

**Women's representation in news: A critical
perspective on the print news media**

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Chapter one

Introduction

1. Background and Statement of the problem

Despite the major contributions women are making both in the private and public sphere traditionally women have not been considered noteworthy and thus newsworthy. Media coverage and media images of women are inadequate and often misleading suggesting that women are doing and saying nothing of importance.

In the Ethiopian society—a society with a strong patriarchal value—women's experiences, knowledge and achievements in their multiple roles i.e. at home, in their communities and in their working environments are unrecognized and un-rewarded. The Ethiopian media working in this context has been reflecting these values and thus major stories of great social, political and economic importance appear in the news without women's voices and images. In covering these issues the media are neglecting women as though they are not citizens whose lives are impacted by the social, economic and political developments taking place in this country.

Researches carried out on the media in this country show women are significantly under-represented and misrepresented in media content. (Abebech, 2004, Alem Seged, 1999, Mesay, 2003) These researches show the Ethiopian media lack women's voice and images in their content and that there is a clear gap in making considerations in taking women as news subjects. Men dominate as news sources and as news subjects showing a masculine bias in the news and media content.

The way the media cover events reflect our culture. The hierarchy of voices and images that appear in the news represent the hierarchy of social groups and their voices in our society. Those who are at the top of these hierarchies tend to have space in the media while those who are at the low levels of these hierarchies tend to be ignored and thus be invisible in the news.

This research tests the hypothesis that news has no gender diversity: news is male dominated and issues of public concern are dealt with from men's perspective and concerns closely linked to women are not given due attention in news and therefore women are under-represented or almost absent in news content. In addressing and analyzing the issue of women's representation in local news stories this research has drawn upon various media theories, concepts projected by feminist communication scholars and the experiences of local journalists interviews in the process of the research. It is within this framework that I have attempted to analyze gendered patterns of inequality in the news.

2. Objectives

2.1 Specific Objectives

- To give accurate description and analysis of data on women's and men's representation in news stories and use the collected data for interpretations of their current representation in news.
- To find out the gap between men and women's and men's representation in local news stories.
- To look for and/or show available opportunities that facilitate in bringing women's perspectives in the news agenda.
- To find out the definitions our media are constructing in their news coverage and find out how these definitions or practices are affecting women and their representation
- To provide a view that counters the current news discourse and thus challenge the current definitions of news
- To provide a feminist and critical research on the way the media reinforce gender inequalities in news coverage

2.2 General objectives

- To make a contribution in the lack of gender disaggregated data in this country in the area of media and communication

- To establish a point of reference against which changes could be measured in similar future research initiatives.
- To provide a local research that could be employed by media organizations, policy makers and women activists to bring media/communication related issues to the forefront of the debate on gender inequalities.
- To stimulate dialogue on the current inadequacy and inaccuracy of news reporting concerning women and their interests
- To raise awareness on the issue and to sensitize media content producers on gender sensitive news coverage.

3. Significance of the study

The research with its critical feminist approach aims at revealing evidence about “the continuing male-dominatedness—the patriarchy—of contemporary society” and aims to use that evidence to bring about “attitudinal and behavioral changes.” (Watson, 2003:266)

Researchers like Brenda Dervin, argues that such research is “enabling and empowering, that it gives women a voice in a world that generally renders them voiceless”. She says such research is “transformative in that it is concerned with helping the silent speak and is involved in consciousness raising”. (Ibid)

This is my greatest hope that this research would become and achieve. By providing a reliable data on women’s representation in news it would show the extent to which a very important social group (women) is marginalized by the media as a result of certain ways the media gather and package information. It would also contribute a lot in addressing the problem and finding a research based solution to the problem.

It could also contribute in alarming media organizations to look at themselves and their operations from a gender perspective, identify their gaps and seek ways to improve their current attitudes and practices.

Such research has great contribution in promoting gender-balanced media coverage on issues of social, economic, and political importance in the Ethiopian society. It could serve as an input in promoting the inclusion of women's views and voices in these issues. It could show how important is the inclusion of women's voice is in providing comprehensive and diversified information to the public at large and thus facilitate for a richer and broader interpretation of issues/events.

The research could also be used to support existing initiatives among women's groups who advocate for accurate and balanced representation of women in the media. It could also be used by those who are advocating for diversity of voices and fairness in the media content.

This research could also provide a base upon which further study could be carried out in the area of gender and media. It could further encourage other similar research initiatives and highlight the importance of monitoring media content from time to time.

4. The Scope of the research

This research focuses solely on the news. This means it does not look into the content of other genres of media content such as editorials, features, opinion pages, letters and the like. The focus is on local news produced by local journalists and local newspapers.

It covers local news stories published by two newspapers—one private and the other government owned, The Reporter and Addis Zemen respectively. It covers news stories that appeared in these newspapers in a period of three months.

Eight journalists working in different media outlets that fall under private and government ownership are interviewed.

5. Limitations of the research

This research for lack of time and resource analyzes sample news stories taken from only two newspapers—The Reporter and Addis Zemen. Although the newspapers are

representative in the sense that they have wide readership, in a context where we have a number of media outlets taking only these two might not be enough to give the full picture concerning the issue this research is investigating.

This research covers sample news stories published within a period of only three months. It also involved in-depth interviews with limited number of journalists. It should be noted that the dynamism of news events and the context in which the findings are drawn are subject to constant change and that media practices could vary from one year to another depending on the events taking place within that specific year. With this in mind concentrating on news coverage of only specific period of time might not be fully representative of the whole news coverage practices but shows only the practice for only that specific period of time.

Media scholars have recognized that research needs to take in all aspects of media texts, the production of these texts, and audience response to these texts. They recommend that studying the relationship among these “big three” would make a research undertaking holistic. (Watson, 2003:287) Due to time and resource constraint, this research mainly focus on media text i.e. news. It slightly touches upon the production processes but leaves out the issue of audience. And accordingly this could be one of its limitations.

Chapter two

Literature Review

1. The media's role in socialization and defining reality

1.1 Media's role in socialization

A view of the media as potentially powerful agent of socialization and of social change lies at the heart of discussions on gender and the media. Gallagher writes:

“The media are potentially powerful agents of socialization and of social change by presenting models, conferring status, suggesting appropriate behaviors, encouraging stereotypes. This underlies past and current analysis of the women and the media relationship.” (Gallagher, 1983:22)

Through its socialization role the media “teach” us how to understand ourselves, the people around us and the world. The media also enable us to “make sense” of the “reality” in which we live in. For instance they teach us about “femininity”, “masculinity”, what it means to be a “normal” woman or man, they teach us about gender relations, the social roles assigned to men and women, and they give us a framework for understanding gender issues. (O’Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2002:22)

It has been established through experimental evidence that “sex-stereotyped” content leads children to describe women’s roles in “traditional” ways; that content which contradicts sex-stereotyping leads to less traditional descriptions; that when watching television boys and girls pay particular attention to children of their own sex performing sex-typed tasks; that the more television girls and boys watch, the more traditional their attitudes and aspirations become. It would appear from such studies that “girls and boys—and by extension women and men—do prepare to model themselves along lines suggested by media imagery”. (Gallagher, 1983:35)

These “standardized characterizations” through which mass media output can be seen to depict both men and women—representation of men and women—arise from

fundamental beliefs in the wider society concerning behavioral and psychological differences between men and women. Even if the validity of such beliefs is open to question, it might seem unrealistic to expect the media—whose appeal is to a mass audience—to deviate from these accepted norms concerning gender roles and relations. (Ibid.:36)

Apart from the cultural and external factors a number of factors particular to the structure and internal demands of media organizations have suggested to some theorists of sexual inequality that the mass media play a particular conservative role in socialization, reinforcing traditional values and beliefs.

One of these factors according to Gallagher includes the tendency to deal in “known” and accepted images and content. She also comments that the mass media products are, in general, required to make “an immediate and vivid impact” and to be “quickly and easily absorbed” by their audience: “considerable reliance is therefore placed on the use of simplified, recognizable and standardized characterizations in media output”. (Ibid.)

She also mentions the sexual composition of the media work force which she says is predominately male—much so in the decision-making positions—also plays a significant role in reinforcing traditional values and beliefs. For these reasons, it has seemed possible to some media critics to conclude that the media present “a social reality which—if not demonstrably false—feeds on the most conservative forces in society, ignoring new trends until they have become established and thus fulfilling a primarily reinforcing role—rather than a transforming one—in the culture.” (Ibid.)

1.2 Media’s role in defining social reality

In today’s world highly dubbed as the information age, the media are our primary sources of information about the world and therefore they are the primary sources for how we see the world. They give us “representations” through which we understand and interpret the world we live in.

“Representation” is one of the key concepts in media studies and according to O’Shaughnessy and Stadler, it has three meanings: “to look like or resemble, to stand in for something or someone, to represent a second time—to re-present” (O’Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2002:50) and media do all these. Quoting Dyer they say “we know reality through representations: ‘there is no such thing as unmediated access to reality’” (Ibid)

They further elaborate that there is no unbiased, objective representation of the world and that this is because representations come from certain particular positions—be it humans or media. Applying this to news, they say, news does not simply happen but is gathered selected, put together, framed in certain ways that are determined by context in which the media operate. (Ibid:55)

McCullagh (2002), in his book *Media Power: A sociological Introduction*, states:

“Our images and knowledge of social reality are formed and shaped by the images and information that the media deliver to us. If these images and information are selective and partial, then our images and information will be selective and partial. Thus the power of the media is the power to define our sense of the social reality of the society and the world that we live in; they achieve this through control over the information that they present to us.” (McCullagh, 2002:15)

So many events and issues take place around us and so many news stories reach the news desk of media organizations but all are not published and presented to us because of the limited “carrying capacity” of the media. This means that some element of selection is inevitable. The media selects issues to present to us and re-present them to us from some specific angle which media scholars call frame.

In their process of selection and framing the media are also limiting our knowledge of reality. They tell us about some events but not about others; they give us some perspectives on issues while ignoring others. And this kind of selectivity and framing,

according to McCullagh, means that the media can control and shape the knowledge and understanding that we—their audience—develop about the world.

2. Selection and Framing: the heart of media power

The issue of selection and framing is an area that really shows the power of the media and therefore has drawn the attention of media scholars as well as feminist communication theorists.

If we are to subscribe to the agenda setting theory of McCombs and Shaw, the media make some voices and issues more “salient” than others. We think more about those issues the media present to us and regard them as more important than those that are not presented in the media. (Griffin, 2003:390) McCombs takes this further and suggests that the media do more than selecting and presenting important voices and issues, they influence the way we think about these selected voices and issues. The specific process he cites for this is framing.

McCullagh elaborates this saying the media do not only simply provide us with information on certain issues and events but also provide us with “perspectives” on them. These place the events and issues within particular context and encourage audiences to understand them in particular ways. In effect, the media do not simply select events to cover but they also offer “interpretative frameworks” through which the events are to be understood. These frameworks widely referred to as “frames” are the “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual”. (McCullagh, 2002:25)

By routinely organizing “discourse”—“a social process of constructing meaning” (O’Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2002:189)—through systematic patterns of inclusion and exclusion of themes and images i.e. through selection and framing, the media may help an “unquestioned consensus” in society about the very nature of the world.

Here the power of the media in building up an “ideology”—“a set of social values, ideas, beliefs, feelings, representations, and institutions by which people collectively make sense of the world they live in” (Ibid:191)—is well established. There are ways that the media do ideological work. One is through supporting the dominant ideology by “masking and displacing” social issues and problems. (Ibid) Accordingly the media can hide or avoid social problems and/or social groups and render them invisible.

2.1 Patterns of selectivity and framing in the media

There are a number of views concerning the patterns of selectivity and framing in the media. However, I will focus on some of the views and approaches that I find would illustrate the hypothesis I have stated in this research i.e. news has no gender diversity: it is male dominated and issues of public concern are dealt with from men’s perspective and concerns closely linked to women and women’s voices are not given due space in the news.

Critical position affirms that the prevailing direction of selectivity and predominant patterns of framing in the media is one that is compatible with the interest of the dominant class or power group in society. (McCullagh, 2002:40) This means that a “consistent and coherent range of oppositional or critical reading of situations and events” is not available in the mass media. (Ibid.) This deficiency sets limits to diversity of information, ideas and opinions.

Quoting William Gamson, McCullagh (2002) argues that there is variety of interpretative packages or frames available in the culture of a society through which events and issues can be understood (the question is whose packages or frames would dominate). These are promoted by social groups and social movements who compete to get their particular insights on to the media agenda. The stronger group will have its interpretation dominate the media. In this respect he says:

“In effect, there is a contest over whose interpretation will predominate and the media form the arena in which this goes on. This winner of the contest is the sponsor of the package or frame that succeeds in dominating news coverage”.
(McCullagh, 2002:41)

According to Palmer (2000) in the process of selecting and framing the situations or events for news coverage, looking into role of the journalists and the source is very important in the sense that journalists, governed by the profession's rules about “objectivity”, “impartiality” and “balance” seek information from sources and these sources are sources that are qualified as “reliable”. Here the claim is based on the assumption that such sources tend to be drawn from among “the powerful” typically representing “organizations of power centers within society”. (Palmer, 2000:141) And according to Stuart Hall, who is well known for this claim in his Cultural Studies, “unmasking the power imbalance within a cultural context is at the core of finding out who has greater sway in the media” (Griffin, 2003:368) and “the media tend, faithfully and impartially, to reproduce symbolically the existing structure of power in society's institutional order” (Palmer, 2000:141)

2.1.1 Newsroom factors influencing the selection of newsworthy events

Strentz (1989) in his book *News Reporters and News Sources: Accomplices in shaping and misshaping the news* argues how newsworthy events are prejudged and thus ignore new trends until they have become established. He sites three problems that often shape the nature of newsworthiness in an event or situation. One of them is what he calls labeling. Here an event is summarized in a word or phrase why an individual has become newsworthy. He says labeling may turn a complicated social issue in to “a slogan suitable for a headline”. He argues reporters who cover such issues may “prejudge” what they will find on the basis of what has already been reported and emphasized. Thus news stories “sometimes only reinforce stereotypes and offer readers or viewers not new insights or observations”. Similarly news sources may be selected according to “how well they fit the mold for representatives of an issue, concern or event.” (Strentz, 1989:43)

The second problem he identifies is what he calls “the herd instinct” or “pack journalism”. According to him the herd instinct in news reporting refers to “news coverage defined almost exclusively in terms of what news is being covered”. A similarly put concept “pack journalism” refers to “a mob scene in which reporters descend en masse on a person, place, or topic that has been defined as newsworthy, often because it is being covered by other news media” (Ibid.:45)

The third problem Strentz puts is what he calls “tunnel vision”. He pinpoints this aspect in news reporting as representing “journalistic errors” such as “providing little breadth or perspective and narrowing one’s perception of what is newsworthy to what have been newsworthy in the past or to what one was looking for in the first place.” (Ibid.:46) He cites as an example reporters who cover only the objective of legislation and not its potential impact as suffering from a “tunnel vision”. The source of such narrow perspective, he says, may result from contacting the same news sources over and over again. And in this practice those who know what the reporter is looking for shape the coverage of an event.

