from					

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	religious groups affects State media coverage of religious conflicts in Ethiopia.					
11.	Self-censorship among journalists is prevalent due to concerns about offending religious sensibilities.					
12.	Public opinion strongly influences the media's coverage of religious crisis in Ethiopia.					
13.	Audience preferences dictate the type and tone of coverage of religious crisis in State media.					
14.	International perceptions and pressure affect how State media in Ethiopia reports on religious conflicts.					
15.	I have personally observed instances where State media coverage of religious crisis lacked objectivity.					
16.	Over the past five years, I have noticed improvements in the media's coverage of religious matters in Ethiopia.					
17.	Increased transparency and accountability within State media organizations can improve coverage of religious crisis in Ethiopia.					
18.	Training programs for journalists on secularism and religious sensitivity are necessary to enhance media coverage of religious conflicts.					
19.	The future of media dynamics concerning religious matters in Ethiopia depends on greater independence from external influences.					
20.	Implementing regulations to safeguard freedom of press and expression can mitigate media silence on religious crisis in Ethiopia.					



Addis Ababa University
አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

SEEK WISDOM, ELEVATE YOUR INTELLECT AND SERVE HUMANITY!



SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

2023 (የዜና ሽፋንን በመመርመር በኢትዮጵያ ብሮድካስቲንግ ኮርፖሬሽን (ኢ.ቢ.ሲ.) በኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን (ኢ.ኦ.ተ.ቤ.ክ) ቀውስ 2016)

የቃለ መጠይቅ ጥያቄዎች

በ: ነብዩ ይርጋለም ወልደ ኪዳን

ውድ ምላሽ ሰጪ

የሚከተለው መጠይቅ በዋናነት የሚዲያ መረጃን አለማግኘት እና በሃይማኖት ግጭቶች ላይ ዝምታን በተለይም በኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተክርስቲያን ግርግር ላይ በማተኮር ግንዛቤዎችን ለመሰብሰብ ተዘጋጅቷል። የእርስዎ ምላሾች ለምርምር ጥናቱ ትልቅ አስተዋፅዖ ያደርጋሉ። የቀረቡትን ጥያቄዎች ለመመለስ እባክዎ ጊዜዎን ይውሰዱ። የእርስዎ ምላሾች በጥብቅ ሚስጥራዊ ሆነው ይቆያሉ።

እናመሰግናለን

ነብዩ ይርጋለም

I. የተሳታፊ መረጃ:-

- የስራ ቦታ/ስራ:
- ትስስር/ድርጅት:-
- የእውቂያ መረጃ (አማራጭ):-

II. የቃለ መጠይቅ ዝርዝሮች:-

- ቀን:-
- ጊዜ:-
- ቦታ:-

III. መግቢያ:-

በዚህ ቃለ መጠይቅ ስለተሳተፉ እናመሰግናለን። የዛሬው የውይይታችን አላማ በተለይ በኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተክርስቲያን ላይ ያተኮረ መረጃ የማግኘትና የሃይማኖት ሽፋንን በሚመለከት ወደ ተለመደው የመገናኛ ብዙኃን አሠራር ለመቃኘት ነው። የእርስዎ ግንዛቤዎች ለምርምር ጥናታችን ጠቃሚ ነው።

IV. የቃለ መጠይቅ ጥያቄዎች፡-

1. የሃይማኖት ግጭት የሚዲያ ሽፋን፡-

ሀ. የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተክርስቲያንን የሚመለከቱ ሃይማኖታዊ ግጭቶችን ዋና ዋና ሚዲያዎች እንዴት እንደሚዘግቡ አስተያየታችሁን ወይም ልምዳችሁን ብታካፍሉ?

ለ. ስለነዚህ ግጭቶች በሚዲያ ሽፋን ላይ ያስተዋሏቸው አንዳንድ ተደጋጋሚ ጭብጦች ወይም ትረካዎች ምን ናቸው?

ሐ. በሃይማኖታዊ ግጭቶች ዙሪያ የሚዲያ ዘገባዎችን አጠቃላይ ጥራት እና ትክክለኛነት እንዴት ይመለከታል?

