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**Coverage of Domestic Violence by the
Ethiopian Media: The Influence behind
Editors' Decision**

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Table of Contents

Chapter one	3
1. Introduction	3
1.1 Background and problem statement	3
1.2 Purpose of the study	5
1.2.1. Research questions	5
1.2.3. Application of results	6
1.3 Conceptual definitions	6
Chapter two	9
2. Literature Review	9
2.1 Domestic violence: An overview.	9
2.1.1 Domestic Violence in Ethiopia	10
2.1.2 International provisions on violence against women	14
2.1.3. Adverse Impacts of domestic violence on the abused women	16
2.2 Media and domestic violence	18
2.2.1 The role of media in tackling domestic violence	19
2.2.2 Communication for social change	21
2.2.3 Lessons from communication programs	22
2.3 Media coverage of violence against women.....	25
2.3.1 Editors role is setting media content, Gate Keeping Theory.....	25
2.3.2 Media reinforcing patriarchal hegemony	26
2.3.3 Domestic violence not a women’s issue	27
Chapter Three.....	30
3. Research Methodology	30
3.1. Study population and background	30
3.2. Research Design	31
3.3. Sampling	32
3.3. Data collection	35
Chapter Four	37
4. Data presentation and analysis	37
4.1 Domestic violence considered as a women’s issue	37
4.2 Sources of domestic violence related news and reports	38
4.3 Newsworthiness of domestic violence events	40
4.4 Level of awareness on domestic violence	41
Chapter Five	47
5. Discussion	47
5.1 Coverage of domestic violence by the Ethiopian media.....	48
5.2 Socio cultural norms towards domestic violence in the Ethiopian society.....	48
5.3 Attitude of Ethiopian media practitioners towards domestic violence	50
Chapter Six	57
6. Conclusion and recommendations	57
Bibliography	60
Annexes	

Chapter one

Introduction

1.1 Background and problem statement

Home is widely depicted to be a safe haven. 'Home sweet home', some say out of the comfort and safety it provides, but not for all. Recent studies exposed that women are more at risk of experiencing violence in intimate relationships than anywhere else, and home could be the worst unsafe place to be at for millions of women worldwide (WHO, 2005; UNFPA, 2005).

A World Health Organization (WHO) multi country study on women's health and domestic violence in 10 countries, including Ethiopia, on which a total of 24, 000 women were interviewed indicates that for ever-partnered women lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual violence, or both, by an intimate partner, ranges from 15% to 71%, with estimates in most sites ranging from 30% to 60% (WHO 2005). Also The WHO 2002 report states, 40 to 70 per cent of female murder victims are killed by their husbands or boyfriends.

Domestic violence is a widely spread and yet a hidden social problem in Ethiopia. According to the study conducted by the WHO, in Ethiopia nearly half of the women interviewed reported physical violence by their partners and 59% of them reported sexual violence (WHO, 2005).

Ample evidences indicate that domestic violence has a severe impact on the health of the abused women. (WHO, 2005; UNFPA, 2005; Amnesty, 2003) More than half of the women who had ever experienced physical partner violence in Ethiopia had been injured at least once (WHO, 2005). The Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association also noted many women have lost their body parts including their eyes and teeth and some have even lost their lives (personal communication).

In addition to the physical injuries, it has also an adverse impact on the mental health and emotional stability of the abused women. Moreover, children who witness domestic violence are also largely affected by the experience and most grow up to be perpetrators of such violent acts, as it is a learned behavior. Domestic violence also has both economic and social costs to the society.

Despite these facts, most cases of domestic violence go unreported and many women prefer not to raise the issue. This is partly because it is considered as normal feature of life since the culture and traditional norms condone male dominance over female tolerate and justify domestic violence in the society. According to various researches, the root causes for the deeply entrenched domestic violence in the country are the socio cultural norms that take domestic violence as a normal feature of life, a culture that tolerates and justifies domestic violence, lack of public awareness on a person's right for a violence free life and weak criminal justice system against domestic violence.

Thus, in order to tackle these issues and root out domestic violence from within the society, media intervention is crucial. Media should cover domestic violence adequately

and address this hazardous hidden social problem that is affecting the lives of so many women by bringing into light and challenging the socio-cultural norms that stoke domestic violence. Mass media along with other ideological institutions such as schools is capable of challenging or sustaining societal values (Steeves, 1997).

Media is advantageously positioned to be able to reach a wider population. Thus, media has a key role to play in stimulating public debate, exposing the severity and prevalence of violence against women, providing a forum for challenging attitudes and questioning traditional gender roles and by publicizing efforts to end the violence. In addition, media being a watchdog in the society, should pressure for the placement of better policies and legislation, and also monitor whether government and legal implementing bodies follow through with their commitments (M. Perse, 2001).

1.2. Purpose of the study

This study attempted to examine the current coverage of domestic violence by the Ethiopian media. In doing so, this study tried to find out whether domestic violence is a top agenda for media editors in light of its adverse impact on the society, or whether there is media apathy in the coverage of this entrenched social problem. It specifically tried to scrutinize if the culture and other social beliefs that normalize domestic violence are affecting media editors in their coverage of domestic violence. In undertaking this, this study attempted to assess the attitude of Ethiopian media editors towards domestic violence and its influences on how it is reported.

1.2.1. Research questions

To this end, it looked into the following research questions:

- 1. How adequately is domestic violence covered on the Ethiopian media?**
- 2. What is the attitude of Ethiopian media editors towards domestic violence?**
 - 2.1 Are the general lack of public awareness and the culture and social beliefs that normalize domestic violence also affecting media editors?**
 - 2.2 Does media editors' attitude towards domestic violence affect domestic violence coverage?**

1.2.3. Application of results

The study analyzed the strong role Ethiopian media could play in curbing domestic violence which has an adverse impact on the lives of so many Ethiopian women as well as the society in general. The results could help media practitioners to be aware of their responsibility in rooting out this hazardous social problem and become agents for positive change. Moreover, many families who endure chronic domestic violence would benefit from a media that holds ending domestic violence as one of its top agenda, address issues related to it adequately and promote a violence free-living environment.

1.3 Conceptual definitions

In order to establish a clear common ground and contextual framework in this study, some frequently used important concepts are defined as follows:

Domestic violence: Any hurtful or unwanted behavior perpetrated upon an individual by an intimate or prior intimate. For the purpose of this study, the term is limited to the pattern of intentional coercive behavior used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abusive behavior in relationships takes a variety of forms, which include physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and economic (WHO 2005).

Attitude: A complex mental state involving beliefs, feelings, values and dispositions to act in certain ways. A lot of factors including personal, cultural and political can influence attitude. On this paper attitude is assessed in terms of level of awareness, beliefs, values and outlooks that influence action.

Societal Norms: A rule that is socially enforced that are thought to affect a wide variety of human behavior; it is an authoritative rule or standard by which something is judged and on that basis approved or disapproved.

Patriarchy: Refers to processes and structures of male dominance in the society. In such structures, male members of a society tend to predominate in positions of power; with the more powerful the position, the more likely it is that a male will hold that position. Feminist point out that the most powerful global and national institutions are owned and operated by men, and their behaviors are not gender neutral (Steeves 1997).

Hegemony: The dominance of one group over other groups, with or without the threat of force. The dominant party dictates all terms in any agreement to its advantage and cultural perspectives become skewed to favor the dominant group. The dominant class

sets the limits both mental and structural within which subordinate class 'live' and make sense of their subordination in such a way as to sustain the dominance of those ruling over them. Hegemony is not a direct stimulation of thought or action, but is a framing of all competing definitions of reality within the dominant class range, bringing all alternatives within their horizons of thought. It controls the ways that ideas become "naturalized" in a process that informs notions of common sense. (Lull 2003)

Chapter two

Literature Review

2.1 Overview of domestic violence

Women are victims of various kinds of gender-based violence in all societies. From among these, studies indicate that domestic violence is the most common form of violence in women's lives, and yet remained largely hidden. It has been mitigated in most societies as a private family matter, as its occurrence behind closed doors and drawn curtains kept it out of sight, making many women to suffer in silence (WHO, 2005; UNFPA, 2005; Amnesty, 2003).