2.1.1.1 News Sources

In analyzing news stories and figuring out why these news stories end up the way they are examining news sources is very important. The journalist-source relation is a complicated one difficult to frame within one model. Some models—“media centric” ones—focus more on the journalist’s and how they operate in terms of their working in representing issues while other models—“source centric” ones—focus on the development of strategies developed by sources to access and dominate in the news.

In elaborating this point, Campbell (2003) refers to Herbert Gans whom he says set four criteria for sources to succeed or fail in accessing the news. These criteria include: incentive, power, the ability to supply suitable information and geographic and social proximity to the journalists. (Campbell, 2003:79-83)

According to Gans there could be a number of “incentives” for sources and that these incentives could range from having a motive for personal financial gain to building and maintaining reputation (especially in the cases of public figures, celebrities.) As a very general rule, he contends that whatever their motive “eager sources eventually become regular ones, appearing in the news over and over again” (Ibid.:81)

Power is another criterion Gans puts. He contends that hierarchy of news sources broadly reflects the hierarchies in the wider society. Elaborating this Campbell says that the institutional authorities in society gain a more “frequent” and “routine” access to the news than those with lesser power even if they are eager to access the news.

Gans also refers to “the ability to supply suitable information”. Source with skills to provide information (like spokespersons) in the way the media want it gain more access to the news. Sources also gain access to the news through routines of press releases, press conference, and through events which are designed to generate the media’s interest. In this aspect Strentz argues that those with no such media skill and those who fail to provide much information are at a disadvantage position. As an example he provides the case of the “non-conventional sources” or “disenfranchised”. He says: “The disenfranchised themselves almost by definition do not or cannot use the “established” language or the “established channels to facilities news coverage.” (Strentz, 1989:130)

The fourth criteria set by Gans in getting access to the news is “geographic and social proximity”. Geographic proximity is related with being within a near reach where newsworthy events take place. By “social” proximity he refers to the aspect of social status. Those sources who are socially close to journalists get access to news while those who are not socially close to the journalists do not get the access.

4. Diversity: responsibility of journalism

In elaborating what journalism has a responsibility to cover, Kovach provides an interesting analogy:

“Journalism is our modern cartography. It creates a map for citizens to navigate society. [...] As with any map, journalism’s value depends on its completeness and proportionality. [...] A journalism that leaves out so much of the other news in the process is like the map that fails to tell the traveler of all the other roads along the way.” (Kovach, 2001:164)

This analogy helps to understand the issue of diversity in news. If journalism is considered as “a map for citizens to navigate society” then it should include news of all members of our society including women, not just those who are considered affluent or powerful. Narrowing down on diversity and concentrating on certain issues and people would be like “creating a map for only certain neighborhoods and not others”. By doing so the news media is keeping some issues salient while highlighting others. It is also narrowing down the public’s options.

According to Campbell the issue of diversity closely relates to journalism’s social role and the organizational structures that best allow the profession to fulfill this role efficiently. Diversity is viewed as “providing a range of viewpoints, a limiting of concentration of influence within too few hands, and ensuring a range of groups within society get access” to media content and production. (Campbell, 2003:16) Quoting William Hachten he forwards:

“A democratic society, it is argued, requires a diversity of views and news sources available—a market place of ideas—from which the public can choose what it wishes to read and believe about public affairs. For no one or no authority, spiritual or temporal, has a monopoly on truth. Underlying this diversity of views is the faith that citizens will somehow make the right choices about that to believe if enough voices are heard...” (Ibid: 55)

3. Re-conceptualizing existing theories and practices: Feminist approach

Attention to the gender-dynamics in the news media will compliment and sometimes identify factors which cross-cut existing theories about media production process. (Kitzinger 1998:2001) As will be shown in this research the gender-dynamics in the

media do not only operate through structures, but also through a whole range of norms, values and ideologies within the media itself and within the cultural context in which the media operate.

Much of the debate in the area of gender and media is rooted in cultural studies and “patriarchy”—a concept that describes relationships or institutions where men dominate women. (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004:96) In such system women are largely confined to the household/private domain and have limited participation in public life. Although women are not totally excluded from the public domain, when they step into it they face inequality and discrimination. (Ibid:95) It is a system based on a “uniform definition of the role of women as naturally subordinate and complementary to the role of men” (Kerr et al. 2004:66)

Fayemi (2004) in her essay, *Creating a new world with new visions: Africian feminism and trends in the global women’s movement*, contends the African culture is defined and interpreted by patriarchal values. She defines women’s identity within the African cultural context as

“A woman is a second-class citizen, her labor is unremunerated, her body is available and disposable, her rights are subject to validation and violation, her daughters will share her fate. She is socialized into sustaining the very structures that will oppress her throughout her life. There will be some rewards that come with compliance, and also punishment for rebellion. This, in essence, is her identity”. (Kerr et al. 2004:46)

Another African feminist, Saadawi (1997) in her essay, *Creative Women in Changing Societies*, also argues that this patriarchal value has exposed women to mental and sexual oppression and has hampered women from developing their physical, mental and emotional power. And under such system few women become “professionals”. She says:

“The patriarchal class system has robbed the woman of her most precious possession, namely her mind [...] The woman has been deprived of her capacity for mental, psychological and even physical creativity. Her capacity for

childbearing and her creative human motherhood have been transformed into bonds, burdens and agony, all of which exhaust and weaken her, rather than strength or develop her abilities.” (Sadaawi, 1997:222)

When the power imbalance within a patriarchal cultural context is unmasked, men are at the center of power greatly influencing cultural forces like the media.

3.1 Women as muted group

According to feminist theorists in patriarchal societies women’s words are discounted and their thoughts are devalued. When women try to overcome this inequity, “the masculine control of communication” places them at a tremendous disadvantage. “Man-made language aids in defining, depreciating and excluding women.” And therefore women are muted. (Griffin, 2003:488)

Ardener, a social anthropologist, points out that muteness is the result of the lack of power, “which characterizes any group that occupies the low end of the power hierarchy”. People with very little or no power have trouble giving voice to their perceptions or having their voices being heard. As a result, they are “overlooked, muffled, and rendered invisible”. (Ibid)

Sadawi encapsulates this saying society is not yet “accustomed to the creative endeavors of women or to their original thinking in any field of activity”. She says issues like sex and religion are considered so sensitive that they take on “explosive proportions” if they are dealt with by a woman. A woman who dares to talk on these subjects “runs much greater risks than a man, because of the double standards prevalent in our societies”. She observes:

“In general a man enjoys a much greater degree of freedom in the areas of sex, moral and social behavior, and thought than does a woman. The mere fact of being female carries with it a whole range of constraints: a woman is therefore obliged to pay a much greater price if she wishes to *express* herself freely in both *thought* and *action*. [Emphasis is mine]” (El Sadaawi, 1997:220)

2.2 The Subjective and Objective Knowledge

McFadden (1992) in her article *Epistemological Issues in Conceptualizing Gender in Africa* elaborates on what is considered objective and subjective knowledge and how this dichotomy in knowledge is extended to a wider social reality. According to her the manner in which men and women are “represented and defined” in societies reflects this “dichotomisation in knowledge”. She says:

“The male becomes the representative of what is objective—he is rational, masculine, logical, and he is able to reason. The woman on the other hand is represented as subjective, feminine, illogical, emotional, and unable to reason. [...] The male is associated with a culture that is public and rewarded, whilst the female is defined in cultural stereotypes that are linked to nature and as essentialism that robs women of their individuality and therefore their rights as human beings.” (McFadden, 1992-68)

She further elaborates that men have been associated with what she calls “public, conspicuous, political, visibility” while women are associated with “roles and spaces that are domestic, informal, unpaid, largely unrecognized”. At the level of knowledge and intellect, being male is associated with being “objective” and being female is associated with being “subjective”. And in the transmission of “knowledge” what women know is taken as “social given” i.e. something known by all. And as women’s knowledge tends to be produced within those social spheres that are regarded as “natural” (in the domestic-sphere) or as “less important” politically or economically (in the informal sector, small businesses, subsistence agriculture, craft) it is often unrecognized in scientific terms.

“Masculinity and the male experience not only serve as the social referent in the production of knowledge, but it becomes “truth”. Men become the knowers in our societies [the elders, the scribes, sages, repository of traditions and wisdom] and women’s knowledge is posed in dependent terms vis-à-vis what women have experienced or decided is the truth.” (Ibid)

According to McFadden, “knowledge” and/or “truth” is “one sided” and women’s knowledge has been disregarded as subjective. And the process of knowledge formation is “fundamentally gendered” because it reflects the non-recognition and denial of what women know as “an essential element in the stock of social experience and intellectual wealth”. (McFadden 1992:69)

2.4 The Private and the public domains

One of the issues that are raised when discussing women’s representation in the media, particularly in news, is the issue of the “private” and the “public” domains. This is an aspect where by certain roles and functions are judged “natural” and appropriate to women and men and where by news stories are outlined accordingly to men and women.

Traditionally women have been relegated to the intimate sphere of the home and family, while men have been allowed more mobility between spheres of politics, economics, civil society and the intimate sphere. Gallagher says: “Defined primarily through our destinies as wives and mothers—to be somebody else’s private life—women are principally placed, politically, ideologically and economically, in the “personal sphere” of the family”. (Gallagher, 1983:12) she says that the historical “separation out” of the domestic or private sphere has been accompanied by, “articulated thought, ideologies of domesticity, femininity, and personal life which have represented the home and the family unit as unrelated to the outside world of work.” (Ibid)

Referring Cohen, McLaughline (1998) in her essay, *Gender, Privacy and Publicity in “Media Event Space”*, suggests that the private and public domains are associated with “a vast chain of polarities that act as cultural codes which assign specific places and roles to different genders”. Here she forwards a series of “binaries” that characterize the two domains and some of them include: body/mind, emotion/reason, passion/interest, home/the world of work or politics. Illustrating on the meaning of women’s confinement to the private sphere she says:

“The sole sphere established as the appropriate place for women is one in which social discourse are depoliticized, where matters related to women’s lives are conventionally off-limits as topics of public discussion and area of political intervention.” (McLaughline, 1998:76)

Kramarea in her Muted Group Theory brings in the language element in the debate in the divide between the public and private domains. She argues that the ever-prevalent public-private distinction in language is a convenient way to exaggerate gender differences and pose separate sexual spheres of activity. Griffin quotes her as saying:

“Within the logic of a two-sphere assumption, the words of women usually are considered appropriate in the home—a ‘small world’ of interpersonal communication. This private world is somehow less important than the ‘large world’ of significant public debate—a place where the words of men resonate.” (Griffin, 2003:48)

Gallagher states that the roots of inequality are buried deep in the cultural consciousness and for the majority of women cultural meaning decrees “women mean love and the home, while men stand for work and the external world.” And this has put great impact on the portrayal of women in the media, which is commonly put within the confines of the home, while men tend to be seen more often in “the outside world of work”.

3.4. The hard and soft news

The public/private divide translates itself into news content through what are called “hard” and “soft” news. This brings us to what media scholars call “the gendered definition of news” (McCullagh 2002: 47) which distinguishes between “hard” and “soft” news. “Hard” news is about politics, economics, and government and is more suitably reported by men. “Soft” news on the other hand is about “life styles, fashion, and shopping” and is therefore dubbed as the “natural” province of women. (Ibid)

Hollander (1998) adds to the list of issues that are fall under “soft” news. She says gossip, scandal, human-interest stories, house management, cooking, childcare, and other

domestic issues fall in the category of “soft” news bringing the issue more to the “private sphere”. And here women’s involvement both at production and content level is relatively high. (Holland 1998:18)

The usual argument is that “hard news” presents a more “masculine agenda”—issues taking place in the public sphere while “soft news” may provide a context for coverage of issues related to the private sphere and considered to be of greater importance to women—such as childcare, women’s health, and male violence.

Allan says hard news constitutes topics such as economics, politics, government, and crime and it “typically” relies on the expert’s knowledge of “public-sphere institutions” and it is accorded “an enhanced prestige status” over soft news which is “lighter”. (Allan, 1998:130)

Much of the news is dominated by hard news and thus by male concerns. The exclusion of women from the news is closely related to definitions of what actually constitutes “news”. According to van Zoonen, “the masculine nature” in news lies in the definition of newsworthiness (selection of issues) and the particular selection of angles on issues (framing) covered in the news and selection of news sources. (van Zoonen, 1998:35)

Kitzinger (1998) also observes that news organizations accord coverage according to a hierarchy of “social proximity” and “social ranking”. According to her such hierarchies apply to the ranking of men and women. Coverage will vary depending on the groups “social proximity” to the journalists and to their assumed audience. (Kitzinger 1998:198)

5. The Ethiopian Context

There are very limited research outputs focusing on women’s representation in the media content and much remains to be done. Much of what is undertaken in the area of women and the media remains unpublished and thus very difficult to locate.

Although limited, these research out put clearly show the under-representation and misrepresentation of women in the Ethiopian media. A news analysis on over 600 news stories published in 25 selected Saturday issues of Addis Zemen newspaper published between March and August 2002 shows that men represented 64.8 per cent of news sources while women represented only 6.1 per cent. The research found out that these female news sources were drawn from women who were in decision-making positions such as ministers, members of parliament, heads of women's affairs offices, and women working at managerial positions in private institutions. More to this, women who appeared on front page of the newspaper represented 5.3 per cent while men represented 76.5 per cent. (Mesay, 2002: 39-54)

Another research on the portrayal of women in the media elaborates that in most cases women do not get media coverage and when they do they are presented in their traditional roles I.e. as wives, mothers, daughters, sisters etc. In terms of the division of assignments in the news media, women are assigned to cover "soft" news while men are assigned to cover "hard" news and women are almost absent in decision-making positions. (Abebech, 5: 2005)

Alem Seged (1999) closely relates the representation of women in the media to the wider cultural and social context. She says Ethiopian women have grown in environments, which "endorse attitudes that women should be seen and not heard". (Alem Seged, 1999:81) Concerning women's under-representation in media content she forwards reasons which she calls "groundless and prejudicial" but are usually given to explain the under-representation of women in the media content. These include: "very few [women] can speak authoritatively, too few women exist that can act as sources of information, media consumers prefer to receive information from men rather than from women and too few women exist who can be projected in the media as role models". (Ibid.) She says:

"Under-representation and misrepresentation of women that persist in the media are legacies of historically based gender relationships still mirrored in media ideologies. [...] the mass media is a form of power and often part of a power

system structured in such a way as to enforce the status quo in favor of the economically and politically powerful. Hence the existing media ideologies dominant in media institutions, national or private, are male preserves where overflowing cumulative social attitudes prejudicial to women are reflected in the mass media and information industries.” (Ibid:80)

Chapter three

Methodology of the study

3.1 Content analysis

In researching the representation of women in news one method is content analysis. And this has been well established in similar media research undertakings that focus on the text of media content. On elaborating what content analysis is, what it does and how it is an appropriate tool in analyzing news Palmer (2000) states:

“Content analysis is a technique for assessing the presence or absence of specified thematic material in a body of text. The thematic material is specified by the researcher for any reason deriving from the purpose of the research. It is particularly apt for capturing cumulative patterns of meaning that arise in extended bodies of text with multiple authorship and not single focus in time or space. To this extent it is an obvious tool in analysis of news. (Palmer, 2000:133)

Accordingly this research mainly employs content analysis as a research method to look at news text and assess the presence or absence of women in local news stories published by two newspapers—The Reporter and Addis Zemen. The purpose of this research is to examine the representation of women in news and test the hypothesis of the research i.e. there is no gender diversity in news: male dominated and issues of public concern are dealt with from men’s perspective and concerns closely linked to women are not given due space in the news and therefore women are under-represented and or absent in news which is the dominant genre in media content.