2. በመገናኛ ብዙሃን ሽፋን ላይ ተጽእኖ የሚያሳድሩ ነገሮች፡-

ሀ. በእርስዎ አስተያየት፣ ዋና ዋና የሚዲያ ድርጅቶች በሃይማኖታዊ ግጭቶች፣ በተለይም የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተክርስቲያንን በሚመለከቱ ጉዳዮች ላይ ዝም እንዲሉ ተጽዕኖ የሚያሳድሩ ነገሮች ምንድን ናቸው?

ለ. በመገናኛ ብዙሃን ሃይማኖታዊ ጉዳዮችን የሚነኩ ፖለቲካዊ ወይም ኢኮኖሚያዊ ጫናዎች አሉ?

ሐ. የህዝብ አስተያየት እና የአድማጮች ምርጫዎች በመገናኛ ብዙሃን ሃይማኖት ግጭቶች ላይ ምን ተጽዕኖ ያሳድራሉ ብለው ያስባሉ?

3. ሴኩላሪዝም በጋዜጠኝነት፡-

ሀ. የኢትዮጵያ ዋና ዋና የሚዲያ ጋዜጠኞች ሃይማኖታዊ ጉዳዮችን ሲዘገቡ ሴኩላሪዝምን በጋዜጠኝነት ሥራቸው ምን ያህል ተግባራዊ ያደርጋሉ ብለው ያምናሉ?

ለ. ጋዜጠኞች በሃይማኖታዊ ግጭቶች ዙሪያ በሚያቀርቡት ዘገባግላዊ አድሏዊነትን ወይም እምነትን የሚገልጹበትን አጋጣሚዎች ተመልክተዋል?

4. የመረጃ ተደራሽነት፡-

ሀ. በእርስዎ እይታ፣ ዋና ሚዲያዎች የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተክርስቲያንን በሚመለከት መረጃ የማግኘት መከልከልን በበቂ ሁኔታ ይመለከታሉ?

ለ. ሚዲያዎች ስለሃይማኖታዊ ግጭቶች ትክክለኛ መረጃ ከማግኘት ጋር የተያያዙ ችግሮችን እንዴት ይቋቋማሉ?

5. የውጫዊ ሁኔታዎች ሚና:-

ሀ. በኢትዮጵያ ያሉ ዋና ዋና ሚዲያዎች ስለሃይማኖታዊ ግጭቶች እንዴት እንደሚዘግቡ ተጽዕኖ ሊያሳድሩ የሚችሉ እንደ ዓለም አቀፍ ግንዛቤዎች ወይም ጫና ያሉ ማንኛውንም ውጫዊ ሁኔታዎች መወያየት ይችላሉ?

ለ. በተሞክሮዎ፣ ሃይማኖታዊ ግንኙነቶች ወይም ከተወሰኑ የፍላጎት ቡድኖች ጋር ያሉ ግንኙነቶች በሃይማኖታዊ ጉዳዮች ላይ የሚዲያ ሽፋን ላይ ምን ተጽዕኖ ያሳድራሉ?

6. አጠቃላይ ነጸብራቆች:-

ሀ. ከግንዛቤዎ እና ከተሞክሮዎ በመነሳት የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተክርስቲያንን የሚመለከቱ ሃይማኖታዊ ግጭቶችን በሚመለከት በዋና ዋና የመገናኛ ብዙኃን ዘገባዎች ላይ ያሉት አጠቃላይ ግንዛቤ ምን ይመስላል?

ለ. የሃይማኖታዊ ግጭቶች ሽፋንን በተመለከተ የሚዲያ ልማዶችን ለማሻሻል የምትሰጧቸው ምክሮች ወይም ጥቆማዎች አሉ?

ለዚህ ቃለ መጠይቅ ላደረጉት ጠቃሚ አስተዋፅዖ በድጋሚ እናመሰግናለን። የእርስዎ አመለካከቶች ሃይማኖታዊ ግጭቶችን በሚመለከቱ ዋና ዋና የሚዲያ ተለዋዋጭ ሁኔታዎች ላይ ያለንን ግንዛቤ በእጅጉ ያሳድጋል። ለማካፈል የምትፈልጋቸው ተጨማሪ አስተያየቶች ወይም ሀሳቦች ካሉት፣ ነፃነት እንዲሰራ ያድርጉ።