“At least one out of every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime, according to a study based on 50 surveys from around the world. Usually, the abuser is a member of her own family or someone known to her.” (Amnesty, 2004: 4)

Despite the threat domestic violence poses to millions of women, serious attempts to determine the prevalence of domestic violence have been made only within the last 15 years. Until recently, it has been depicted as a minor social problem by most governments and policy makers. The nature and extent of violence against women in society surfaced as a powerful issue on the international agenda during the 1990s. It was during this time that it was recognized to be a major health and human right issue. Following these

efforts, declarations were put in place in order to give a stronger legal framework for prevention of violence against women (WHO, 2005; Gallagher, 1998).

Moreover, violence against women has long been shadowed by a culture of silence. The WHO multi country study indicates that 20 to 70 percent of the women interviewed in the research were talking about their abuse for the first time. In most places violence is underreported because of shame, stigma and fear of vengeance by the perpetrators (WHO, 2005; UNFPA, 2005).

In 1995 Beijing summit, the lack of adequate information on the prevalence, nature, and causes of domestic violence was identified to be a major obstacle and thus following that studies were undertaken by some UN agencies and research organizations (WHO, 2005).

2.1.1 Domestic violence in Ethiopia

Women in Ethiopia have lower status in the society in many aspects. Most women are financially dependant on men and are less educated with only limited professional job opportunities. The male adult literacy rate for age 15 and above is 49.2 % and the adult female literacy rate, age 15 and above is 33.8 % (UNDP, 2005). Most girls are forced to drop out of school due to pressure from the society and the gap in education widens in higher education institutes. The prevailing gender inequality and the lower status of women have made women to have no decision-making power both in households and in the society. This can both be a cause and a consequence of violence against women in the society (Cherinet and Mulugeta, 2003).

“Ethiopia is a patriarchal society that keeps women at a subordinate position, using religion and culture as an excuse. These excuses have for many years been supported by laws and legislations that uphold patriarchy and women’s subordination. This has brought about and maintained disparities between men and women, in division of labor, share of benefits, in law and state, in how households are organized, and how these are interrelated” (ibid :10).

In all Ethiopian cultures, women are victims of physical, sexual and psychological abuse both in the family and in the community. The violence exerted include beating, rape, FGM, abduction, early marriage and unregulated fertility which are well-established traditions that adversely affect the health and well being of the victims. These acts are major violations of human rights, but not considered so by the societies that take it as a normal feature of life (ibid).

According to the WHO study, combining the data for physical and sexual violence, in Ethiopia, 71% of ever-partnered women experienced one or the other form of violence, or both, over their lifetime. Among them, 35% of all ever-partnered women experienced at least one severe form of physical violence and 67% of the women reported that their children commonly witnessed the violence. These circumstances cause physical damage and mental disturbances for women (WHO, 2005). Also, according to the Ethiopian Women lawyers Association (EWLA), out of an average 30 women coming to their office seeking legal support daily, about 22 of them report physical violence by their partners (EWLA, 2002).

2.1.1.1 Socio cultural norms on domestic violence

Domestic violence is seen as a private family matter in Ethiopia, and disclosing a family matter is seen as a shame. There is also a deeply set belief that “women who are beaten must have done something to deserve it and therefore most women tend to maintain silence about their situation” (EJHD, 2003: 65). Of the interviewed Ethiopian women who had ever experienced physical violence by a partner, 39% of them had never talked to anyone about the physical violence. Among these, 53% said they feared the consequence or they had been threatened and 37% said they considered the violence “normal” or “not serious” (WHO, 2005).

According to another report by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), nine out of ten women interviewed in Ethiopia think their husbands are justified in beating them (UNFPA, 2004). A similar study conducted by Butajira Rural Health Program (BRHP) revealed many of the women suffering physical or sexual partner violence believe that a man would be justified in hitting his wife “if she does not complete her household work on time, if she disobeys her husband, if she refuses to have sex with him, if she asks him about other girlfriends and if he suspects that she is unfaithful. Over half of the women felt that it was a women’s obligation to have sex with her husband even when she did not feel like it”. Similarly, nearly half of the women felt that other family members should not get involved if a husband beats his wife. (EJHD, 2003: 35)

Moreover there is a widely held belief in Ethiopia that beating a wife or a girl friend is a way of expressing love. This belief causes some women to endure the beatings especially at an early stage of their relationship. Moreover, it causes members of the society not to sympathize with them and not to be agitated by the occurrence, which is supposedly a crime if exerted on a stranger.

2.1.1.2 Legal and institutional frameworks on domestic violence in Ethiopia

A new family law incorporating legal provision for domestic violence that clearly put domestic violence as a crime was adopted in May 2005. There was no legal framework prior to that, which had for a long time created a major loophole as cases of domestic violence had been largely mitigated and tolerated by police officers unless a severe body injury occurs. The 1957 Ethiopian civil code that governed for a long time subtly tolerated violence “Article 644 (2) of the Code under the heading ‘Husband to give protection states: He may watch over her relations and guide her in her conduct, provided this is in the interest of the household, without being arbitrary and without vexation and other abuses” (EWLA, 2002).

Even if a new law has been enacted as of May 2005, there are limitations with regards to the implementation especially with regards to the punishments. It is not clearly stated, and instead it is cross refer to other parts of the penal code according to the type of crime that is committed. (EWLA Personal Communication).

Although placing a stronger legal framework for addressing domestic violence is vital, violence against women cannot be alleviated without challenging traditional views towards women. “Most women believe that women should obey their husbands in all aspects of life, and that their husbands have the right to beat them if they do not. Such deeply rooted beliefs cannot be changed simply by decree. Therefore, it is crucial to carry out both national and community level educational campaigns to promote women’s right and challenge the view that violence against women is acceptable” (EJHD, 2003: 65).

In most places where laws against gender based violence exist, the legal enforcement system is not supportive and sometimes it even re-victimizes women by not providing legal protection. Even where laws against gender-based violence do exist, enforcement and legal systems may not be supportive (UNFPA, 2005).

2.1.2 International provisions on violence against women

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, states that everyone should enjoy human rights without discrimination on grounds of sex. The UN Charter affirms that the “equal rights of men and women”, “the dignity and worth of the human person” and the realization of fundamental human rights are among the UN’s core principles and objectives (UN Charter, 1948).

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence was adopted by the Security Council in 1993, to tackle gender-based violence. The Declaration defines the problem as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in,

physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (UN, 1993: Article 1).

The declaration also emphasizes that governments are obliged for eliminating discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise and that governments are required to prevent violations of rights by any actor, punish these acts and provide compensation. (Article 4, sub-article (c)) in the declaration specifies, governments should, “Exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons”

Following that, the 1995 Beijing Platform Action included ‘Violence against Women’ as one of the twelve critical areas of concern to be addressed by governments and other actors. Violence against women, also known as gender-based violence, is now widely recognized as a serious human rights abuse, and identified as a major public health problem that concerns all sectors of society (Gallagher, 1998).

Despite these international efforts and declarations many governments still do not acknowledge and address the problem of violence against women. While the adverse health consequences of violence are also increasingly recognized, the involvement of the health sector in tackling the problem is still very small. Most governments respond to domestic violence inadequately and domestic violence claims are frequently ignored, trivialized, and dismissed by police, by prosecutors and by judges (WHO, 2005).

Ethiopia has ratified the UN charter on Human Rights and more importantly the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women. Moreover the Constitution adopted in 1995, also affirms that women have equal rights with men in every sphere and emphasizes affirmative action to remedy the past inequalities suffered by women. However despite these provisions, practice has shown that disparities still exist in the implementation of gender equity measures (ADB, 2004).

2.1.3 Adverse Impacts of domestic violence

2.1.3.1 Impacts of domestic violence on health

Domestic violence has been identified as a major public health issue with an adverse impact on the health of the abused women (WHO, 2005; UNFPA, 2005) On the WHO country study undertaken in 10 countries, one quarter to one half of all women who had been physically assaulted by their partners said that they had suffered physical injuries as a direct result. The abused women were also twice as likely to have poor health and physical and mental problems (WHO, 2005).