In order to arrive at “cumulative patterns of meaning” concerning the representation of women in news I have adopted coding instruments—coding categories—from similar research undertaking namely the Global Media Monitoring Project 2005 (www.whomakesthenews.org) and applied the instruments after making slight modifications. News stories are analyzed based on these coding categories. These coding categories are developed to use the same coding schemes across the sample news stories

and in the end arrive at a certain established meaning in the news published across the period covered by the research.

3.1.1. Coding reliably

One critical component of content analysis is to establish the degree of reliability of the coding. This helps to ensure that there is consistency in the “application and interpretation” of the coding schemes and thus avoid bias and personal interpretation of coders. In the case of this research three coders—the main investigator and other two coders—have monitored the sample news stories.

The disparities among the coders were evident in the beginning of the coding stage. A solution applied to resolve the disparity was to come up with common definitions for each coding category and options given for those coding categories. Another was to reduce the major coding categories and limit them to only seven categories. At the end of the coding exercise the percentage of agreement among coders has been derived at.

The general framework and definition of the coding categories used in analyzing the selected news stories include:

- Topic category, which refers to the dominant theme of news stories.
- Prominence of the story, which refers to the place where the news stories are placed in the pages of the newspapers.
- Photo in the story, which refers to whose photo, appears in each of the news stories.
- News sources which refers to those who speak or have their voice in the news.
- Occupation category, which refers to the major activities in which the news sources are engaged in or are portrayed to be engaged in.
- Function in the story, which refers to the assumed role of the news sources in the story at the time of giving news information.
- Victim category, which refers to the people and the circumstance in which the people in the story have been negatively affected with.

For each category Chi-square tests are applied to check the statistical significance of the findings on the categories. Statistically speaking a result that is less than the alpha level of 0.5 is much significant.

3.1.2. Quantitative data

The part of the content analysis aims at capturing a specific set of data about the news items that are specifically related with the problem stated in the hypothesis of this paper. Questions tackled in this part of the research include:

- Proportion of male and female sources
- Whose voices are heard on what subjects
- Who appears in photos in the news and how
- Occupations of news sources and which occupations are represented in the news stories
- What roles women and men assume in the news
- Who appears on the prominent pages
- Who is portrayed as victim and in what type of stories

3.1.3. Qualitative Data

This is part of the content analysis used to draw a qualitative data. Testing the validity of the hypothesis applying the various concepts/frameworks elaborated in the study concerning women's representation in news as news sources and provision of examples for the study are the major objectives that underlie the choice of cases. Here a number of news stories from both newspapers are selected and analyzed. Major themes raised in this part of the research include:

- How women are marginalized in certain news stories
- How women and men are portrayed as sources in the news
- If all women and men of various background are represented and given voice in the media

- If there are missing voices or perspectives in the news stories
- If women and men are treated equally and/or fairly in news content
- Which group of women have access to the overwhelmingly limited media space left for women and which of them do not have access

3.2. In-depth interview

This is the method used to arrive at a “deeper” and “richer” analysis of the subject this research is treating. In-depth interview is employed to take in the aspect of production of news and investigate how news is shaped by journalists and editors who make decision as to what should be covered.

The emphasis is to record what the issue of women’s representation means to the journalists and how they put an account of their professional “behavior” which impacts on the subject in question—women’s representation as news sources. In these interviews the main idea is to “negotiate an explanation that is internally consistent and in accordance with other facts” (Alasuutari 1998: 143) i.e. in accordance with my findings of the content analysis.

Quoting Harre and Secord (1972), Alasuutari forwards:

“At the heart of the explanation of social behavior is the identification of the meanings that underlie it. Part of the approach to discovering them involves the obtaining of accounts—the actor’s own statements about why he performed the acts in question, what social meanings he gave to the actions of himself and others. These must be collected and analyzed, often leading to the discovery of the rules that underlie the behavior.” (Ibid.:142)

This is the method that invites the journalists to become part of this research providing their views on the issue and on their journalistic practices. It mainly focuses on the process of news production and how this affects the representation of women in the news. Here journalists who are currently working as senior reporters and editors in various

media organizations are interviewed. These journalists are asked open-ended questions revolving around themes drawn largely from the findings of the content analysis.

The major themes covered in the in-depth interview include:

- Who reports on what
- The difference in the attitude and practice of female and male journalists in covering events
- Why women are invisible in the news
- Profiles of sources in the daily coverage of events and who fits into those profiles
- Factors in the newsroom/news organization that impact the coverage of issues
- Attitudes of journalists towards “women’s” issues
- How to improve women’s representation in news

The in-depth interview is also used as a method to validate the findings of the content analysis. Here I specifically wanted to apply what researchers specializing in qualitative research call “member validation”—“a term used to denote an array of techniques that purport to validate findings by demonstrating a correspondence between the researcher’s analysis and collectivity members’ descriptions of their social worlds” (Bloor, 1997:41) and check “if the members recognize, understand and accept” researcher’s description.

My aim in this is for the journalists to participate and have a say on my findings and explain elements in their working environment that have had impact/bearings on representation of women in news.

3.3 Data sources of the research

This research analyses news stories published in *Addis Zemen*, a state owned newspaper and *Reporter* (the Amharic version), a privately owned newspaper. Both are selected based on their high circulation, variety in news content and the language they use—Amharic which is a widely spoken language in Ethiopia. These newspapers are selected to represent the dominant categories in media ownership—the private and the government owned media.

This research analyzes local news stories published in these newspapers within a period of the first three months of this Ethiopian year i.e. from September—November 2005. I have considered 25 percent of *The Reporter*, a biweekly, and 10 percent of *Addis Zemen*, a daily newspaper. All in all a total of 625 local news stories published during this period in the two newspapers are selected for analysis.

News is selected for analysis because it is a dominant genre in media content and is a major source of information about the world we live in. Specific focus is put on locally produced news stories to also look into the context in which the content of news stories are produced i.e. the process of news production and how these production processes affected representation of women as news sources.

This research also analyses data from in-depth interviews conducted with news reporters. These are individuals representing members of the media who are currently working in different media organizations and are engaged primarily in news reporting.

3.4. Sampling

Systematic random sampling is used to select a sample of individual days for the study. Each month is considered in taking samples from the period of three-month publications of both newspapers. And then samples are picked randomly from each month. In the case of *Addis Zemen*, each day of each month and in the case of the *Reporter* each of the days in which the newspaper comes out, have had equal chance of being selected and by choosing individual days rather than weeks I have attempted to provide a widely spread and broader a look at news stories published within the period this research covers.

The journalists for the in-depth interview were selected based on their extensive work and experience in their field. Their work experience ranges from three to 20 years. Both female and male journalists drawn from both the private and government owned print media, and the electronics media—Radio and TV—are considered in the sample.

Chapter four

Findings and discussion

Part one

4. 1. Findings of the Content analysis

4.1.1. Quantitative data

This part of the research presents the quantitative and qualitative findings of the content analysis done on 625 news stories taken from the Reporter and Addis Zemen newspapers. It also presents the findings of the in-depth interview conducted with 12 journalists working in different media houses. I have also included my discussion on the findings in this part.

4.1.1.1 Women and men in the news

It is often said that news provides a mirror of the world and reflects reality. A content analysis done on sample news stories shows that it does not provide a mirror of the world and that it does not reflect reality as it is. The world we see in these news stories is a world where women are doing and saying nothing of importance. Women hardly represent the voices and faces in our local news.

Women represent over half of the Ethiopian population but represent 8 per cent of news sources while men represent 69 per cent of the news sources. For every woman who appears as news source there are nine men. This figure for women is way below figures put for Africa i.e. 19 per cent and where for every woman who appears in news there are four men. (whomakesthenews.org)

The content analysis also shows that groups/individuals—voices of groups such as residents, farmers, community members, employees, parents, students, party members etc—have better representation in local news than women representing 10 per cent of the entire news sources. Likewise intuitions/organizations—those who represent the various private, government and non-governmental organizations in the country—also have a better representation than women representing 12 per cent of the news sources in the news. And the coding reality of this category is 98 percent.

As has been stated in the previous chapter of this research, media scholars contend the hierarchy of news sources broadly reflects the hierarchies in the society. The powerful groups in society gain a more “frequent” and “routine” access to the news than those with lesser power. Accordingly as these findings suggest women are found at the very last from among the news sources and this is a clear reflection of their place in the power hierarchies in our society.

Table one: News Sources

News Sources	Count	Percentage
Male	677	68.9%
Female	79	8%
Groups/Individuals	97	9.9%
Institution/Organization	113	12%
Not stated	16	1.6%
Total	982	100%

4.1.1.2. News topics and News sources: Who speaks on what?

Women are the least represented in news topics that dominate in the news agenda i.e. politics and government, business and economics, and social and legal issues. They have a slightly better representation in news dealing with social and legal issues.

Voices that represent the female voice in political and government related news stories constitute 1.3 per cent. Likewise women represent 1.2 per cent of news sources in economic and business stories, and 3.9 per cent in news stories related with social and legal issues. (See table two) The coding reliability of this category is 86 per cent and its level of statistical significance is .001.

The finding also shows that compared to men, women do not dominate in any of the news topics and that there are no story topics where female voices outnumber that of males’.

When women become central in a news story it is outside the mainstream “hard” or “serious” news agenda. In fact news topics where women become central or are relatively represented better are in topics that are usually identified as “soft” news—in social, legal stories where for every female news source there are four males. This trend of slightly being represented applies to news topics such as business and economy where the focus of the news story is on such topics as poverty, informal businesses, credit schemes etc and news stories focusing on these topics are very few in number.

Women’s rights/advancement, one of the sub topics under the range of option for Social, Legal topic category was treated separately to check women’s representation in issues that enhance the chance of women’s representation in the news. The coding reliability for this specific sub topic is 93 per cent and it was clearly brought out how women are still invisible in this area. Although women take the lead in these stories, the male voice still prevails and takes a significant portion representing 1.6 per cent of the news sources in this category—for every man there are two women as news sources. These stories signify that it is the male perspective that shapes news stories on issues that directly and dramatically affect women. (See more specific examples in Case three: *Male’s voice in women’s page*)

The news topics in the two newspapers lack diversity and concentrate on limited range of topics mainly falling under three categories. By concentrating on certain issues and leaving out others, the news has rendered social groups like women invisible marginalizing them further. In other words all social groups are not represented in the news.

According to Gallagher through their selective representation of issues and people the news media are “orchestrating” certain representations forming a certain order in which certain issues and voices have greater power than others. In this context the male voice carries a greater weight than that of the female. And by doing so the media is reinforcing existing economic, political and social patterns. (Gallagher, 1983:108)

Much of the emphasis in news coverage has been given to very limited areas of public concern. We do not find diversified stories that offer “an account of the day”—a mix of all sorts of events as they unfold in everyday life. News has a purpose and that purpose is to provide us with the information we need to fully understand our world. In order for news to achieve this purpose, it should provide us with diversified information. It should come to “the public”—an entity that holds all social groups—that it claims to serve in a way that is meaningful, relevant and engaging.

News needs to delve into broad range of “public interest” like how we see policies and laws affecting our lives and daily routines, our daily fears and worries in everyday life, how we spend our days both at home and at work, how we can be “healthier, happier and safer” etc. In other words news needs to primarily meet the basic needs in our lives. It needs to address our “deeper concerns” by showing us how we can cope up with situations in our home, communities and working places and resolve our challenges and how we can make a decision on issues that affect our lives.

If the news meets our needs, issues like family relations, education, work at home, in the community and in the office, religion, health, traditional beliefs and practices and the like would be brought out in the news agenda providing space for women’s voices and concerns. This would make news to have meaning and relevance for all members of society including women.

Table two: News topics

Topic Category		News sources					
		Male	Female	Group/ Individuals	Institution/ Organization	Not stated	Total
Politics, government	Count	132	13	28	28	2	203
	Percentage	13.4%	1.3%	2.9%	2.8%	.2%	20.7
Economics, finance	Count	172	12	27	22	3	236
	Percentage	17.5%	1.2%	2.7%	2.2%	.3%	24%
Crime, Law	Count	41	3	6	18	1	69

	Percentage	4.2%	.3%	.6%	1.8%	.1%	7%
Social, legal	Count	164	38	18	22	1	243
	Percentage	16.7%	3.9%	1.8%	2.2%	.1%	24.7%
Sports, Arts	Count	46	3	11	14	6	80
	Percentage	4.7%	.3%	1.1%	1.4%	.6%	8.1%
Science, health, technology	Count	102	9	6	5	0	122
	Percentage	10.4%	.9%	.6%	.5%	0%	12.4%
Disaster	Count	10	0	1	2	0	13
	Percentage	1%	0%	.1%	.2%	0%	1.3%
Others	Count	10	1	0	2	3	16
	Percentage	1%	.1%	0%	.2%	.3%	1.6%
Total	Count	677	79	97	113	16	982
	Percentage	68.9%	8%	9.9%	11.4%	1.6%	100%

4.1.1.3. Prominence

Prominence in this case refers to the importance accorded to a news story by its placement in the newspapers' pages. News stories are signposted through their placement enabling readers to follow a certain pattern in their reading. The placement of news stories communicates which story is the most important, more important, important or less important.

In analyzing the prominence of the news stories four variables are employed namely front page, odd page, even page and back page of the newspapers.

The findings on this category show out of the 182 news sources that have appeared on the front-page women represent 1.4 per cent while men represent 12.2 per cent. Out of the 49 news sources appearing in the back page of the newspapers women represent .7 per cent of the news sources while men represent 2.6 per cent. Out of the 561 news sources that appeared in the odd pages of the newspapers women represent 5.2 per cent while men represent 40.3 per cent of the news sources. Out of the 190 news sources that appeared in

the even pages women represent .7 percent while men represent 13.7 per cent of the news sources. (See table three) The coding reliability of this category is 100 per cent and the level of significance is .001 suggesting a significant difference in the distribution.

These figures suggest that the newspapers rarely consider women for their most important news pages such as the front page. Women's voices are very rare in the front page and women's issues are rarely covered on the front page. They are covered if it is a national festival of some sort that is closely linked to women like the White Ribbon Day (Addis Zemen Vol. 65 No. 77) or if an important public figure (who is usually male) is associated with them. (Addis Zemen Vol.65 No.22) In one story President Girma Wolde Giorgis' opening of International Day of Older Persons (with the theme: "Aging in the Millennium, focus on older women, poverty and development") got a front page coverage in Addis Zemen. However, much of the focus of the story, which could have centered on women, was on what the president said about women.

Table three: Prominence

News sources		Prominence				
		Front page	Odd pages	Even Pages	Back page	Total
Male	Count	120	396	135	26	677
	Table %	12.2%	40.3%	13.7%	2.6%	68.9%
Female	Count	14	51	7	7	79
	Table %	1.4%	5.2%	.7%	.7%	8%
Groups/ Individuals	Count	16	55	21	5	97
	Table %	1.6%	5.6%	2.1%	.5%	9.9%
Institution/ Organization	Count	31	50	25	7	113
	Table %	3.2%	5.1%	2.5%	.7%	11.5%
Not stated	Count	1	9	2	4	16
	Table %	.1%	.9%	.2%	.4%	1.6%
Total	Count	182	561	190	49	982
	Table %	18.5%	57.1%	19.3%	5%	100%

4.1.1.4. Occupation of news sources

Occupation is widely employed to judge a person's status in her or his society. It is one major defining characteristic for individuals, groups or institutions to become news sources or be part of what constitutes news. "The question of power and status of men vis-à-vis women in media representations relates in part to the kinds of occupational roles to which each sex is predominately assigned". (Gallagher, 1983:74-75)

The findings on the occupation category—with a coding reliability of 83 per cent and statistical significance of .001—assert there are significant differences in the occupation of men and women who make the news. Although men are still in the lead, one major occupation where females are represented better compared to the rest of the occupation categories is as homemakers. In this occupation category for every female there are two male news sources. Another occupation category with similar characteristic is the category Activist/NGO where for every female there are three male sources. It should be noted here that even in the occupation categories which are commonly viewed as women's domain (homemaking) and considered as being more progressive on gender issues (the NGO sector) women's representation is still on the imbalance. (See table four)

The findings suggest women are not at all represented in occupations such as sports, celebrity, and arts—a differing pattern from the global patterns where we have women mostly being represented in these occupations.(www.whomakesthenews.org).

Occupation as a separate category is taken into account in this research to also look at the extent to which women and men are represented in news as holding occupations in proportions which reflect the proportions of women and men with those occupations in the real world, and thus to check if media representations are consistent with reality. The finding of the research shows that women do not make the news in occupation categories such as business, politics, agriculture, government employee etc where in reality their number is increasing and they have a higher proportion than the news is presenting.

For instance women in government occupy 21.9 per cent—5.9 per cent at ministerial level 7.7 per cent at lower house and 8.3 per cent at upper house in parliament (UNDP, 2005:319)—and yet they constitute 1.1 per cent of politician voices in news. In terms of their economic participation women constitute about 65 per cent of the urban informal sector through which most households secure their means of livelihood (Zenebwork et. al, 2001:12). Even in the formal sector women constitute 34 per cent of those employed labour (Daniel 2004:2) but they are not visible in stories that cover the formal and informal sectors. In the agricultural sector women constitute 58 per cent of the labor force. (Zenebwork et. al., 2001:11) But still they are invisible in news stories that focus on agriculture and peasants.

Compared with that of men the voices of even those women who are well established and are considered prominent in their fields are almost unheard of in the news. Here sports stories could be taken as an example. With so much space dedicated to sports coverage it is clearly brought out in the content analysis that in sports news women still remain invisible. (See specific example on Case five: *Women's achievements vs. men's achievements*)

Table four: Occupation of news sources

Occupation Category		News sources				
		Male	Female	Group/ Individuals	Institution/ Organization	Total
Politician, diplomat	Count	123	11	7	20	161
	Percentage	12.7%	1.1%	.7%	2.1%	16.7%
Business, finance	Count	34	3	11	8	56
	Percentage	3.5%	.3%	1.1%	.8%	5.8%
Law	Count	41	2	3	16	62
	Percentage	4.2%	.2%	.3%	1.7%	6.4%
Sports	Count	26	0	6	5	37
	Percentage	2.7%	0%	.6%	.5%	3.8%
Government employee	Count	249	26	11	25	311
	Percentage	25.8%	2.7%	1.1%	2.6%	32.2%
Activist, NGO	Count	65	21	3	22	111
	Percentage	6.7%	2.2%	.3%	2.3%	11.5%
Health, sanitation, hygiene	Count	20	2	1	3	26
	Percentage	2.1%	.2%	.1%	.3%	2.7%
Education	Count	29	6	14	2	21
	Percentage	3%	.6%	1.4%	.2%	5.3%
Homemaking	Count	2	1	1	0	4
	Percentage	.2%	.1%	.1%	0%	.4%
Celebrity, media	Count	9	0	2	6	17
	Percentage	.9%	0%	.2%	.6%	1.8%
Science, technology	Count	18	1	1	0	20
	Percentage	1.9%	.1%	.1%	0%	2.1%
Community	Count	34	4	28	5	71
	Percentage	3.5%	.4%	2.9%	.5%	7.3%
Agriculture, mining	Count	27	1	8	1	37
	Percentage	2.8%	.1%	.8%	.1%	3.8%
Others	Count	0	1	1	0	2
	Percentage	0%	.1%	.1%	0%	.2%
Total	Count	677	79	97	112	966

	Percentage	70.1%	8.2%	10%	11.6%	100%
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4.1.1.5. Function in the story

People appear in the news in variety of functions. They are sometimes news subjects i.e. the news story is about them. At times they are spokespersons representing or speaking on behalf of a person or institutions. At times they are experts giving detailed professional analysis on issues being covered in the news. And at other times they are in the news giving an account of their own personal experience, or providing eyewitness accounts. Sometimes they express popular opinion on events covered in the news and are included as representatives of the “ordinary citizen”. (www.whomakesthenews.org)

The findings on this category—with coding reliably of 80 per cent and statistical significance of .001—suggest that women usually appear in the news representing popular opinion (for every female there are five males) giving personal opinions (for every female there are four males) and eyewitness account (for every woman there are five males). By contrast men appear overwhelmingly in an authoritative capacity i.e. as spokespersons (there are eight males for every female) and as experts (there are 18 males for every female). More so, males overwhelmingly dominate in being a news subject—there are 33 males for every female news subject. (See table five)

A look at the function of the news sources shows how the media have aimed their coverage at elite groups leaving out much of citizens namely women and social groups with less incentive, power, ability to supply suitable information for the media and with less social proximity to the journalists. By doing so the media is failing in its responsibility of serving citizens equally and fairly and in its responsibility of providing diversified ideas and perspectives on issues of public concern.

The authorities, spokespersons and experts from whose perspectives reality is being told are men while women assume a role that emanates from personal function i.e. from experience. The overall picture reinforces a traditional pattern of gender differences and stereotypes that prevail in the Ethiopian society—men in positions of power while

women in subordination positions, portrayal of men as objective and females as subjective and with a socially given knowledge that is not worth referring to when discussing important issues.

Accordingly the dominant profile of news sources is men and authoritative, people who don't speak the everyday language and people who are extremely detached. As women do not fall in this profile they are alienated in news.

Table five: Function of news sources in the news

Function in the story		News sources				Total
		Male	Female	Groups/ Individuals	Institution/ Organization	
Spokesperson	Count	482	60	29	40	611
	Percentage	50 %	6.2%	3%	4%	63.3%
Expert	Count	70	4	5	27	106
	Percentage	7.2%	.4%	.5%	2.8%	11%
Subject	Count	65	2	24	41	132
	Percentage	6.7%	.2%	2.5%	4.2%	13.7%
Eyewitness	Count	5	1	7	4	17
	Percentage	.5%	.1%	.7%	.4%	1.8%
Personal Experience	Count	14	4	4	0	22
	Percentage	1.4%	.4%	.4%	0%	2.3%
Popular opinion	Count	41	8	28	1	78
	Percentage	4.2%	.8%	2.9%	.1%	8.1%
Total	Count	677	79	97	113	966
	Percentage	70.1%	8.2%	10%	11.6%	100%

4.1.1.6. Photographs of news sources

The role of pictures in the communication of news messages is enormous. News items are clearly flagged through pictures motivating readers into the news content. And with

this in mind the content analysis has gone into analyzing pictures that appear with the analyzed news stories.

However, before going further, I would like to underscore that there is a lack of pictures in our newspapers—83 percent of the news stories appeared without a single photo. This clearly shows that the practice of communicating to readers through pictures is lacking. However, still from the limited number of pictures in the news stories an analysis has been carried out and a conclusion has been drawn.

The finding has a coding reliability of 99 per cent and shows that males are on the lead in photo appearance representing 14 per cent of the photos published in the newspapers while females represent 2 per cent. (See table six)

A further investigation into photos along with the texts in which they appear reveals that a number of those women who have appeared in the photos tend to disappear in the text showing that women have a better chance to appear in photos than in text. (See specific example on case one: *Women to be seen but not to be heard.*) On the contrary men have a better chance of being in the text when they appear in the photos.

Table six: Photos in the news

Photos Co	unt	Percentage
Male	92	14 %
Female	12	1.8 %
Group Photo	8	1.2%
Photo of object	3	.5 %
No photo	543	82.5 %
Total	658	100%

4.1.1.7. Victims in news stories

The portrayal of women as victims is said to be a continuing tradition in the coverage of news. Other researches on news content shows that women are more likely than men to be represented as victims. The findings of this research on this category, however, show men are presented as victims than women. This is not because our media is sensitive on the issue and taking great care in portraying women as victims but because of the kind of news coverage given to issues that negatively affect men and women.

The findings illustrate that issues like sexual violence, domestic violence and traditional beliefs and practices that expose women to harm are not reported as much as robbery, assault, murder, accident and disaster where men are the most likely victims. (See table seven) In addition to this a qualitative investigation shows that in crime stories for instance women are not accessed as sources even when they are the subjects of the news.

Stories that focus on such issues like domestic violence and traditional beliefs and practices are far down the news agenda with only 4.5 per cent of news coverage. These stories attract much less coverage than stories on accident and disaster which covers 22.7 per cent and robbery, assault and murder covering 50 per cent of the news coverage in this category.

The coding reliability of the finding on this category is 82 per cent but the statistical significance is .97 per cent, above the alpha .05 showing how the difference in the distribution is statistically insignificant.

Table seven: Victims who speak in news stories

Victims News	sources					
		Male	Female	Group/ Individuals	Institutions/ Organizations	Total
Accident, disaster	Count	3	-	1	1	5
	Table %	13.6%	-	4.5%	4.5%	22.7%
Robbery, assault,	Count	9	1	-	1	11

murder	Table %	40.9%	4.5%	-	4.5%	50%
Domestic Violence	Count	1	-	-	-	1
	Table %	4.5%	-	-	-	4.5%
Sexual violence	Count	-	-	-	-	-
	Table %	-	-	-	-	-
Discrimination (gender, ethnicity, age, education etc)	Count	3	-	-	-	3
	Table %	13.6%	-	-	-	13.6%
Harmful traditional beliefs and practices	Count	1	-	-	-	1
	Table %	4.5%	-	-	-	4.5%
Other	Count	1	-	-	-	1
	Table %	4.5%	-	-	-	4.5%
Total	Count	18	1	1	2	22
	Table %	81.8%	4.5%	4.5%	9.1%	100%

4.1.2. Finding of qualitative data

The previous part of this chapter gives detailed pictures of the numbers of women and men in local news, the different ways in which they make news, the roles and functions they play in news. However, numbers do not give us the full and qualitative picture especially when discussing about tendencies and patterns in news coverage. They do not tell us the framing or the angle of the news stories. This part deals with these issues and does a qualitative analysis on selected news stories to show examples of news stories where certain patterns and tendencies of reporting have marginalized women, where opportunities are missed to explore the gender dimension of issues in the news, and stereotypes are being reinforced.

4.1.2.1. Case one: Women to be seen but not to be heard

Headline: National day for the disabled marked

Summary

This story appears on page 12 of Addis Zemen newspaper (Addis Zemen Vol.65. No.85). The story elaborates on how National Day for the Disabled was marked nationwide. It makes reference to what the attendants of the ceremony had said and for this one male source, the chairman of the National Association for the Disabled, is reported to express a concern on how mentally impaired children have the right for education, health care services and legal protection. Another male source, the manager of the association, is quoted on how the association is working on close collaboration with donors and other stakeholders and how the association is providing training and discussion forums and working with the children and their parents. This story has one picture that shows parents who attended the ceremony—as the caption suggests. And at the picture suggests the individuals in this picture are elderly women/mothers of the children.

Analysis

In this article the people in the photo i.e. women who were attending the ceremony and the people quoted in the text differ. There are women in the picture but it is what the men said that was reported in the text. The picture offers a different interpretation of the event

than the one forwarded in the text of the report. The 7 cm. x 12.4 cm. picture covering two columns draws one's attention to it communicating that women turned up in significant numbers to attend the event that focused on their children. However, not a single mother of the mentally impaired children was interviewed in the story.

In the argument of women's absence in news stories more often it is suggested that women are not there to be interviewed and that they do not take active part in media events. But here is a situation where they had been present and actively attending an event that concerns them and their children but their idea or opinion was not sought and did not seem to matter anyway.

In this story the women's wealth of knowledge and experience in nurturing their mentally impaired children could have been highlighted. The story could have been enriched and told best if it had been told from the perspective of these women and their children who constitute the reason for being at the event or marking the day in the first place. Such perspective could have given the event a human face bringing it closer to the daily realities of the mentally impaired children and their mothers/family. However, the usual sources—authoritative sources in the form of officials and association leaders who are good at drawing media attention to them—are given the space in the news and the story shifts focus from the most important groups to the less important groups.

4.1.2.2. Case two: Ordinary women vs. ordinary men

Headline: "The statue is a valuable tourist attraction"

Summary

The story published on page 13 in Addis Zemen newspaper (Addis Zemen, Vol.65. No.85) mainly focuses on the reaction of Addis Ababa residents on the renovation of a historic statue of one of Ethiopia's historic figures, St. Abune Petros. The story reports on the public's reaction to the opening of the site of the statue for public view. Three ordinary men are interviewed and they give their personal comments on how they are

happy to see the statue being renovated and open for public view. The comments were that the statue is a historic heritage and citizens should take precaution in safeguarding it.