The consequences of gender-based violence are devastating. The abused women often experience life-long emotional distress, mental health problems and poor reproductive health. Abused women are also at higher risk of acquiring HIV/AIDS. The research findings in Ethiopia indicate that more than half of the women who had ever experienced physical partner violence in Ethiopia had been injured at least once. Among the main

injuries were abrasions or bruises 39%; sprains and dislocations 22%; injuries to eyes and ears 10%; fractures 18%; and broken teeth 6%. One third of injured women were hurt badly enough to need health care. Also, women who experienced physical or sexual violence were twice more likely to report that their general health was fair or poor than non-abused women. Women who had ever been pregnant and who experienced violence also had more abortions than non-abused women (WHO, 2005).

The consequences of domestic violence are far beyond immediate physical damage to the victim. The psychological damage erodes a woman's self-esteem holding her back from defending herself and taking action against her abuser. Some of the long-term effects of violence against women are abuse of alcohol and drugs, depression, other mental health disorders and suicide (Amnesty, 2003)

2.1.3.2 Social and Economic costs of domestic violence

Even if little work has been done so far in placing a monetary value on the economic and social costs of domestic violence, the costs of domestic violence to society are large. To mention some, the value of goods and services used in treating or preventing domestic violence, increased health care expenditures, demands on courts, police, and losses in educational achievement and productivity as well as the value of goods and services not produced when abuse leads to increased absenteeism, decreased productivity while on the job, and job loss. "In Chile, domestic violence costs women \$1.56 billion in lost earnings in 1996, more than 2 per cent of the country's GDP. " (UNFPA, 2005: Internet)

Moreover, domestic violence has a severe impact on children. It affects children in various ways including their health; their educational performance; and their use of violent conduct in their own relationships. Even the unborn and newborns can be affected by domestic violence, as abused women are exposed to abortions. (Morrison et al, 1999)

Domestic violence perpetuates violence in the society, both inside and outside the home. Various studies indicate that violence is at least in large part a learned behavior. Thus, boys who grow up witnessing domestic violence against women are more likely to be future abusers, while girls who witness domestic violence are more likely to be future victims. Witnessing domestic violence also teaches children that violence is an appropriate way to resolve disagreements, which is likely to lead to violent conduct outside the home, as well. (Morrison et al, 1999)

2.2 Media and domestic violence

The crucial role media could play in minimizing violence against women was underscored at the 1995 fourth women's conference, Beijing platform for action, right when it was first identified as a major threat to millions of women worldwide. Focus was placed on two major aspects on the links between media and violence against women. The first has been prompting a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media and the second major area of concern is media coverage of actual incidents of violence against women. Thus, from the beginning, bringing on board media to eradicate violence against women was noted. (UN DAW, 2001)

2.2.1 The role of media in tackling domestic violence

Media can play a crucial role by positioning domestic violence as a social problem that calls for the attention of political leaders and the society in general. In particular, the media can be an effective way to inform society at large. Communication programs can help to reverse the attitude that such violence is somehow normal and to be tolerated by family members and society as a whole (PRB, 2000).

The social norms aggravating domestic violence should be challenged by breaking the silence and by placing the problem squarely in the view of society. Media is the best tool to undertake this valuable function, being advantageously positioned to reach a large number of audiences. Media has a key role to play in stimulating public debate, exposing the severity and prevalence of violence against women, providing a forum for exploring strategies in other areas challenging attitudes, questioning traditional gender roles and by publicizing efforts to end the violence (Gallagher, 1998).

This is part of a pivotal function of the media as a watchdog in the society, by highlighting abuses, encouraging better policies and legislation, and ensuring that governments follow through with their commitments and also by pointing out deviant behavior and holding it up to ridicule. (M. Perse, 2001)

The above mentioned roles of the media are best explained by agenda setting theory, which is a media effects theory that points to the ability of the media to tell us what issues

are important. It is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media that plays an influential part in how issues gain public attention.

Media effects study has gone a long way with varying perspectives reflected in different theories over the years. Early media effect theory, the Magic Bullet model, claimed media has a power and uniform effect on everyone exposed to the media message. This line of thought was later challenged by other scholars whose studies showed that media has a limited effect on the audience. Contemporary scholars, however, argued the type of media effects cannot be generalized and the effect vary depending on the message, the medium and other factors that makes it more complicated than described in the early theories. (Sparks, 2000)

Media has a persuasive power on its audience and the effects are illustrated at different levels. The first is change in the attitude, after being exposed to a certain media message over some time, and through time it leads to changes of behavior, which at a higher stage results in the creation of a behavior that persists over time. Communication is influencing what people buy, how they vote, what they wish and strive for, and how they conduct their daily lives. Companies spend millions of dollars to advertise their products indicating the messages are getting through to the audience bringing back profit, it works. Therefore, the same principles that are used in persuading people by advertisers can be applied to persuade people to adopt healthy principles and attitudes using the media (Ibid).

2.2.2 Communication for social change

“Communication invites action, and informs women and men of where to seek guidance, where to find self-help groups, and who to call in an emergency. It can empower men and women alike to aspire to reverse the chronic patterns of violent behavior that many families endure” (Poppe, 1999: 185).

Carefully designed media messages that are designed to promote and bring change in attitudes can make a difference. Women’s Media Watch in South Africa claims that stories about women who escape abusive relationships are often inspirational to women still caught in the cycle of violence (Gallagher, 1998).

To address an issue as complex as domestic violence, a special kind of communication approach that is strategic, sustained and integrated is vital to bring forth social change. For communication to succeed there needs to be a systematic planning and implementation process. It should be based on clearly defined goals and should involve strategic design, market testing, audience input, production, monitoring, impact evaluation and planning for continuity and sustainability (Suarez and Quesada, 1999).

Adopting a new behavior takes time. Changing attitudes and practices is not a simple process with an immediate result. Individuals go through a series of phases before adopting a certain behavior. This process of behavior change can be looked at in five steps. The first step is awareness or critical understanding of the issue - exposure to the message is critical. The second step is the formation of a favorable attitude toward the

new practice. The third step is deciding to adopt a new behavior, and the fourth is the permanent adoption of the new practice - not simply to decide or intend to act, but to act on the decision. The final stage is reaffirmation and consolidation, recognizing and valuing the advantages of the new behavior and promoting its adoption (Poppe 1999).

In the case of domestic violence, a high percentage of women in most places are in the first stage of learning, since they are unaware of legislation that protects them from abuse or aggression by their partners. Another group of women may feel that physical abuse is their partner's right, or that "women deserve the beatings they get." Such attitudes tend to perpetuate abuse and block progress toward changing their attitudes or taking action against abuse (Ibid).

2.2.3 Lessons from communication programs

"For women who've been raped or abused, media coverage of how women have lived through, and survived similar experiences may provide the impetus to leave an abusive relationship, or speak out for the first time about an experience of rape or child abuse. When these stories are accompanied by the contact numbers of local organizations dealing with the issue, it's often the first time women are made aware of such services." (Usdin et al, 2004: internet)

Many communication programs based on effective communication strategies have been successful in creating awareness and bringing forth change. Various evaluations of media programs conducted by Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs

in the last 15 years on reproductive health in Africa, South America, and Central America indicate that communication has a clear impact when sustained over time and when there is an effective communication strategy followed by high quality products (Poppe, 1999).

South Africa's Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication has scored a remarkable success through its media program on domestic violence in collaboration with the national Network on violence against women. Soul City is a non-governmental organization that harnesses mass media to health promotion and social change projects. The strategy it uses is edutainment—entertainment education – a media program that is specifically designed to entertain and educate, in order to increase the audience knowledge, create constructive attitudes, shift social norms and challenge hazardous behavior. (Singhal et al, 2003)

The media program was a TV drama series based on a story of a woman who is a victim of domestic violence. The drama was also broadcasted through radio and summary of the story was written on a weekly newspaper. It was designed to reflect all the ordeals of domestic violence and it tried to show remedies by highlighting the provisions on new law on domestic violence and how a woman should go about seeking legal and medical support. It was aimed to make women identify themselves with the character on the drama and learn their legal rights and the procedures in seeking legal and medical support. It was also designed to target abusive men by making them identify themselves with the male main character that could make them question their personal attitudes and show them the adverse impact domestic violence has on children. (Usdin et al 2004)

The advocacy activities include lobbying to the government and public marches and community meetings. Extensive research was undertaken while designing the content of the Soul City multimedia series on domestic violence. It was done in collaboration with experts and it drew on the inputs of the audience in focus group discussions. This has been the major reason for the success of Soul City's TV series on domestic violence. A year before the launch of the multimedia series, a domestic violence series was launched in parliament but there was delay in the implementation. Thus among the target of the program was to bring forth the speedy implementation of the law (Singhal et al, 2003).

The evaluation of the soul city series shows that it achieved 79 % penetration among its target audience and the data showed that knowledge about the law on domestic violence increased among the audience and more people were aware of the telephone help line. "Those exposed to the media intervention significantly were more likely to say domestic violence is a 'private affair', and that abused women should not "put up" with it. " Moreover the direct lobbying with the Soul City multimedia program led to a speedy implementation of the Domestic Violence Act and raising domestic violence as a top priority among government bodies that expedite the law (ibid: 16).

The theory that is a base for the edutainment strategy is social learning theory, which holds that learning can occur through observing media roles. The media has the potential to "model" norms and specific behavior among members of a target group, such as women living with violence, or aggressors who require negotiating skills to solve conflicts with their partners (Poppe, 1999).

2.3 Media coverage of violence against women

2.3.1 Editors role is setting media content, Gate Keeping Theory

Editors largely determine what goes on the media. As described by the gate keeping theory, in the news selection process, editors select news stories they believe that their audience wants. The gatekeeper decides which information to pass on to the audience, and which not to. Thus, the weight they attach to a certain topic and their attitude towards it is a big factor in setting media content.

On his gate keeping research, David Manning White studied the news selection decision-making process and closely looked at one telegraph editor, Mr. Gates, who picked stories he liked and felt his readers wanted. The study concluded that editor perception of fitness and appropriateness determines news selection and rejection (Okigbo, 1987).

By determining what goes into the media, gatekeepers are able to control the public's knowledge by presenting certain stories and by keeping others out. Moreover the audience attaches weight to a certain topic based on the emphasis media places on it.

Hence, editors and journalists are vested with the power of determining what the audience should think and hold as an important issue. Therefore they have the responsibility to identify social problems affecting the well being of the society and address them efficiently by setting them as a top priority agenda. In order to fully utilize their power to influence the audience, editors should be well aware of pertinent issues and also should seek the collaboration of experts in the field. As discussed in depth in the

previous section, communication, when undertaken effectively, bring forth a constructive change in the society.

Even if there are procedures by which editors and reporters determine newsworthiness, it is has never been easy to define. When there are a lot of issues that call on media coverage, it is very difficult to separate what to cover and what to ignore. News scholars have also noted that the assessment of newsworthiness is a matter of ongoing compromise and negotiation among reporters and editors (Meyers, 1997).

2.3.2 Media reinforcing patriarchal hegemony

Cultural studies scholars argue that mass media content is made to sustain and strengthen the dominant ideology on which emphasis is not given to certain alternative points of views and issues.

This line of thought is drawn from the concept of hegemony that explains how the ruling elite keeps its position by wining the consent of the governed. In the case of gender violence, media may support patriarchal hegemony by reinforcing framing techniques that are supported by news traditions and values (Steeves, 1997).

By the use of language that supports the values, beliefs, and goals of the ruling elite, news contributes to the maintenance of popular consensus. “News draws on traditional notions of appropriate gender roles in the representation of violence against women. Those notions are rooted in patriarchy, which is the systematic institutionalization of

women's inequality within social, political, economic, and cultural structures" (Meyers, 1997: 19).

Coverage of violence against women is rooted in cultural myths and stereotypes about women, men and violence, and it is framed by the news so as to support sustain, and reproduce male supremacy. Ethiopian media are gender biased in their portrayal of women. Women are mostly depicted "doing domestic chore", or "appearing as sex objects" also their given characteristics of being mean and selfish. Such media content can perpetuate more violence and can further victimize the survivors. (Cherinet and Mulugeta, 2003).

Feminism challenges the central assumptions of patriarchy's hegemony, and struggles to rearticulate the meaning of gender in favor of equality at all levels - including in the news. Journalists must take the responsibility for halting the perpetuation of myths and stereotypes that underline patriarchal ideology and the myths of anti-women violence. They must stop excusing men for their violent behavior (Meyers, 1997).

2.3.3 Domestic violence not a woman's issue

Unless men are involved in the effort to root out this deeply entrenched social problem, there would not be much success. Domestic violence should not be seen solely as a women issue rather it is a societal issue and a collaborative effort is needed to eradicate it. The focus should be how to involve the maximum number of citizens, women and

men, in recognizing issues aggravating this social problem. Then it may be possible to address it efficiently.

The involvement of men in gender monitoring and analysis is important. “As long as “gender representation” remains synonymous with “ women’s representation, gender media advocates will find it difficult to make the media alliances that are necessary to bring about lasting changes” (Gallagher, 1998:193). Most central of all is the question of how to persuade the maximum number of media professionals, women and men that fair and diverse gender portrayal is likely to appeal to a wider range of audiences producing a higher output.

Cultural beliefs about male superiority play an important role in power relationships between men and women. Masculinity in many cultures is based on an attitude of superiority over women and when it is challenged, a man opts to commit violence to assert his identity as a man. Learning to avoid violent behavior toward one’s wife thus means redefining masculinity at a basic level (Cervantes Islas, 1999).

Thus, media programs on domestic violence should be designed to reach men through media message that bring forth behavioral change, and more specifically should be targeted towards showing them a non-violent way of expressing anger and the adverse impact violence has on their family. Moreover they should be aware that they are accountable for their actions under the law.

Media reports are influential in shaping the understanding and attitudes towards particular crimes. This can raise public awareness and develop informed understanding of the problem within the society. The media can bring out the experiences of women, inform the public on the existing laws, direct people to find help by telling the procedures and the assistance offered to the abused women by the criminal justice system and health sectors. In addition, media reports can influence the politicians and legislators to give emphasis on the issue, and also the media message can raise the awareness of parents and teachers who are raising the next generation (Usdin et al, 2004).

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1. Study population and background

The study population in this research composes of Ethiopian media editors. The current Ethiopian media falls into two categories: state owned and private owned media. Both the state and private media have their own respective shortcomings that have hindered the development of media in Ethiopia as an independent, critical, theoretically objective enterprise, as experienced in many democratic western nations. Thus, journalism in Ethiopia has not developed to be the “fourth estate” in the society. (Thomson Gale: internet).

The history of Ethiopian media has been virtually identical to that of the political history. With long years of totalitarian regimes, the media had been mostly owned by the state for long, serving as a mouthpiece to those in power. A strong legal framework for the development of private media was put in place in 1991; however, the operation of the private sector has been limited to print media. To date, the government has retained the sole ownership of the nationwide broadcast media. Nevertheless, due to the limited resources and infrastructure constraints, the circulation of the private papers has been largely limited to the capital city. Considering the country’s low total literacy rate of 35.5%, and the relative high cost of newspapers, regular readership may be as low as one percent of the population. “The Addis Ababa public consumes most of the country's newspapers (which, in total, number no more than 500,000 out of a population of 60 million, or less than one in a thousand).” (Ibid: Internet)

On the other hand, Ethiopian radio, the most widely accessed medium in the country, has 100% broadcasting coverage with short wave, and 70% with medium wave; moreover, Ethiopian television has 47% nationwide coverage. (Ministry of Information, 2003:491).

Besides the limitation in the circulation, Ethiopian private media has faced a stiff challenge in the past years that has left it at a very fragile status. The situation has deteriorated since the last Ethiopian election in May 2005, which resulted in the closing down of most of the private newspapers.

3.2. Research Design

This study attempts to assess the attitude of editors towards domestic violence and its influence on the coverage of domestic violence by the Ethiopian media. It tries to examine their level of awareness, beliefs, dispositions and priorities that affect editors' news/media program selection choices. In order to deeply look into it, and considering the sensitiveness of the issue at hand, a qualitative method has been applied in undertaking this research. Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning – how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world. Understanding a particular situation, event, role, group, or interaction is the prior focus in qualitative research. During a qualitative research the researcher attempts to make sense of a social phenomenon through investigative process that involves “contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the object of study”. A Qualitative research helps

one to understand a social phenomenon as well as to look at the phenomenon from the perspective of the researched (Creswell, 1994: 161).