Analysis

One of the enduring preoccupations on women's absence in the news is the notion that women do not constitute the experts, those people with specialized knowledge that is worth quoting and the notion that women do not possess the authoritativeness or prominence that is much valued in the news. However, even in stories that do not seek or make reference to this kind of specialized knowledge, authoritativeness or prominence but where the focus is on ordinary voices representing popular opinions, women's views are not represented.

In this story ordinary citizens are interviewed representing popular opinion—that voice of “the man on the street”. Still the female voice is missing. The quantitative findings on the functions of news sources (See table five) show that women are most likely to appear in the news in a personal capacity i.e. as representative of popular opinion, giving personal opinion or as eyewitnesses. This story, however, shows how in many cases that women's personal opinion is not valued and made reference to on issues taking place in the public domain.

This news story also extraordinarily brings out that the selection of voices to represent the “citizens” is that of males'. An issue that is of equal importance to all citizens be it men or women, is reported in a way that is slanted so radically in favor of men. With women being denied a space in the news to express their views and opinions concerning an issue that is of equal importance or significance to all citizens, the news cannot be said to reflect balance in its representation of voices of citizens.

4.2.2.3 Case three: Male voices in women's page

Headline: Nine thousand females exposed to fistula every year

Summary

This story appears on page 39 in the Reporter newspaper (The Reporter, Vol.11. No.1/560). It appears on the whole length of women's page and reveals facts about fistula highlighting it as a serious health problem affecting large number of Ethiopian young women. The story elaborates on the causes of the illness with much emphasis on early marriage and rape taking place during war times.

Two male sources—a health expert and representative of an international organization—elaborate on the magnitude of the problem stressing on its negative physical and psychological impact on women affected by fistula. The first source suggests that a woman who is a victim of fistula suffers from what he called “sever” physical pain. In explaining the psychosocial harm inflicted upon her, he says, she is most likely to be pushed away by her own family and community, be driven away by her own husband and forced to live detached from the people close to her. He comments that women who have sustained fistula live with shame and do not usually think that there is a cure for their illness. He says when they find a cure “they feel like they have been reborn as their cure heralds their reunion with their husband, family and community”.

The second source refers to the experiences of women in other African countries who have sustained the illness as a result of rape taking place during war times. He gives anecdotal examples and shows how children are as well becoming victim of rape and exposed to fistula. He refers to some research and says besides the sever physical injuries they sustain, 91 per cent of victims are exposed to fear, low self esteem, mental trauma, memory lapses, lose of hope, and suffer from feeling rejected and unwanted by their family and community. At the end of their elaborations both sources made brief recommendations as to how the problems could be dealt with.

Analysis

The very fact that this story appears on the women's page and does not bear a single female voice is a damage done to the whole concept of women's page—a hard won page

which is born out of expressed needs of women to put forward their concerns in their own voices, a page which is an expression of claiming a space for women in society.

Going further into the content the story is framed from only the perspective of an expert and a spokesperson leaving out the perspective of those who are directly and dramatically affected by the problem. The story could have served a lot its readers if it had presented a voice with a function of representing the personal experience. The voice of women who are the sufferers of the illness and about whose experience these sources are talking about is completely ignored. Such a story should have naturally included the voice of women who are directly affected by the illness. The men are telling what these women are going through giving us details on the impact of the problem on the lives of women and their families.

The story is a reinforcement of the general cultural attitude whereby we have men speaking on behalf of women even on matters that directly affect women's lives. Here is an issue that directly affects women—every year the fistula hospital in Addis Ababa, the only hospital treating the illness, receives 1000-1300 female patients for medical treatment—but women are not given the space to say anything. What better way could there be of telling the ordeal of these women than through highlighting their personal experience expressed in their own voice? I would say this is a case where an opportunity is missed to enrich and expand the news angle by including the main group affected by the problem.

4.1.2.4. Case Four: Women on the front page: emotional appeal

Headline: Ethiopian mothers are searching for their disappeared children

Summary

The story is placed on the back page of The Reporter (The Reporter, Vol.11. No.12/579) and it focuses on a chaotic situation where according to the report many people disappeared following a street demonstration and police arrests. The story begins by elaborating how these mothers went to the Ethiopian office of the International Red Cross

Society to report about their disappeared children and husbands. It gives figures on how many people went missing and how many people were released from police custody. The story quotes a sister of one of those young boys reported missing. She tells how her younger brother was an “innocent” young man and that he did not take part in the street demonstration. The story also includes another female source, a spokesperson from the international organization who briefly tells the newspaper what her organization was doing concerning the situation.

Analysis

The very placement of the story on the back page of the newspaper where it is visible shows how it was considered important in the news agenda of the day. This is a very rare occasion where women appear on such important pages. Although this was the positive side of the story, a closer look at the content of the story from the perspective of women’s portrayal in news, the story has undermining elements.

The big headline referring to the aggrieved mothers generates pathos or emotion, or it stimulates and presents an emotional appeal to the reader. For this reason, it seems, the story is placed at a visible page of the newspaper. But in the body of this news story not a single mother’s voice is included. Only one female speaks representing this group of mothers and she is a sister of one of the young boys who went missing. Another female speaks and she represents the voice of a spokesperson for an international non-governmental organization that was involved in searching for the people reportedly missing. This story is a good example that further reinforces the quantitative findings on the occupational category of this research where it is shown that women appear in news in the categories homemaker and NGO sector.

More often women get into news when they are related to those men in the news and thus they are much more likely than men to be described in relation to others—“the wife, the mother or the daughter of men in news”. They are portrayed in terms of their relationship to other people, rather than as autonomous beings, and by doing so the media are undermining and disempowering women as individuals. In these cases women’s

personhood is being put in question. Women have their own identities independent of the people in their lives and by extension the people in the news. When the media portray women in relation to others, they are undermining the personhood of women and they are reinforcing the patriarchal notion where womanhood is defined as motherhood or wifehood.

4.1.2.5. Case five and six: Women's achievements vs. men's achievements

Case five

Headline: Athlete who disappeared from training field scores amazing victory

Summary

The story published on page 30 in The Reporter (The Reporter, Vol.11. No.6/571) in the sports column highlights the victory of one of a well-celebrated Ethiopian female athlete calling it an “amazing” victory. According to the seven-paragraph news report what makes her achievement “amazing” was that she was away from competition for a certain period of time and has not been to the training field as the rest of the members of the athletics team. In the story her friends and close acquaintances were quoted saying she won her victory after training on her own and this was brought out in the story as “exceptional”. The story also reports that the victory of this athlete was considered “extraordinary” at a time when the country is losing scores in marathon and on this experts—as groups sources—are referred and their statement is put in a sentence. The story carries the athlete's photo in which she appears smiling.

Case six

Headline: 2005's Marathon's fastest time recoded

“The wind posed as an opponent”: Haile G/Sillasie

Summary

This story published on the opposite page from the above story i.e. on page 31 (The Reporter, Vol.11. No.6/571) focuses on one of the prominent male athletes who participated in the same completion with that of the female athlete in the previous story. The full-page news story on him has a headline that is a direct quotation taken from what he said while commenting on his performance.

This news story gives detailed facts and descriptions about the whole competition. It describes the atmosphere of the competition, what the commentator said during the competition, specific challenges the athlete faced while running—the harsh weather condition, untactful pacemakers, and the rigorous training he had to go through. It gives colorful quotations from the athlete himself and a commentator who reported during the competition. It carried a statement from his coach commenting on the athlete's health status at the time of finishing and the technical aspects of the competition. The story goes into giving background information on the athlete's previous performance in similar international competitions. It also carries the photos of one expert and a professional athlete who also commented on the news subject's success. There is a big photo of the athlete, placed at the center of the page, whereby he is shown at the finishing line. His coach's photo also appears just below his photo.

Analysis

The story is a good example in showing how the media value women's and men's achievements. Here are athletes, one female and one male, with similar achievements but with a wide gap in the depth of reporting and space of news coverage. His achievement is much more enhanced through the inclusion of expert voices—his coach, the commentator and his colleague. Her achievement is much more diminished through the exclusion of expert voices and through the much emphasis on voices representing mere opinions of friends and acquaintances. In her story experts are referred but are referred in group and their opinion does not much differ from the ones forwarded by her “close” friends and acquaintances. Their opinion does not go beyond mere expression of amazement into analyzing her performance like the kind we see in the news story of the He athlete.

In her story not a single statement is included from the athlete herself further denying them space to talk about her victory. It is others who speak on behalf of her and these others constitute “close friends and acquaintances”. The story is on the professional achievement of a woman (in the story her victory is dubbed as an “amazing” and a “hard

won” victory as it came in a time when Ethiopia was suffering loss of victory in marathon) and yet friends and close acquaintances are quoted reinforcing once again that women belong to that “personal world of interpersonal and social relationships”.

However, in the story of the male athlete all sorts of details are given. He even spoke in the story and managed to give the reporter colorful quotations one of which found its way to the headline of the story. Here are two athletes—female and male—participating in the same competition taking place in the same foreign country and yet one is accessed while the other is not.

The photos in the news stories also say a lot. The photo of the female athlete with a size of 5.3 cm x 12.2 cm shows her picture in a mug shot showing her simply smiling. His photo with a size of 12.5 cm x 19 cm. shows an action packed photo attractive enough to draw attention by being relatively very big and placed at the center of the page. His is an established shot where he is shown fully engaged in action at the finishing line. He is portrayed as one who is performing his professional duty, a man in action—further reinforcing the traditional view of maleness equating action. She was not portrayed like that—there was no indication, what so ever, of what she does or a single sign showing her professionalism in her photo. She was there simply smiling.

In terms of placement her story was published in the even page of the newspaper—a less prominent page—while his story was put in the odd page of the sports column of the newspaper—a more prominent page.

4.1.2.6. Case seven: Powerful women vs. the less powerful

Headline: UN’s 60th anniversary marked

It was revealed ensuring women’s equal participation is the only way to bring women out of poverty

Summary

The story is an opening news story published on the front page of Addis Zemen (Addis Zemen, Vol.65. No.38). It focuses on the statements made at a panel discussion organized to mark the United Nation's 60th anniversary under the theme "Bringing women with opportunities into decision-making".

Women in decision-making positions in the various women's associations in the country are referred in the story. Chairperson of one local civic association states that ensuring women's full participation in all sectors is the only way to bring them out of poverty. She says wrong gender perceptions that are deeply rooted in our society are major areas of intervention in the fight against poverty. She notes that it is very important to ensure equal participation and equal opportunities for women to bring about sustainable development, eradicate poverty, protect human rights, and bring about democracy and good governance.

Another female source from another women-focused civic association (still representing those in decision-making positions) elaborates on the objective of the panel which she says was to discuss political, social and economic issues that affect women with low economic status and seek solutions to the problems these group of women are facing.

A third female voice representing yet another women-focused civic association (still representing those in decision-making position) states that the millennium goals would come into reality only when women directly participate in and benefit from the social, economic, and political initiatives taking place in the country. She goes further and makes a call to government bodies to create educational opportunities for females and to build their capacity.

Analysis

This story represents the obsession of the news media to focus on the powerful. It exemplifies the power issue in media access, which evidently applies to women as well.

This story illustrates how powerful women have got more news access than the less powerful.

The story also is a good illustration in showing the kind of shallow coverage that is typical of our news media when it comes to covering women's rights issues. The story constitutes a series of rhetorical statements with no new element. They symbolize the much familiar and cliché driven statements published by the media while covering such issues. There is always room to find new and fresh angles in these stories and the media need to work on these angles. In this specific case one way of doing this could have been to stretch out to the less visible group of women who were also attending the conference—women of low income.

The presence of this group of women was slightly mentioned at the end of the story when the report listed those who attended the event. This shows the very least attention given to these women in the news. What is mention is that these women—the ones on whom the whole event revolves around, whose problem is being discussed, for whom solution is being sought, the major characters in the story—were there attending the event. However, none of them are given the space in the news report to express their views and ideas on the agenda of the day. This major group is absent in the news content and by being absent they are kept marginalized.

One point to note here is that the heterogeneous make-up of women should be taken into account when dealing with this kind of stories. Acknowledging the diverse opinions and views among women—what some call “diversity of diversity”—is very important. There are so many groups of women within the bigger group of women and each sub-group has its own experience, identity, opinion and reality. The sub groups of women should not be lumped together as homogenous groups. Care should be taken in media coverage to consider each group of women and not putting one under the cover of the other, not putting those with less power under the cover of those with more power.

4.1.2.7. Case eight: Women having no say on decisions affecting their lives

Headline: Medical treatment protecting mother-to-child transmission of HIV to be rendered in seven hospitals

Summary

The story published on page five in Addis Zemen (Addis Zemen, Vol.65. No.27) provides a good news that medical treatment that protects HIV transmission from the mother to child is to be rendered in seven hospitals located in two regions of the country—Oromia and Southern Region. The good news comes from the Ministry of Health and an official is interviewed representing the department that is handling the process. The official gives the names of the hospitals where the service is to be rendered and elaborates on some of the setbacks in these hospitals that have made it so far difficult to render the service. He also explains how these difficulties have been overcome and also mentions that the service had started four years ago at a limited scale and that so many people have benefited from it.

Analysis

One of the follies in reporting such a story is the lack of sensitivity in identifying who the directly affected groups are when such decisions are made. In this case the directly affected groups are women and infants and yet the story only interviews the official and stops there. It does not connect at a deeper level to the lives and realities of the women who are receiving or are going to receive the medical treatment. By doing so the news report has failed to show how the decision to render the service is going to affect the lives of women and their families or what it means for them to be provided with such medical service. It is the official that talks on behalf of the women who have already started taking the medicine and benefited from the treatment.

Part Two

4. 2. In-depth interview

This is the part where I have put forward the findings of the interviews I have had with male and female Ethiopian journalists currently working in different media organizations. Here much of the focus is exploring on the process of news production highlighting the ways in which journalists' decision-making impacts on the selection and presentation of news and thus on the visibility of women in news. It analyses the how and why behind news selection decisions and news production processes. It explores the values, beliefs or attitudes of media personnel while carrying out their journalistic duty. All these are discussed and analyzed in relation to their influence on women's representation as in news. Both female and male journalists are given the space for critical reflection on the issue of women's representation in locally produced news stories.

4.2.1 Women as news sources

4.2.1.1 The public and private divide

According to the journalists women's invisibility in media content specifically in news emanates mainly from women's absence in the public domain where much of the media focus is placed. They say most of the news topics like politics, business and finances, crime and law etc take place in the public domain and thus people who are actively engaged in this domain receive media coverage. It is noted that women are largely engaged in the private domain and this is the domain where regularly covered issues are less likely to originate from "unless there is unusual or human-interest element involved".