Given the sensitiveness of the topic and the need for a leading and follow up questions, an in-depth interview has been selected as best tool in undertaking this research. Qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values – things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire. “Issues that might be of a sensitive nature, for example, experience of violence, or which interviewees may be reluctant to talk about (or unconscious of) such as racism or other forms of prejudice, can be approached with sensitivity to open up dialogue and produce fuller accounts” (Byrne 2004: 182).

Open-ended and flexible questions provide better access to interviewees' views, interpretations of events, understandings, experiences and opinions. Open-ended questions are more likely to get a considered response than closed questions. Follow up questions could be asked, and the interviewer can present questions in different formats focusing on certain areas. Therefore, this approach tends to be used by those who attempt to find out people's knowledge, values and experiences. Interview produces a particular representation or account of an individual's views and opinions. (ibid)

3.3. Sampling

Two levels of sampling were done in undertaking this research. The first was selecting the media institutions; from the selected media institutions respondents - senior media

editors- were picked. The sampling technique applied in both cases is a non-random, 'judgmental' or 'purposive sampling'.

In purposive sampling the researcher purposively target and select sample units that are best suited for the study. As explained earlier, this study aims to examine the current media coverage of domestic violence and the attitude of Ethiopian editors towards it. By doing so, the paper tries to identify the strong role media could play in tackling the socio cultural norms that have been pointed to be the root cause for the wide spread of domestic violence.

Selecting media institutions

Due to the weak status of the private media and its limitation to print media, as explained above, this study used purposive sampling in selecting the state media to be included in the sample. The state media has three categories: broadcast media (TV and Radio), print media and news agencies. Considering the high illiteracy rate, and the limited circulation of news papers, the sampling was narrowed down to the State broadcast media and the two news agencies that supply news to all state media, to be included in this study.

Due to time and resource constraints to take sample from programs in all languages, only Amharic language programs were reviewed- Amharic being the most commonly used national language in the country.

Ethiopian Television (ETV) is the only TV station in the country. Thus, sample was taken from the Ethiopian TV Amharic program.

With regards to Radio, Ethiopian Radio is the medium that has the highest broadcasting coverage - 100% shortwave and 70% medium wave, followed by Fana Radio with 87% shortwave coverage. (Ministry of Information, 2003:491) Thus, the study used purposive sampling by selecting Ethiopian Radio Amharic program, which is widely accessible in the country. Moreover, there is a weekly 10 minutes Radio program that is run by EWLA called 'Berchi', which is fully dedicated to address issues related to violence against women. This program was also included in the sample. In addition, Amharic desks in the two leading news agencies in the country have been selected.

In picking the sample units, therefore, mediums that have the capacity to reach a wider population were chosen. In this regards, ETV and Ethiopian Radio - both news and program sections- and Walta and Ethiopian news agency (ENA) were included in this study.

In addition to the news coverage on ETV and Ethiopian radio, the study closely examined whether the topic is addressed in other media programs, including entertainment and media programs on societal issues.

Selecting Respondents

In order to get a collective outlook, the study targeted in drawing up the views of chief editors. Thus, chief editors of Amharic media program and news sections were selected from the selected media institutions. Editors are the gatekeepers in news and program selection, their position and attitude towards domestic violence have been given a prior

emphasis. By determining what goes into the media, editors are able to control the public's knowledge by presenting certain stories and by keeping others out. Moreover, the audience attaches weight to a certain topic based on the emphasis media places on it. Therefore, they have the responsibility to identify social problems affecting the well being of the society and address them efficiently by setting them as a top priority agenda (Okigbo, 1987)

From the selected media institutions, a total of seven senior editors were picked. Two editors from ETV- one news editor and one program editor; Three editors from Ethiopian Radio- one news editor, one program editor and an editor of 'Berchi' radio program- a ten minutes weekly radio program fully dedicated to address issues related to violence against women ; two editors from news agencies- Walta and ENA.

Besides, coverage of domestic violence on these media programs for the last six months is examined. With the current structure, domestic violence related issues are mostly addressed on women's program, as a result of a widely held view of considering domestic violence as a women issue. Thus, domestic violence coverage on Women's media program for a period of six month was assessed. The time frame has been limited to six month due to time and resource limitation. In addition, News coverage on domestic violence for the past three months of ENA news agency has been assessed. ENA was selected as it is the leading supplier of news items to the sate media.

Furthermore, a senior legal expert from the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association, the leading organization that works on eliminating violence against women, has been interviewed on this research.

3.3. Data collection

Combinations of different primary and secondary data collection methods were applied with the view to get sufficient information. The methods include related literature review, in-depth interview and assessment of media coverage in a given period of time. Data collection tools like note-taking and audio recording of all the interviews have been carried out and transcribed to record such sensitive issues as the attitude and belief of Ethiopian editors towards domestic violence.

3.3.1. Secondary data

Secondary source materials both on the concepts and practices relevant to the research subject were reviewed. Relevant books from different resource centers and individuals were referred. In addition to the books, electronic materials from the internet and publications from government and non-government organizations were also reviewed to get clearer idea and good background information pertinent to the research topic.

3.3.2. In-depth Interview

Two separate lists of open-ended questions were prepared for news editors and program editors. The questions were designed to measure the interviewees' level of awareness, the depth of their knowledge on the topic, and for examining their attitude. An in-depth interview was conducted with the selected respondents from ETV, Ethiopian Radio, Walta and ENA. The responses were categorized thematically for qualitative analysis. In

addition a legal expert from the Ethiopian Women lawyers Association (EWLA) was interviewed.

Chapter Four

Data presentation and analysis

As explained above, two levels of sampling has been used in undertaking this research. The first is the samplings used to select the media institutions; from the selected media institutions, respondents best suited for the study were then identified.

The interview results are thematically grouped into five major areas. The first is, the common view of holding domestic violence solely as a women's issue; the second point relates to sources widely used when reporting domestic violence; the third point relates to the news worthiness of news on domestic violence - criteria used in selecting domestic violence related news; the fourth point focuses on skeptical attitude of editors towards organization working in women related issues; the last one relates to measuring the level of awareness of editors regarding domestic violence, including their awareness on the magnitude of the problem, the legal provisions and the causes for this hazardous social problem.

There are eight respondents for this study. Two from Ethiopian television programme and news section, two from Ethiopian radio program and news section, one from the Ethiopian radio Berchi program, one from Walta news agency and one from ENA news agency.

4.1 Domestic violence considered as a woman's issue

There is a commonly shared view among the respondents of considering domestic violence solely as women's issue to be addressed on women's program and forums.

As a collective view on the issue at hand was required for this study, chief editors were first contacted in each media selected. Thus the researcher first contacted the chief editors of both news and media programs in ETV. The program chief editor delegated the interview to women's program editor saying issues related to domestic violence is addressed on the women's program. The news chief editor also assigned the journalist who reports women related issues to do the interview. The same was the case with Ethiopian radio chief program editor who forwarded the request to the women's program.

The two respondents from the news agencies also said they put news related to domestic violence under the category of women's news section.

4.1.1 Current coverage of domestic violence

The Ethiopian radio women's program is a weekly 30 minutes program. Out of that airtime 10 minutes is used by Berchi – a radio programme run by the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association, mostly covering issues related to violence against women. Thus, violence against women is not addressed on the remaining 20 minutes of the Ethiopian radio women's program. Moreover, the Ethiopian Television women's program is a

weekly 30 minutes program. Thus, domestic violence coverage is mostly limited to these programs, with insufficient air time – 30 minutes per week.

Although, domestic violence coverage is limited to women's programs, the coverage on these programs is also very minimal. The respondents from the ETV and Ethiopian radio women's programs said there was no coverage on domestic violence in the last six months. The respondents from 'Berchi' also said domestic violence was not addressed on the program in the last six month; the focus was on other forms of violence including rape and FGM. Review of ENA news reports for the period of three months (March to April, 2006) also indicates only three domestic violence related news were reported.

4.2 Sources of domestic violence related news and reports

All the respondents said the most common sources of domestic violence related news are courts and police. In almost all cases the police officers approach them with a report; most of them do not take the initiative to hunt for such stories. Only one of the respondents said to be getting information from organization like EWLA that work on fighting against violence. And the respondent from the 'Berchi' program said when individuals with such cases approach them, they send them to the police to bring evidences.

Regarding Ethiopian radio news coverage, there is high dependency on the news inputs from the news agencies mostly ENA, which accounts for 80% of the news reports. The chief editor said, "We don't directly take the ones we get from the police or the courts.

Because it might come from woreda police or woreda courts and we don't have the capacity to accommodate all that. What we use is by our legal connection. When I say legal connection it is the agreements signed for news exchange. So we get the news from ENA , Walta and Information offices in relation to this.”

Despite the high reliance by media practitioners on police and legal officers as the major sources, these legal implementing bodies are reluctant in handling cases of domestic violence unless a severe injury involving loss of body parts or homicide occurs. Cases of domestic violence are widely mitigated as private family matter. According to EWLA legal officer, this legal implementing bodies are the major barriers and bottle necks in tackling domestic violence. “Usually when a woman reports the case to the police they tell her that this is something that should be handled by family arbitrators or family members. And most police, I could say almost all police, believe that it is not their mandate.” The abused women are also usually mistreated by the legal offices. Even if the new law puts domestic violence as a crime, it takes time to raise awareness and bring behavioral change of legal implementation bodies. Consequently, the abused women do not seek police assistance and do not pursue legal avenues.

4.3 Skeptical attitude of journalists towards other organizations

All the respondents said they have loose relationships with other organizations working on women related issues and experts in the area. Most of them do not take the initiative to contact these organizations. There is a commonly held view among media editors that such organizations want to use the media, exclusively to promote themselves; thus, a cynical attitude towards such organization is noticed.

This situation was explained by the respondent from the ETV women program as follows “The reason NGOs come to us is to say what they want, when there is some occasion. they want to promote. There are many NGOs that work on women's issues in Ethiopia but if you want something...for example recently there was one program on FGM, in Jijiga. It was an event where even the prime minister's wife was present. In order to cover that story we approached many NGOs to assist us, seeking experts that could tell us about the severity of it, how the law treated the case etc. but we only found a few who were willing to assist us after we had pleaded a great deal. They tell you that they are working but maybe we haven't gone deeper in to them or they are not doing what they should. According to my opinion it is not something that you can rely on.”

The respondent from ENA puts it as follows, “What different institutions want is to only speak through the media and if there are any mistakes to be critical of the media. They must learn to use the media appropriately. Every organization especially judiciary bodies should have their PR services open and to use the media exhaustively.”

4.4 Newsworthiness of domestic violence events

All the respondents said domestic violence becomes news worthy when the violators/perpetrators of such acts are legally convicted; four of them said when there is a police report of a crime. In addition, the respondent from Berchi radio program said, cases of homicide and dreadful physical attack causing severe injuries and loss of body parts gets coverage. Two of the respondents from ETV and Ethiopian radio said, cases of horrible attacks should not be reported as it will incite and widen such actions.

The Ethiopian radio Berchi program editor said extremely dreadful cases get coverage, “if it is very horrible for example if it has led to her death, if she becomes handicapped.... you see it is at this stage that it comes out in the first place; beatings exists in many women’s lives all the time. This is for one, normal and plus we might not even get there.”

On the other side the respondents from ETV and Ethiopian radio news section have a position of not reporting horrifying experiences. Their argument is that, news items should aim at benefiting members of society rather than putting evil thoughts in people’s mind.

The respondent from ETV news section puts it as follows, “If it is news that might push others to commit crimes, the news will not be done. After broadcasting news about a husband beating a wife, a child being raped etc. the next day you hear nine child rape cases. I think may be they say “oh so this is possible?” and commit it. So I am happy to work with our current policy which states that it should be broadcasted when such things could benefit and will be educational to the society. Broadcasting the news will not undo the harm done to the woman. So it will be only broadcasted if it is thought that it will benefit other members of the society. We fear that broadcasting similar things over and over will become boring because there are very many cases of them. You can go in search of this sort of news and you will find many around lawyers, fistula hospitals etc. but it will be repetitions and the society instead of taking them seriously will say that all women do is to complain. Especially male viewers don’t believe us. I have an e-mail line open for audiences to respond if they have opinions. One day we presented a story of

men doing women's work and women doing men's work. Most men viewers were very happy about the show and asked us why we didn't show similar programs before, instead of showing women who are always crying”

Furthermore, only severe cases get the attention of police officers and thus, a very small percentage of victims of domestic violence get justice through legal systems get media coverage. This was explained by the respondent from the ETV women's program. “It is very rare that one goes in search of justice because she was beaten by her husband or by her family. It is only if it is very severe that she dares to go to seek justice, and news coverage of these sorts of issues is related to going to the courts. So it is only when it comes to the courts and the reason why the number of cases is limited is because of the customs and traditions of our country. In many cases women just bear what they feel and stay silent. It is only when it is very severe that they go for justice. Therefore, we go only after such severe cases that reach the courts to report.”

4.5 Level of awareness on domestic violence

4.5.1 Awareness on the magnitude of domestic violence

Even if all identified domestic violence as a social problem existing in Ethiopia, most of them were not aware of the magnitude and its adverse impact on the physical and mental health of women, its impact on children and the social and economic cost to the society. Much emphasis and coverage is given to FGM and rape related news rather than domestic violence. Regarding to domestic violence, violence occurring in a private

sphere, focus is given to occurrences of abuse (mostly sexual) against under aged children by other members of the family.

4.5.2 Domestic violence legal provisions

Three of the respondents are not aware of the new domestic violence that was enacted May, 2005. The remaining three are informed about the placement of the law but they don not have an in-depth knowledge about the law.

The respondent from ENA said, “Let alone us how well do you think the lawyers know it exactly? The courts and other legal bodies aside from saying that not knowing this law will not save anyone from being subject to it, have done nothing to promote the law.”

Another respondent from the Ethiopian radio Berchi program said, “In the 1945 penal code, I don’t think it is found on that in detail butabout domestic violence. ...It doesn’t clearly say what is subject to what punishment ... the law needs to be referred. “

Most recall few coverage of the drafting process of the new family law, but it has not got much coverage after it was enacted. In addition, an in-depth coverage with regards to the new law on domestic violence has not been done.

Three of the respondents linked the low emphasis given to domestic violence to the hidden nature of the occurrence and to the culture of silence.

The respondent from Ethiopian radio news section puts it as follows, “Her husband beats her and she doesn’t tell you. Plus how many women stop and ask why? I think it is a problem of being aware of ones rights and the law. If this woman knows this at least she would say this is my right. So I myself have to deal with it, have my rights granted. I think this is the reason. The other I think is culture. Our culture doesn’t permit her to speak of her misfortunes. “

4.5.3 Causes of domestic violence

Regarding the cause of domestic violence, most said the poor economic status of women to be the major cause of the problem. Among other causes mentioned are, lack of education, societal norms, culture and increase in demand.

The respondent from walta puts it as follows, “Domestic violence on women is related to economic status. The majority of women are dependant on their husbands so husbands have a reason to treat their wives as they wish. Therefore, it is for the reason that they are not the owners of the economy. “

The respondent from the Ethiopian radio news section said, “If our economy grows your demand centers on your work. If you go to the countries that we call civilized, their focus is always on economical development. Everyone contributes to that. When you first change yourself you don't have time. He'll be more eager to meet and talk with his wife than being in a rush to beat her.”

The respondent from ETV women's program also said "This is a societal crisis. Poverty is one reason. In addition to societal crisis for example, when poverty becomes aggravated your attitude towards the other members of the society will deteriorate. Respect, love, cooperation etc. are secondary things that you focus on if you are poor. For example it may be nothing to kill for a person that is severely struck with poverty. I think the root cause is poverty and alongside other factors that are results of poverty."

4.5.4 Media coverage of domestic violence and its role in curbing domestic violence

All the respondents have the same opinion regarding the strong role media could play in rooting out this hazardous social problem. However, all noted the media in Ethiopia has not addressed the issue adequately.