The journalists were asked on the division and production of "hard" and "soft" news. According to them generally speaking issues taking place in the private domain are categorized under "soft" news and "less serious" while those taking place in the public domain are categories under "hard" and "serious" news. And according to their news reporting practices there is a clear tendency to largely focus on matters taking place in the public domain where "matters of public discussion" and thus "newsworthy" events take place.

This practice of categorizing issues into public and private and the values attached to these domains have kept women from appearing in news content. In addition this dichotomy between “hard” and “soft” news has led for the media to present women mostly in their reproductive roles i.e. household responsibilities as wives. (See quantitative finding on Occupation category of the content analysis)

As I have stated in the literature reviews many media scholars have suggested that women are kept in the private domain and much of the issues taking place in this domain is “depoliticized” and thus matters taking place in women’s lives are “conventionally off-limits as topics of public discussion”. (Carter 1998: 46) However, reality constitutes both in the “private” and the “public” and by concentrating on what takes place in the public domain, news is only giving us a small piece of reality where women have been pushed aside in the name of limited participation.

Besides we have gone beyond the stage when family disputes, issues of reproductive health, the well being of children and families, traditional practices etc have ceased to be the private matter of only those who are directly involved. We have reached the level of advancement whereby these issues are considered societal matters. The media needs to follow suite and give coverage to these issues as much as issue taking place in the public domain.

4.2.1.2. Women “lacking” confidence

A number of the journalists point out that women’s invisibility in news owes itself much to women’s “lack of boldness” to appear in the media. They say compared to men most women they approached have been very “shy”, “timid”, and “uncomfortable” with the media and “lacked” confidence to come out and speak their mind. Some journalists referred to their experience in elaborating this point.

One of the journalists who is well recognized for the articles she produces on social and development issues (winning two local awards for her work) refers to her experience whereby she had been confronted with rural women who referred her to their husbands

even to talk about matters such as family planning and the upbringing of their children. Their reason was that they were “not as good as their partners at expressing themselves” and felt they had “nothing to say that would be good enough” for her to write about. This journalist says she has seen that there is “a wealth of information among women but because of socialization and cultural constraints that has put much pressure on them they tend to share that information among themselves or in a group where they feel comfortable”. This journalist says her experience with interviewing rural women has taught her to take time to “win their trust” before going straight into interviewing them.

Based on her experience with women parliamentarians another journalist who does front-page news stories for a reputable privately owned newspaper and covers parliament says this “lack of boldness” in women to express themselves in public is also a “weakness” among women in decision making positions (who are exposed to that world of work and politics). Intrigued by the whole issue of women’s lack of voice in parliament and thus in her news, this journalist approached an outgoing female parliamentarian and asked her why she had not said anything during her years as a parliamentarian. The elderly woman replied that she used to be one of the most “lively”, “expressive” and “witty” persons in her community/constituency but once she joined parliament she found herself “challenged” and “alienated” in that “men’s world” and did not find the confidence to speak.

The stereotypical representation of women as “passive” and “silent” is highly dominant in discourses on women and communication. But these discourses are open to debate especially in the context of family and community levels where women’s communication skills are highly visible.

Women have proved to be effective communicators at the family, community and certain social levels. In these contexts communication is oral, participatory and flexible and builds on the knowledge of one another and women especially rural women find it natural to communicate within such context. In discussing the communication culture among African women, Riano suggest that they have “historically maintained an oral tradition

that celebrates the open and spontaneous exchange of ideas. In expressing freely these women exercise a form of power”. (Riano 1994: 41)

Their communication “inactiveness” comes in their communication within the “public” domain, in communication that is non-participatory, non-flexible, and takes place in the presence of strangers (in the name of journalists) and in the presence of men. Why? As scholars in the area of women and communication (Ibid: 3-65) suggest this is because of socio-cultural factors that relegate women to inferior positions to men inhibiting them from speaking out.

There are cultural and social forces underlying the dynamics of women’s invisibility in the Ethiopian media and therefore it would be necessary to shed some light on the Ethiopian context: the social and cultural context in which women are socialized.

Ethiopian women from the time of their birth until the moment they die remain under the influence of institutions with strong patriarchal values—the family, school, religious institutions, peer and the media. Such patriarchal institutions reinforce norms that put women at lower social hierarchies and relegate them to what constitutes the private domain. For instance they confine women at home—in that “private” world where the identity of a woman is closely associated with her family if she is unmarried and her children and/or her husband if she is married. Whenever women make decisions they are conditioned in a way to seek the support of the men in their lives.

Such patriarchal values and practices put women at the bottom of social power. And recognizing the power dimension is fundamental to our understanding of the dynamics in which any communicative interaction evolves. “Power influences communication and any communication interaction is a negotiation of power.” Having less economic, social and political power would put one at being less able to negotiate for communication space. (Ibid: 30-43) The more powerful one is in economic, social and political standing the more powerful she is in asserting herself and gain ample communication space.

4.2.2. Newsroom Constraints

4.2.2.1. Who reports on what

There is a tightly framed role for females and male journalists in the daily practices of news reporting. According to the interviewees female journalists predominate in topics such as family relations, children, women's rights issues, poverty, housing and welfare, art/fashion and entertainment. Sports seem to be the least reported area by women. By contrast most male journalists cover what is termed as "hard" or "serious" topics such as politics, government, business, economy, law, crime, agriculture and environment, urban development, science and technology,.

Issues dealing with such topics as politics and business are considered a "male only zone" and female journalists are reported to have low participation in covering such issues and those who do are considered exceptions. One journalist who mainly covers politics says her male colleagues consider her as being "one of the men" or "a woman with man's heart". On the contrary what is termed as "soft" news like women's rights issues or gender equality are considered as a "female only zone" and usually considered unconventional for males to cover. One male journalist, who mainly covers women-related issues has been teased as being "one of the women" or "a man with a woman's heart".

The composition of the newsroom and roles delegated to male and female journalist are important in that they influence the kind of coverage given to issues. As the experiences of other countries show in a newsroom where female journalists are present, ways are facilitated for women's issues to be covered or for women's voices to be heard in news. And to bring this positive aspect into the news content there needs to be an exchange of roles—men reporting on women's issues while women reporting on "hard" issues. In other words female reporters should not be "pigeonholed" to the "soft" news and males to the "hard" news. Newsrooms should encourage such transformations as they would bring in a broader, a more representative, and diversified information for the news audience.

In fact there is a well-expressed concern reflected by the female interviewees who cover politics, business and crime that women journalists need to go into reporting “hard” news—news that dominate the news agenda—so that these issues could be reported from the perspective of women.

One very important point that was clearly brought out in the interviews was that “aspiring journalists” strongly associate themselves with hard news coverage. One parameter of “professional success” strongly lies in covering issues like politics, business and finance etc. This seems to be a well-established attitude in newsrooms and although some female journalists are making some effort, they seem to find it very hard to change this attitude. Those females who do political news are labeled as “one of the men” connoting to a higher professional aspiration and status while those males who cover women specific issues like gender based violence and family relations are labeled as “one of the women” connoting a lower professional aspiration and status. In this context both male and female journalists find themselves facing conflict between their “personal beliefs” and their “professional aspirations”.

4.2.2.2. Source, resource and staff constraints

There were journalists who found the issue of the absence of women as news sources in the news content somehow insignificant. They say in the Ethiopian context where a journalist is faced every single day with the a range of difficulties of getting information for news, in a context where there is no “well developed culture of freely expressing oneself in public” or giving out information to the media, the most important issue for a journalist is to be able to get information; whether the source of that information is a man or a woman is not that important as long as that person is able to provide reliable information that can be used for news.

They also point out the newsroom pressure to produce more and to produce fast does not give them the “luxury” of thinking about the gender composition in their news sources. For these groups of journalists the ideal source is a person who is “easily accessible”, “willing to give information when approached”, “prominent”, “expressive”, and

“quotable”. In most cases women do not fall into these source profiles. There is little time and resource that opportunities for stretching out to people who don’t fall under these profiles are really constrained.

The interviewees suggest resources are one of the criteria for covering events. By resource they refer to whether their media institution has both the financial and the human resource it needs to cover events. Faced with limited finances, events may fall from being covered and the news media may tend to regularly rely upon available news sources who are more easily accessible and can generate more information. According to the journalists it is unaffordable for a number of news organizations to spend a long period of time than usual to cover events that require more insight, explorations, research. The journalists understand this could have led to further development of new sources and diverse perspectives on issues. They say with resource constraints stories that can be done quicker with the least financial pressure fair better in the news selection of the day.

The lack of a well developed culture of freely exchanging information or the culture of giving information to the media is a problem that should be well appreciated. And news coverage at times may require an increased investment of newsroom time and resources. However, some journalists have some how attempted to cope with the situation by personally developing sources who are well situated to give them information. However, as the experiences of these journalists show the gender composition of their sources has not been considered that important. In the word of one journalist it “never crossed [their] mind”.

4.2.2.3. News audience

Another criterion for the news media in the selection and coverage decisions is their audience. The journalists say selection of stories for coverage is closely linked to what their audience find “interesting and important”.

Some of the journalists base their argument on what they called “press readership”. They suggested that the press readership differentiate between men and women. Men tend to

read more newspapers than magazines while women tend to read more magazines than newspapers. Some of the issues they suggest interest men more than women include politics, international affairs, business, investment, crime, technology and the like. Some of the issues they suggest interest women more than men include social and cultural issues, fashion and beauty, lifestyles, home management, relationships etc. One journalist in particular says: "...issues that focus on and interest women are more suitable for magazines than newspapers [...] newspapers are supposed to be dealing with serious matters that shape the political, economical and social conditions prevailing in the country"

Careful analysis of audience and their needs is very important for any news media. A key point about audience interests as suggested by Campbell is that evidence suggests journalists mostly make their decisions based on "assumptions" about audiences, rather than rely on research or on feedback about audiences. Responding to audience interests is one area of concern in the contemporary journalism debate and there is a criticism against the news media for increasingly appealing to "audience interests" rather than "audience needs". (Campbell 2003: 116) Kovach advises a better understanding of changing tastes, needs, and trend in society is an important task of reporters in their endeavor to meet audiences' needs. In our case this needs a research on its own.

4.2.2.4. Attitudes towards women's voice and issues

Some of the journalists say the issues of selection and coverage decisions go beyond the newsroom resource and audience interest. They say news decision in the end depends on tests and preferences of editors and the issue of newsworthiness largely depends on what the editors call news. It was noted that the news values of the editors usually falls into "the routines of decision-making" which are closely related with owners' interests or with the commercial or political interest of the media organizations which constitute the "organizational ground rules".

These journalists find it very hard to deviate from these rules and mostly find themselves confirming rather than deviating from these rules. In this context both female and male

journalist are forced to work and bring similar news reports and do not have the freedom to deviate from the “established ways of doing business” in their newsrooms.

There are some journalists who try to think out of the box and attempt to bring in women’s voices even within these “established ways of doing business” but of course faced resistance from other colleagues.

One of the journalists shares her experience while covering the recent sugar prices increases. Instead of reporting the issue from the perspective of male authoritative sources her newspaper reported the issue from the perspective of an ordinary female who earned her income from selling sugar and other consumer items at an open market. According to the journalist the story gave the issue a human face bringing it down to the level of ordinary citizens and the source was very resourceful in sharing information that clearly communicated how the rise in sugar prices affects people with lower income—a group that constitutes a large portion of residents in the city. So as far as the news value was concerned the story passed the threshold. However, this journalist remembers how other colleagues from other competing media house mocked over the story saying her newspaper failed to quote the authoritative and prominent people from the concerned government office.

The journalists were asked whether or not if they could still manage to cover women related issues within the existing newsroom values and norms, and ways of covering issues. One journalist in particular says she had faced a lot of challenge from her editors when she did stories focusing on women and has seen a number of her stories being dropped because either there had been “better” and “marketable” stories or her stories do not fit with the “profile” of the newspaper. One of her coping mechanisms has been negotiate with her editors at best or at worst passing her story to other publications interested in the issue at the expense of her byline.

Some of the interviewees argue that there are no “new perspectives” that can be tapped for news in this country’s women’s related activities. They say as people who are out

there to report on “fresh” and “new” developments on events, they are challenged by the lack of freshness that is needed for news. They say the much “similarity and redundancy” in women-related activities in this country does not render itself much for news. They mention that because of the “redundancy and similarity” in them news on women, children, and HIV/AIDS are at times automatically dropped from the news agenda in some newsrooms or are used as fillers in days where there is lack of “news”.

One journalist who practically reacted to this “deeply rooted” attitude among editors and newsroom practices and started a newspaper focusing on women says such attitude and “insensitivity” are mostly unchallenged. She mentions crime coverage as an example. Based on her experience as a crime reporter, she says in crime events women take the biggest toll. She says: “women fall victim to all sorts of violent crimes such as sexual abuse, rape, harmful traditional practices, discrimination and so forth. But in crime reporting such issues are sidelined and crime stories considered newsworthy are those involving corruption, forgery, property disputes, terrorist activities, high profile murder cases to mention few”.

For this kind of crime coverage she mentions the lack of female journalists as one major problem. Female victims tend to “trust” females than males—be it investigators or journalists—to pour out their heart and share their experience. “If there had been more female journalists such stories on women would have found their way in the front pages of our newspaper,” she says.

Chapter five

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

News is male dominated. Issues of public concern are mainly told from men's perspectives, with male voices and images. Concerns closely linked to women and their voices are not given due space in the news putting women in the margins of news and the issues of public importance.

The much valued beliefs and accepted norms in our society concerning women and men, femininity and masculinity—although the validity of these beliefs and norms is open to question—have shaped media content. One of the areas where such beliefs and norms are reflected is in the public/private divide. The placement of women in the “private” domain and men in the “public” domain and the lesser value attached to women and issues taking place in the private domain have facilitated for the exclusion of women from news content. Issues taking place in the private domain are “depoliticized” and matters related to women's lives are conventionally excluded from being topics of “public discussion and area of political intervention”. Their knowledge is often unrecognized or undervalued. As a result of this widely accepted values and norms and practices women have been marginalized in society and in the media.

As has been shown in this research the media are presenting a partial reality, a reality as put forward by men for men and a reality that has excluded women in the discussion of issues of “public concern”. The media are providing a social reality where only men exist, a reality where women and their concerns are not important. The media are giving us a reality where only issues that have men's high and direct involvement are more important for our well being and for us to function in society, they are providing us with a social reality where women are active only in their domestic roles or in the NGO sector, a social reality where women's knowledge is presented as being subjective and does not go beyond their personal experience, a reality where women are there to only be seen but not to be heard.

The hierarchy of news sources in the analyzed news stories broadly reflects the hierarchies in our society. Those who fall in the category of people accessed as news sources i.e. those with the greater power, those with the means to provide suitable information to the media, those with social proximity to journalists are men compared to women. The selected issues and frames in the news media are the ones that are compatible with the interest of the dominant class or power group in our society.

Through their selected social realities and through supporting the dominant ideology by “masking and displacing” social issues and problems the media have established or are maintaining an ideology—“a set of social values, ideas, beliefs, feelings and representations by which people collectively make sense of the world they live in”—in which men are associated with what is “public, conspicuous, political, visibility” while women are associated with “roles and spaces that are domestic, informal, unpaid, largely unrecognized”. The media are maintaining an ideology in which what women’s knowledge is taken as social given i.e. something known by all, an ideology in which women’s knowledge and experience is unrecognized or is denied the due recognition to be an equally essential component in social experience and in the building up of social reality.

On this context the issue of diversity and fairness—issues closely related with journalism’s public role—are at stake here. In other words the media’s role in providing a range of viewpoints and ensuring a range of groups within society get access to media content has been undermined. Few groups seem to have the authority and “the monopoly on truth”.

All in all the news media have missed the point that all issues whether taking place in the “public” or “private” domain affect the various groups in our society including women. They have missed the point that “all issues are women’s issues”.

Much of the world’s historical accounts including ours are highly criticized for their lack of facts on the role of women in shaping history. It is often said that journalism is

“history in a hurry”. The 21st century journalism should not make that same mistake observed in historical accounts by excluding women, their views, opinions and contributions and achievements and leave a blackout in its recording of social reality. With this conclusion I would like to forward the following recommendations.

Recommendations

- Journalists and their institutions need to aspire for high-quality journalism through fair and balanced representation of gender. This aspect should be seriously taken into account like the other standards or principles in the profession.
- It does not easily come to our mind that women and their concerns need to also be included in the news—in issues of public concern. These attitudes need to be challenged, questioned and changed. And this could only be achieved when media content producers are sensitized and come to the realization that women’s voice and experience does count in our coverage of issues of public concern and that coverage of news that excludes women’s ideas and views is like presenting a partial social reality.
- Adopting a guideline on gender sensitive reporting could facilitate in mainstreaming gender in news content and improve the quality of news content in terms of gender perspective. The purpose in this is to provide the media with a framework within which media content producers adopt a way of operation that is responsive to women’s ideas and opinions, encourage equal treatment of women and men in media content, and work on accurate and balanced portrayal of women and men.
- Considering the composition of the newsroom is very important in order to take women’s representation beyond the current stage. A newsroom dominated with only one group would lead to the production of non-diversified and less accurate news content. It is widely suggested that the presence of female journalists in the newsroom contribute much to the coverage of issues from women’s perspective

and thus encourage more female visibility in news content. Such reporters should of course not be limited to covering “women’s” issues or “soft” news and be confined to writing about the reproductive roles of women but also work in “hard” news coverage.

- News organizations need to seriously come up with strategies of putting women in editorial and managerial positions where decisions are made as to what should or should not appear in the daily news agenda. What happens in such transformation is that women’s needs would be addressed and their voices heard in the news thus the news media would be able to provide broader, more representative and comprehensive information to the audience. Besides the very presence of women in these position could create a new working atmosphere and new social relationships between the women and their male colleagues and this could create a new ethics and attitudes towards their day-to-day assignments.
- Women’s growing participation in journalism schools should be encouraged as this would continue to ensure the supply of well-trained female journalists for news organizations. Today those news organizations that genuinely recognize the necessity of having women in their newsrooms are faced with the challenge of the lack of skilled women in the market. This gap can be addressed through training of more women in media and communication related fields of study.
- Schools and training institutions in the area of journalism and communication need to seriously come up with courses that focus on the gender dynamics in the daily practices of content production and decision making processes in newsrooms. These training institutions should also put the issue of gender at the top of their lists when they organizing seminars, short-term trainings or any program with the objective of bringing forth high quality journalism.
- Women researchers in the fields of media, communications and cultural studies need to be highly motivated to carry out research in the area of gender and media.

Such works could contribute a lot in coming up with “analytical tools” to develop appropriate local strategies, suitable and specific to our context. They would also help in analyzing how the media constructs definitions such as femininity and masculinity and how women and men are affected by the mediated messages. More so they could be very significant in recognizing and documenting women’s experience and contribution in the area of communication—at the level of content and production, consumption. Such initiatives could facilitate in “deconstructing” widely held beliefs in our society concerning women and men.

- There needs to be independent and reliable media research groups with well established analytical skills to look into media content and structures and from time to time question the daily practices of journalism in this country. The presence of such groups and research practices would encourage a context in which media outputs are monitored and critiqued providing an eye-opening opportunity for the media to improve themselves.
- Media institutions need to also develop some mechanism to review their work or out put from time to time and check if they are inclusive and if they are reflecting the diversities in our society.

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I. Annex Checklist for monitoring news content

Variables	Description	Range of options
1. Name of the newspaper	This refers to the name of the newspaper	- Reporter - Addis Zemen
2. Date of publication		- Meskerem 1/1998 - Meskerem 25/1998 - Meskerem 12/1998 - Meskerem 16/1998 - Meskerem 22/1998 - Meskerem 27/1998 - Tikimt 9/1998 - Tikimt 6/1998 - Tikimt 8/1998 - Tikimt 12/1998 - Tikimt 17/1998 - Tikimt 27/1998 - Hidar 18/1998 - Hidar 7 1998 - Hidar 17/1998 - Hidar 25/1998 - Hidar 14/1998 - Hidar 8/1998
3. Volume of publication		- Volume 11 - Volume 65
4. Issue number of publication		- No.1/560 - No.6/567 - No. 12 - No. 16 - No. 22 - No. 27 - No. 6/571 - No. 6/570 - No. 38 - No. 42 - No. 47 - No. 57 - No. 17/582 - No. 12/579 - No. 77 - No. 85 - No. 74 - No. 68
5. Topic Category	This refers to the dominant issue in the story	- Politics, government - Domestic politics - Defense, military, police, security

		c. Foreign affairs, International relations 2. Economy, Business a. Economic indicators, statistics b. Transport, road, traffic, telecommunication c. Economic policies d. Labor issues e. Consumer issues f. Poverty, housing, welfare g. Rural economy, agriculture, mining, forestry, fishery h. Banking, insurance, tax i. Investment 3. Crime, violence a. Violent crime b. Discrimination c. Non-violent crime, corruption d. War, terrorism e. Gender-based violence 4. Social, legal a. Education, training, capacity building b. Child care c. Legal system, legislation d. Development issues, aid e. Religion, culture, tradition f. Human rights g. Women's rights/advancement h. Family relations 5. Celebrity, arts, sports a. Sports events player, coach b. Celebrity news c. Arts, entertainment, leisure d. Media e. Fashion and lifestyle 6. Science, health a. Environment, nature b. Medicine, health, hygiene c. Science, technology, research d. HIV and AIDS 7. Disaster, accident a. Traffic b. Natural calamities c. Animal attack 8. Other, specify
6. Prominence of the story	This refers to the page where the story is placed in the newspaper.	1. Front page 2. Odd pages 3. Even pages 4. Back page

7. Producer of the story	This refers to the media house that produced the story	1. Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) 2. Walta Information Center (WIC) 3. Addis Zemen 4. Reporter 5. WIC and ENA 6. ENA and Addis Zemen
8. Photo in the story	This refers to whose photo appears in the story	1. Male 2. Female 3. Group photo 4. Photo of an object or a non-human 5. No photo
9. News source	This refers to those who speak, those who are used as a source of information in the story	1. Male 2. Female 3. Group/individuals 4. Institution/organization 5. Not stated
10. Occupation Category	This refers to the major activities in which the news sources are engaged in	1. Politician a. Government official, Ministries b. Diplomat, embassies, AU c. Political party members/leaders 2. Business a. Entrepreneur, investor b. Trade/labor c. Corporate 3. Law a. Criminal, accused b. Court, judge c. Police, military, security d. Legislator, lawyer 4. Sports a. Player b. Coach c. Sports fan d. Sports clubs, committee 5. Government employee a. Public/civil servant b. Office, service worker 6. Activist, NGO a. Civil society, associations, unions b. International donor agencies 7. Health, sanitation, hygiene a. Medical professional b. Health workers c. Patient 8. Education,

		a. Academia, teacher, trainer, scholar b. Student, trainee, 9. Homemaker a. Child b. Parent c. Relatives, friends 10. Celebrity a. Artists/musicians/entertainers b. Fashion and lifestyle c. Media professional 11. Science and technology a. Researcher b. Scientist 12. Community a. Resident/villager b. Religion c. Disabled d. Retired person e. Diaspora 13. Agriculture and mining a. Peasant, miner, pastoralist b. Environment workers c. Development workers 14. Not stated 15. Other, specify
11. Function in the story	This refers to the assumed role or capacity of the news sources in the story	1. Spokesperson 2. Expert 3. Subject 4. Eye witness 5. Personal experience 6. Popular opinion
12. Victim	This refers to the type of an event/circumstance that has a negative impact on the people involved in the story	1. Accident, disaster 2. Crime, robbery, assault, murder 3. War, terrorism 4. Domestic violence 5. Sexual violence (non-domestic) 6. Discrimination (gender, ethnicity, age etc.) 7. Traditional belief, practices 8. Other, specify

II. Annex

Table for the Chi square test

Table one: Chi square test for topic category

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	118.837a	28	.000
Likelihood Ratio	92.972	28	.000
Leaneor0by0Leniear Association	1.644	1	.200
N of Valid Cases	982		

a. 14 cells (35.0 %) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .21.

Table three: Chi-Square tests for prominence

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	33.942a	12	.001
Likelihood Ratio	28.530	12	.005
Leaneor0by0Leniear Association	.799	1	.372
N of Valid Cases	982		

a. 5 cells (25.0 %) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .80.

Table two: Chi-Square tests for occupation category

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	207.760a	39	.000
Likelihood Ratio	180.818	39	.000
Leaneor0by0Leniear Association	4.343	1	.037
N of Valid Cases	966		

a. 25 cells (44.6 %) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .16.

Table three: Chi-Square tests for function of news sources

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	221.411a	15	.000
Likelihood Ratio	193.444	15	.000
Leaneat0by0Leniear Association	43.976	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	966		

a. 14 cells (25.0 %) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.39.

Table three: Chi-Square tests for victims

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.133a	15	.977
Likelihood Ratio	6.474	15	.971
Leaneat0by0Leniear Association	1.892	1	.169
N of Valid Cases	22		

a. 14 cells (95.8 %) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

III. Annex

Text data of the in-depth interview with the journalists

Journalist A

Q: Would you say the news media has represented diverse voices in their news coverage?

A: No but there is a good reason for that. I think you need to look at the issue of diversity in voices from the perspective of the Ethiopia Context. If you look at our context a journalist has to toil to get a single statement out of people. We do not have a well developed culture of freely expressing ourselves in public. People are simple afraid and suspicious of journalists and the media...In this context journalists are left with the option of grabbing whosoever is willing to give information so long as it is reliable and is an established source. Our sources choices are very limited and we don't have that luxury of having a range of sources on an issue and of choosing among them in whichever way is suitable for us.

Q: I have presented to you the findings of the content analysis of my research showing you how women are invisible in news. What do you think is the reason behind this?

A: It is because women are not actively engaged in the world of politics, international affairs, finance, investment and the like. These are the issue we usually cover in the news.

Q: With your professional background I am sure you have come across women who are directly or indirectly involved in the event you have covered. What has been some of your challenges in dealing with women news sources?

A: When women are approached by the media they tend to be very difficult to access or they tend to refer the media to their male colleagues. I have been faced with this challenge a number of times. Even those women officials do not find it easy to deal with the media unlike their male colleagues.

Q: Would you tell me about the practices in your newsroom on the division of work between male and female journalists?

A: Females usually cover soft news or issue appearing for the women's page. There are however exceptions and we have female journalists covering hard news like court and crime. But usually the tendency is for females to go into covering social issues.

Journalist B

Q: I have presented to you the findings of the content analysis of my research showing you how women are overwhelmingly under-represented in news. Why would you say women have such low representation in news?

A: I think it is because their domain—the home and community—is not given due consideration in news coverage. Much of what we cover as news focus on issues taking place in the public domain; we don't cover issues revolving around home and community unless there is unusual or human-interest element in them.

Q: Why is that?

A: Because of the news values we apply in selecting issues to cover.

Q: Tell me some of your news values?

A: Well much of them fall under the interest of our editors or the owners of our media house. As I see it they have vested interest in certain issues and we tend to give much coverage for those issues than others. For instance whatever I cover for news is dictated to me by my editor. My editor selects the issue, the news source and we work on the questions that are going to be asked to the news source. I would be required to do my assignment accordingly.

Q: What if you go beyond these sources and try to do stories that go beyond the dictates of your editor?

A: There is an established way of doing news in our media house. I know my limits in the range of topics and news sources I include in my news stories and I know to what extent I am allowed to go. Even if I want to do some stories I know they are not going to appear unless they fall within those parameters set by my news organization.

Q: Who are your usual news sources?

A: Prominent individuals and organizations, spokesperson like public relations officers or heads of department in the various government institutions. Experts also comprise the larger segment of our news sources. These groups of sources are easily accessible, better skilled to give information and handle the media.

Q: Would you tell me about the practices in your newsroom on the division of work between male and female journalists?

A: There is not much difference in the division of work...all of us report on the various ranges of issues that our media finds important. But it is usually females who cover issues on women and children.

Journalist C

Q: I have presented to you in detail the findings of the content analysis of my research showing you how women are invisible in news. What do you think is the reason behind this?

A: Women are not visible because they are not bold and confident enough to come out and speak in public or for the media. They are shy and don't have the boldness to appear in the media.

Q: Do you have any specific example you would like to share with me on this particular point?

A: Yes. The lack of confidence in women is evident even among women in higher positions, among those whom we consider to be well educated and/or well exposed.

I have been covering parliament for years now and I have always been wondered about why the women parliamentarians have not been making strong statements worth quoting for my news. One day I got an opportunity to ask one of the outgoing female parliamentarians and confronted her why she did not raise her voice during those years when she worked as an MP. I could see she was a very lively and expressive person. She told me she used to be one of those witty and eloquent individuals in her community and

that she was even able to mobilize her community to elect her in which she succeeded thanks to her communication skill to influence people. However, once she joined the House and found herself in that “male world” she felt alienated and out of place. I was so surprised...I did not see it that way. After that I started closely following up how the house treated its women. And one day, last year, I got a living example. There was some discussion on some law and one of the female MPs raised a question as to how women’s concerns would be addressed in that law. And to my surprise I saw some people laughing. It was then that I really understood that female MPs point.