The respondent from Ethiopian radio news section stated the role of the media as follows- "Yes, it can change society. Don't you remember the election 2005? The media was the one that played the biggest role. That was what created the awareness. In areas that need awareness, it is possible to do it through the media."

The respondent from walta said, "It can't be said that the coverage is that wide, but as I have told you since the other news get priority it could be included in those with respect to the wideness of the issue, it doesn't have that much coverage."

Chapter Five

Discussion

In this chapter, major findings are discussed in accordance with the objectives of the study. The discussion focuses on the coverage of domestic violence by the Ethiopian media and the influence of the attitude of media editors on the coverage. Ideas that arise from the discussion are hoped to lead to conclusion and recommendations.

Recent studies by the United Nations and other research institutions indicate that domestic violence is an entrenched social problem in Ethiopia. The findings indicate that it is the most common form of violence in women's lives. This has hazardous impacts both on the physical and mental health of the women. In addition domestic violence has social and economic cost to the society. Despite this, domestic violence has been shadowed by a culture of silence and socio cultural norms that normalize domestic violence. (WHO, 2005; UNFPA, 2005; EJHD, 2003)

Effective communication is vital in order to root out this hazardous social problem by breaking the silence and challenging the socio cultural norms that aggravate domestic violence. Media, being advantageous placed to reach a wider population, is one major tool of communication to address this issue. This study was conducted in an attempt to see the coverage of domestic violence by the Ethiopian media, and to examine whether the societal norms that tolerate domestic violence affect editors' choice in the coverage of domestic violence.

Lessons are drawn from successful communication programs in other countries, mainly from the South Africa's Soul City media program on domestic violence. South Africa's Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication partnering with the National Network on violence against women, has scored a remarkable success through its media program on domestic violence.

Research findings indicate that the soul city series achieved 79 % penetration among its target audience. The data indicated that knowledge about the law on domestic violence increased among the audience; people who were exposed to the media messages were generally more informed on the issue. Moreover, the Soul City multimedia program contributed to the speedy implementation of the Domestic Violence Act and raising domestic violence as a top priority among government bodies that expedite the law. (Usdin et al, 2004).

5.1 Coverage of domestic violence by the Ethiopian media

The study results indicate that domestic violence get minimal coverage in the Ethiopian media - both in terms of news coverage and coverage in other media programs. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there was no domestic violence coverage on media programs on ETV and Ethiopian Radio for six months (December 2005 to May 2006). Review of ENA news reports for the period of three months (March to April, 2006) also indicates only three domestic violence related news were report. This is a very insignificant amount comparing to the intensity of the problem in the country.

5.2 Attitude of Ethiopian media editors towards domestic violence

In order to curb this social problem, the societal norms that normalize domestic violence should be challenged. Moreover, members of the society should be aware of their legal rights for a violence free life, and also the penalties if they breach the law. “Communication invites action, and informs women and men of where to seek guidance, where to find self-help groups, and who to call in an emergency. It can empower men and women alike to aspire to reverse the chronic patterns of violent behavior that many families endure” (Poppe, 1999: 185). Moreover, success stories of women who have escaped abusive relationships should be highlighted, in order to encourage those who are trapped by it.

In undertaking this study, the researcher tried to see the weight editors attach to domestic violence, their level of awareness in all aspects, their attitudes towards it, and how they see their role in tackling it. In order to examine these, an in-depth interview questions that cover these points were prepared. Their responses are categorized thematically for qualitative analysis

The study targeted Ethiopian media editors working for media institutions that have access to the wider population. To that end, the broadcasting media was given more focus – radio being the most accessed medium followed by television. In addition the two being media agencies that supply news to all state owned media including ETV, Ethiopian radio and government newspapers have been covered in this study.

A total of seven senior editors and editors were interviewed in this study. The findings of the interview are analyzed below.

The first point is that domestic violence is widely viewed by editors as a women's issue, to be solely addressed in women programs and forums. This has made the senior editors to push it aside and place it in a silo, rather than addressing it as a social problem that calls for the collaboration of all members of the society. Nevertheless, as explained in detail in the literature review section, unless men are involved in the effort to root out this deeply entrenched social problem, there would not be much success. "As long as "gender representation" remains synonymous with " women's representation, gender media advocates will find it difficult to make the media alliances that are necessary to bring about lasting changes" (Gallagher, 1998: 193).

One way of mainstreaming domestic violence in different programs is through edutainment. Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication used edutainment strategies to address domestic violence. The program combines education with entertainment, educating the society on a certain issue, by presenting it in entertainment packages such as dramas. This strategy is best explained by social learning theory that states learning can occur through observing media roles. Such programs have scored great successes by being able to channel media messages to all parts of the society. The Soul City media program was a drama series based on a story of a woman who is a victim of domestic violence. It is designed to reflect all the ordeals of such a life and it tried to make women abused to identify themselves with the abused character on the drama, and men with such behaviors to identify themselves with the perpetrator of

domestic violence- designed to make them question their behavior by showing the adverse impact on their family including on their children. It also shows how/where to seek legal and medical support, emphasizing the provisions on the new domestic violence law. (Usdin et al, 2004).

The second important point is that domestic violence is not given much emphasis. Most of the respondents are not aware of the severity of the threat domestic violence poses to many women, in terms of health, economic and societal costs. There is a tendency to attach more weight to rape, female genital mutilations and other violence exerted at women in the society. In addition, even if most of them mentioned the societal norms aggravate domestic violence; most of them put much weight on poverty and financial dependence of women to be the major cause of domestic violence.

This is despite the high domestic violence rate reported by UN agencies and other research institutions. In a recent study undertaken by WHO, nearly half of the women interviewed in Ethiopia reported domestic violence. The study also exposed the adverse impact of domestic violence on the mental and physical health of women abused. It also has a huge societal and economic cost to the society. (WHO, 2005) However, due to a noticeable lack of awareness of the threat domestic violence poses to the society and the little weight editors attach to the issue, domestic violence has not got enough coverage so far.

The weight editors attach to a certain issue and their attitude towards it affects media content. Media editors largely determine what goes on the media. This is best explained

by gate keeping theory - in the news selection process, editors select news stories they believe that their audience wants. By deciding what goes into the media, gatekeepers are able to control the public's knowledge by presenting certain stories and by discarding others. Moreover the audience attaches weight to a certain topic based on the emphasis media places on it. Editor's perception of fitness and appropriateness determines news selection and rejection (Okigbo, 1987).

Furthermore, findings on this research indicate that domestic violence becomes newsworthy when either a homicide is committed, or when a woman loses parts of her body because of a physical attack. This is partly due to the fact that the major sources of domestic violence related news are police officers and courts. As explained in the previous chapters, police officers mitigate domestic violence cases unless a severe injury occurs.

Even though there are criteria in determining newsworthiness, it has never been easy to define. News scholars have also noted that the assessment of newsworthiness is a matter of ongoing compromise and negotiation among reporters and editors (Meyers, 1997).

There is also a loose relationship between editors and other organizations that work on women related issues. Editors do not seem to collaborate with experts in the field in designing programs and in reporting news stories. There are organizations that work towards curbing violence against women in the country; the leading organization is the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA). Most editors seem cynical about such organizations, and there is a common belief among editors that such organizations want

to use the media to promote themselves. Nevertheless, collaborating with experts in designing effective media programs is fundamental.

Effective communication strategies should draw views from experts and also from the audience. When communication programs link together theory, experts view and audience input - quality messages and content will be constructed. Consequently, it can initiate change, speed up changes that are under way and reinforce changes that have already taken place (Poppe, 1999).

One major factor attributed to the success of Soul City media program on domestic violence is its partnership with the National Network on Violence against Women in designing the program. Extensive research was undertaken while designing the content of the Soul City multimedia series on domestic violence. It was done in collaboration with experts and it drew on the inputs of the audience in focus group discussions (Usdin et al, 2004).

Moreover, almost all the respondents are not aware of the new domestic violence law that was enacted as part of the family law in May 2005. Prior to that, domestic violence had not been clearly placed by the law as a crime; rather, such cases were treated under other crimes like body injuries in the penal code. The placement of the law was a great step that gave a legal framework to the fight against domestic violence. Nevertheless, there is a notable lack of awareness of the new law among media editors. On this study, it was found that three of the respondents are not aware of the new domestic violence law and the remaining three are informed about the placement of the law but lack in-depth knowledge on the legal provisions.

Although a strong legal framework for addressing domestic violence is essential, such deeply rooted beliefs cannot be changed simply by a decree; in order to root out domestic violence from the society, undertaking awareness campaign is fundamental, to promote women's right and to challenge societal norms that tolerate domestic violence (EJHD, 2003).

Lesson could be drawn from the South Africa's Soul City media series on domestic violence that was part of an advocacy campaign, which scored great results in ensuring effective implementation of new Domestic Violence Act (DVA) enacted in 1998. Though, DVA was put into law there was delay the implementation process. The soul city media program ensured effective implementation of DVA. During the advocacy campaign there was a noted growing sense of urgency within government ranks to move the process forward. Government officials were also getting enquires from the public why the DVA was not implemented. (Usdin et al, 2004).

Besides the above factors that resulted in inadequate coverage of domestic violence, some of the respondents said, media coverage of such issue will exacerbate the occurrence of domestic violence rather than curbing it down. As explained by two of them, it will be "putting evil thoughts in the minds of people", and is not educative to members of the society. However, being advantageously positioned to reach a large number of audiences, media is the best tool to challenge the social norms aggravating domestic violence, by breaking the silence and by placing the problem squarely in the view of society (Gallagher, 1998).

Chapter Six

Conclusion and Recommendations

Effective media communication is crucial to root out the entrenched domestic violence in Ethiopia. Various studies indicate that the socio cultural norms that tolerate domestic violence and lack of awareness of one's right for a violence free life are the root causes of such hazardous social problem. Thus, media has a key role to play by exposing the severity and prevalence of domestic violence, providing a forum for challenging attitudes and questioning traditional gender roles and by publicizing efforts to end the violence. Furthermore, communication invites action and could inform women and men of where to seek guidance and their legal rights. It can empower men and women to reverse the chronic patterns of violent behavior that many families endure.

Nevertheless, a close examination of Ethiopian media editors reveals that the socio cultural norms that normalize domestic violence also influence them in their choice of news and media programs. This is one major factor for the minimal coverage of domestic violence by the Ethiopian media. There is a media prejudice regarding domestic violence with little emphasis given to it. Thus, in this regard, media has failed to play its crucial role of addressing issues that are pertinent to the well being of the society.

Some of the main results emanated from the study are highlighted as follows: -

- Domestic violence gets minimal coverage by Ethiopian media - both in terms of news coverage and coverage in other media programs.

- Domestic violence is considered solely as women's issue to be addressed only on women's program and forums.
- The most common sources of domestic violence related news are courts and police. However, the legal implementation bodies are perceived as largely mitigating cases of domestic violence.
- There seems to be a skeptical attitude of media editors towards organizations that work on women related issues.
- Domestic violence becomes newsworthy either when the violators/ perpetrators of such acts are legally convicted or when a severe attack is exerted on the abused women that led to death or loss of body parts.
- There is clear lack of awareness among the respondents regarding, the magnitude, adverse impacts and causes of domestic violence.
- Even though a new domestic violence law has been enacted in May 2005, there is a significant lack of awareness about the new law among media editors.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations:

For media editors

- Media should play its pertinent role in the society by addressing domestic violence, which is a threat to many families in the society.
- Domestic violence should not be limited to women's program and should be mainstreamed into other societal and entertainment programs.

- Media editors should be aware of the magnitude of the problem and its severe impacts.
- Media should promote the new domestic violence law in order to increase awareness among the society. It also needs to pressure the law enforcing bodies for its effective implementation.
- The loose relationship between media institutions and other organization that work in women related issues should be strengthened. Media editors need to develop a positive attitude towards these organizations in order to utilize utmost collaboration to curb the existing domestic violence.
- Media editors should not solely depend on reports from police officers and courts in covering domestic violence.
- Media should highlight success stories that would encourage more women to voice out their concern, by breaking the culture of silence. Studies indicate stories of women who managed to escape abusive relationship encourage more women in this condition to take actions instead of bearing it in silence.

For organization that work on women related issues

- Organizations that work on women related issues should collaborate with media practitioners in designing effective media messages that aim to reach the wider population.
- Educate media practitioners to raise their awareness on the magnitude and impact of the problem, on the provisions of the new family law and on the major causes of domestic violence.

For policy makers and government bodies

- As Ethiopia is one of the countries that adopted the United Nations' Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the government should follow on its commitment by identifying ways to challenge the societal norms that are identified to be the major causes of domestic violence- one way through effective communication programs.

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Annex

Annex I

Interview with the editors of ETV and Ethiopian Radio

1. What are the pertinent issues you most of the time address on your program?
2. How much emphasis do you give to violence against women? What are the issues you cover?
2. Do you think domestic violence is widespread in Ethiopia? Is it a critical social problem that calls for the attention of the media comparing to other social problems like rape, AIDS and FGM?
2. How do you define domestic violence?
3. When does domestic violence become news? When is it news?
4. Has there been much coverage of domestic violence on TV? Talk shows, special programs, educational dramas. – With in the last year, with in the last six month, within the last month?
11. Was it exhaustively covered? Was it a one-time programme or a series?
12. How often do you make news related to domestic violence? What would be the story angle? Who would normally be interviewed?
13. Has any organization (NGOs and other international and local) that approached you to make a programme on domestic violence?
14. Have you contacted any organization to collaborate in making a programme on domestic violence?
15. What do you think is the major cause of domestic violence?
16. What are the common excuses you have heard and reported for domestic violence?
17. Is there a legal provision against domestic violence? Was there any coverage of the new law passed on domestic violence in may 2005?
18. What do you think is the role of media in curbing domestic violence?
19. Are there any reasons why you think the media might want to cover stories of domestic violence?

(If yes, what do you think those reasons are.... why do you think that?)

20. Are there any reasons why you think the media might not want to cover stories of domestic violence?

(If yes, what do you think those reasons are.... why do you think that?)

Annex II

Interview with News Editors (ETV, Ethiopian Radio, 'Berchi', ENA and Walta)

1. How do you categorize news?

2. What type of news is mostly covered? (Political, economic, social)

3. How do you pick news stories? What is the procedure?

4. In which category does news related to domestic violence falls in? How do you define domestic violence?

5. When does domestic violence become news? When is it news?

6. How often do you make news related to domestic violence? What would be the story angle? Who would normally be interviewed?

7. Where do you get reports on domestic violence most of the time? Police, women organizations

8. Do you think domestic violence is widespread in Ethiopia? Is it a critical social problem that calls for the attention of the media comparing to other social problems like rape, AIDS and FGM?

9. Is there a legal provision against domestic violence? Was there any coverage of the new law passed on domestic violence in may 2005?

10. What impact did the coverage on domestic violence had? Did you have any feedback from the audience?

11. Are there any reasons why you think the media might want to cover stories of domestic violence?

(If yes, what do you think those reasons are.... why do you think that?)

12. Are there any reasons why you think the media might not want to cover stories of domestic violence?

(If yes, what do you think those reasons are.... why do you think that?)

Annex III

Interview with Ethiopian Women Lawyer's Association

How many women come to your office approximately seeking legal advice and support?

How many of them have a case for domestic violence?

How bad is their situation most of the time? (Examples)

What kind of abuse is common? (Physical psychological, sexual assault, economical)

Where do these women usually opt for help? Do they come to your office after they exhaust other alternatives, for instance, family, elders, neighbors, and police?

Do the abused women approach police?

Is it in the mandate of the police station to help the abused women? / Are they obliged to address such issues? Is there any disciplinary action taken if the police fail to comply?

Is there any legislation on domestic violence?

What are the major causes of domestic violence? What aggravates it?

Have you approached journalists and media houses to produce programs on domestic violence?

Has the media approached you for news stories on domestic violence and/or to produce a program on domestic violence?

How closely do you work with the journalists?

Are they interested on issues related to domestic violence?

On which programme is domestic violence mostly covered?