Q: Would you tell me about the practices in your newsroom on the division of work between male and female journalists?

A: Soft news is usually the domains of female journalists while hard news is that of males. I am strongly against this division though. It confines both males and females to some specific areas and discourages the females from dealing with serious issues like politics, business, court, crime etc. If more women start covering the hard news I feel it would have a different perspective.

Q: You are covering front page news stories and issues that are categories under “hard” news. How do your colleagues react to this?

A: Many reporters find it unique and out of the ordinary and there are those who consider me to be one of the men.

Q: Do you cover soft news?

A: Not that much.

Q: Why?

A: I enjoy covering hard news. I like dealing with much more serious issues, issues that are much more influential and powerful. I want to consider myself a very serious journalist. But it does not mean that I do not do stories on women or seek their perspective on the stories I do when covering hard news. I believe I have an open ear to

their voices as well and I find myself doing stories on issues closely linked to women although I have had some resistance from my editors.

Q: Would you give me an example where you faced resistance and how you dealt with that resistance?

A: There are times when I do story that I feel are important and yet do not fall into the profiles of the media organization I work for. At the end of the day the decision for a story to appear in the newspaper page depends on the decision of my editors. I have seen my stories being dropped because my editors did not think they would fit into the profile of the newspaper. In such instances I try to negotiate with my editors for these stories to appear and if I am lucky they could appear even if it means being buried in the inside page of the newspaper. And sometime I do not get lucky so I give out my story to other newspapers for them to be published but without my byline...I am not allowed to use my byline outside my newspaper.

Q: I have shown you my finding on the kind of news sources used usually in the news and many of them as I have indicated to you are have a function of spokespersons and experts and there is a lack of representation of personal experience and popular opinion accounts. What has been your experience in dealing with this kind of sources?

A: The media normally go for spokespersons and experts. These are easily accessible with a language that is well suited of news and for quotation. There are conscious efforts in some media houses to also include personal experiences or popular opinion accounts in news and the story my newspaper did recently is good example.

We were covering the recent price increase in sugar and we decided to do a news story from the perspective of an ordinary woman who earns her income from selling sugar and other consumer items in an open market. We found her account very representative of the views of large segment of the city residents and so we run the story on the front page. This story was mocked at by colleagues who worked at another newspaper...they said we kind of failed to do a story quoting the prominent authorities in the concerned government office.

Journalist D

Q: I have presented to you the findings of the content analysis of my research showing you how women are overwhelmingly under-represented in news. What do you think is the reason behind this?

A: I believe it is because of the attitudes of journalists and editors. As is well known our newsrooms and media organizations are dominated by men and no wonder we are having news that reflects male concerns and male sources. We live in patriarchal society that does not value women's ideas and opinions. Our journalists and editors are the product of this society; they have gender prejudices and biases, norms and values that relegate women to the periphery. I believe these are the major set backs.

Q: Are you saying the attitude of editors and journalists towards issues is the major influencing factor for news selection?

A: Yes. News is whatever editors say it is and how ever the journalist frames it to be. Editors select issues and assign journalists and journalists select their sources and present their story in certain ways that they feel fit into the preferences of their news organization or what they stand for.

Q: Are you saying the news is shaped to fit the preference of media institutions instead serving the public?

A: Yes. Media institutions have their own interest; it could be commercial interest or political interest. In this case events that are given visible and wide coverage by the media are those that fit with these interests. In this context women's concerns and perspectives are marginalized unless the media house has a strong conviction to serve the public. All of us work within certain organizational ground rules highly influenced by owners or commercial or political interests. These ground rules are very difficult to challenge and we tend to fit our news selection within these rules.

Q: Would you tell me about the practices in your newsroom on the division of work between male and female journalists?

A: I have been covering crime for years and I would like to illustrate the division of work between male and female journalists based on my experience on the coverage of crime. Female journalists tend to cover crimes that affect more women than men like sexual abuse, rape, family disputes, trafficking in women, harmful traditional practices and the like while male journalists tend to cover crimes that focus on corruption, forgery, drug trafficking, property disputes, high profiled murder cases and the like. However, if you look at the level of coverage of issues, those issues I have listed as being covered by male journalists find much coverage and space in the media than those issues I have listed as being covered by the female journalists. In this kind of crime coverage women tend to become invisible.

Q: What would you recommend to improve the situation?

A: For more female journalists to come to the fore. I believe female journalists would be more sensitive to these issues more than those of males. Besides female victims tend to trust females—be it journalists or police officers—to open up their heart. If there had been more female journalists in our newsrooms these stories on women would have found their way in the front pages of our newspaper.

Q: I have illustrated to you based on my findings that there is more emphasis on spokespersons and experts sources in news coverage than accounts of personal experience, popular opinion or eyewitness accounts. How do you say this would affect women's representation in news?

A: As you have explained to me yes there is much more focus on these sources. And that is what we tend to do more often i.e. focus on the authoritative sources. I think the reason is that our news tends to be event driven that experience driven. If news is event driven you are most likely to refer to spokespersons and experts who usually know how to organize media events or talk in a way that attracts the media. If news is experience driven everybody gets the opportunity to have a say on issues. Most of what women know is based on their daily experience. Their experience and knowledge have really maintained households and communities—areas that are largely excluded from the news

agenda. I feel the media need to have an open eye for this yet untapped wealth of information and area and draw their information from the experiences of women as well.

Journalist E

Q: I have presented to you the findings of the content analysis of my research showing you how women are overwhelmingly under-represented in news. Why would you say women have such low representation in news?

A: Because most of them are not prominent, powerful and dominant in areas that get media focus. On the side of the media it is because they do not consider it important to have women's views in their content and go to extra lengths to incorporate women's voice and opinions on issues they cover.

Q: What do you mean by "going to extra lengths to incorporate women's views"? What challenges are you specifically referring to when you say this?

A: Women are not easily accessible and willing to talk to the media. Unlike most men they do not feel comfortable to hear their voice or see their faces in the media. However, I also would like to express strong conviction that the media needs to represent every social group even if it means that that group is not easily accessible and willing to talk to the media. After all we live in a society most of whose members are media phobic. It takes a lot of exposure to know how to handle the media. Those who have had the exposure—like the one the spokespersons have—have been able to access the media whenever and wherever they want and those who do not have that exposure have been invisible and pushed aside in the media content.

I strongly believe the media should not be a forum for only few but for all social groups. We would serve our profession best if we realize this and find our way to go and negotiate with those people whom we want to speak in our stories even if they are not easily accessible...we should not only be using those sources who come to us, but also those potential sources to whom we should go. That is why I said going to extra lengths.

Q: Would you tell me about the practices in your newsroom on the division of work between male and female journalists?

A: Usually female journalists deal with issues that fall under the category of soft news while male journalists deal with issues that fall under the category of hard news. There is a general view that issues like gender based violence, women's right issues, family relations and the like are mainly the concerns of women and thus should be covered by female journalists.

Q: Do you agree with this view?

A: No but this view is there in many newsrooms and at times you could become influenced by it. In fact if you are an aspiring journalist and want to make it up the ladder you might need to seriously consider covering hard news.

Q: You are one of the very few males who cover issues related with women and you have built a reputation for that. How do your colleagues react to that?

A: I have been teased as being a man with a woman's heart. However, I believe the issue is very important and as I have said earlier all social groups including women need voice in the media and we all need to work on that.

Journalist F

Q: I have discussed with you on the findings of the content analysis of this study showing you how women are invisible in news. What would you say about this?

A: It is no surprise that women are invisible in news. Women are closely associated with home, family that world of interpersonal communication and they become shy and don't feel at ease to express themselves when they are approached by the media.

Q: Could you site an example on this?

A: Yes. I have been doing a series of articles on women's reproductive health right and have been visiting a number of rural communities. At one point I was doing a story on family planning and nurturing of children. I used to visit a number of houses to interview rural women on family related issues and these women were very shy to say a word. Their way of avoiding me was to push me to their husbands whom they said are "all knowing". They said they were not as good as their partners at expressing themselves and

they also felt they had nothing to say that was worthy enough for me to write about. You could seriously detect their fear to speak to people with a tape recorder and a notebook.

I usually take time with these women to draw on the wealth of information and experience they have. I have worked for quite for long now marginalized social groups and so I do not easily get discouraged by their shyness because I know it would only last until they gain trust. And I take time to build a nice and comfortable atmosphere with them and win their trust before I pull out my tape recorder and note book.

Q: Would you tell me about the practices in your newsroom on the division of work between male and female journalists?

A: Soft news is considered a female only zone while hard news is considered a male only zone.

Q: What are those issues that fall under soft and hard news?

A: Issues like politics, business, agriculture, environment, science and technology, urban development, etc fall under hard news. Issues like art and entertainment, fashion, lifestyle, celebrity news, personal profiles of prominent people, women related topics like home and family fall under soft news.

Q: What specific characteristic are attributed to soft and hard news?

A: Hard news coverage is considered to require specialized knowledge, broader understanding, more boldness and persistence, better reporting and analytical skill etc while soft news is considered to require less of all these qualifications in a reporter.

There is a deeply rooted attitude in our newsrooms that anyone—beginners in the profession—can cover issues considered soft. New comers start their career by covering issues falling under soft news and they learn there and when they learn their ways in the profession, acquire better skill and more or less become competent they move to covering issues considered hard. I feel this is one reason for the kind of shallow reporting we are seeing on the coverage of social issues and women's rights related issues.

Q: Do you accept these attitudes and standards?

A: No, I do not accept them...I have been trying to show through my work that covering social issues that are largely considered soft require open mindedness, specialized knowledge, in-depth research, careful reading of prevailing situations and doing our homework, analytical skills, persistence, reporting skills, in short all sorts of skills, knowledge and experience we look for in covering hard news.

All issues we deal with and go out to cover are serious issues. They are complicated and require knowledge.

Q: Do you think diverse voices are represented in our news content?

A: No I don't see diversity in the voices of news sources. The names and images of the sources appearing in news are the same. The media tend to concentrate on authoritative sources like officials, spokespersons, executives in various institutions, and experts on various topics.

I do not see the citizen in the news. Citizens are not interviewed on topical issues that affect their lives; the media tend to concentrate on decisions taken by various bodies than their impacts of those decisions on the citizen. I believe this is where women have also been excluded in the news. Many political, social, economic, and legal decisions are made that directly and indirectly affect the lives of social groups like women and yet they are not invited to comment on those decisions and yet the media is supposed to be the voice for citizens.

Journalist G

Q: I have presented to you the findings of the content analysis of my research showing you how women are overwhelmingly under-represented in news. Why would you say women have such low representation in news?

A: Because they don't fall within the profile of sources we look out for news.

Q: What is that source profile?

A: Prominent, established figure, willing to talk to the media, easily accessible, well organized to handle the media, eloquent and so on.

Q: Would you tell me about the practices in your newsroom on the division of work between male and female journalists?

A: Usually male reporters cover the hard news and female cover the soft news, issues like social and cultural events. Of course the way I see it no body creates this division but us. You can do both if you want to but what usually happens is that once the female reporters start covering social issues they don't find their way to come out of that and cover hard news...if you want to consider yourself a serious journalist and establish a good reputation you need to have the capacity to cover hard news.

Q: How about covering political, economic, social, legal and cultural issues from the perspective of women where would this fall—hard or soft news?

A: Yes that could be hard news but that needs extra effort and time. In covering these issues there are established/conventional sources whom we normally go to. These include public relations officers, information or communication officers, those in decisions making positions who have established themselves as sources for the media, experts and the like. Now if a news reporter wants to cover say an economic issue from the perspective of women it would require more knowledge, more research and more resource in term of time. Most of our media organizations have limitations in these and what could be covered quicker with the least time and expense fairs better.

Q: How about covering issues that are closely linked to women like women's rights issues?

A: But look at the kind of media events organized on issues revolving around women's rights issues. Most of them are similar in content and presentation. You would hear same topics, same voices and see same faces and this sameness makes these issues unattractive for news coverage. I know newsrooms that automatically drop invitations to these events for the reasons I just told you.

Q: How do you see the *responsibility* of a news reporter covering these issues in doing research and explorations to develop new angles on these stories?

A: Yes, that is important and I see your point but you should also know that it is also our reality that we need financial and human resources to do that kind of research. As I mentioned earlier most of our news organizations work under financial pressure and lack a skilled manpower. We manage with what we have.

And the pace of doing our business does not give us time to do much research. I am for instance expected to cover two to three events in a day and same with my colleagues. Most of the times our days go by without finding for ourselves time to properly sit and read what we have written. We write fast, submit our stories to our editors and off we go to do the next story. We rush and we prefer stories that can be done fast and with the least constraint...of course we know this way of doing our job compromises the quality of our news stories and don't give us time come up with a comprehensive coverage of issues. But that is how things are moving for now.

Journalist H

Q: I have discussed with you on the representation of women in the news. I have shown you the findings of the content analysis of my research on this issues and how women are invisible in news. Why would you say women have such low representation in news?

A: Because news is about events that take place in the public domain where women have very limited participation.

Q: Do you think events taking place in the private domain could become issues worth reporting?

A: Yes but it depends. Issues taking place in this domain tend to get coverage if they are unusual, bizarre or have human-interest element in them.

Q: How about women's right issues...the movements and steps women are making to advance their cause/interest?

A: I do not see any newness in the way these issues are progressing in this country. They simply constitute conferences and meetings where women gather and make rhetorical statements and then leave without really resolving the issues they raise. These events take place repetitively and year in and year out you don't see their lives improving or

changing for the better. I feel these issues have lost the freshness and the tempo required for them to be in news.

Q: Would you tell me about the practices in your newsroom on the division of work between male and female journalists?

A: The female journalists tend to cover women's and children's issues while the male journalists cover politics, law, court, parliament, science and technology, health, agriculture etc.

Q: One issue I have discussed with you based on the finding of my research is that the media seems to have very limited news sources and thus less diversity in its news coverage—some group of people who the power and the means to access the media are overwhelmingly visible while those who don't have these are overwhelmingly invisible. And yet the media—being a public space/forum for discussion—are supposed to be serving the interest of all citizens. Why do you think have the media failed in bringing in diverse sources of news and groups of citizens in news?

A: I see your point and I know it is important to bring diverse voices in its content and that this is also an issue of fairness. But then there are issues in the newsroom you also need to take into consideration. For one the newsroom pressure in meeting deadlines plays a great role here. We work under a strict deadline and we do not usually have time to seek “non-conventional sources” that have not established themselves well with the ability to give the media information in a package that suitably fits into the routines of news coverage...like in the form of press releases, press conferences, press meetings, and other media events. It is easier and more suitable for us to use what we have at our disposal...this saves us time and newsroom resource. This is the main reason for the media to go to the spokespersons and executives of the various institutions in the country.