

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION**

**ETHICAL ISSUES IN NEWS REPORTING  
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO  
*THE ETHIOPIAN HERALD*  
NEWSPAPER**

**BY**

**HAILE-GEBRIEL ENDESHAW**

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of  
Addis Ababa University in partial fulfillment of  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This research is a pilot study, or a kind done as experiment, intended to identify ethical problems in news reporting with particular reference to *The Ethiopian Herald* Newspaper. In conducting the research, the following major questions were taken in to account. What are the ethical problems in news reporting in *The Ethiopian Herald* newspaper? And what are the causes for these ethical problems? The research method employed for the study is content analysis. Sampling population for the analysis was taken from issues of *The Ethiopian Herald* published between March and August 2005. Some 55 Election news stories printed during the stated period were drawn from the sampling population as unit of analysis. Questionnaire and interview were also employed as supportive instruments of data gathering for the study. Accordingly, the final results of the study indicate in the first place that the majority of the election news stories published in *The Ethiopian Herald* do not fulfill one of the major ethical principles of journalism, fairness. Secondly, the journalists working for the paper carry out their journalistic duties under the interference of their employers, government officials. Finally, it was possible to see through the study that censorship, which is prohibited by the constitution of the land, Article 29 (3a), is practiced by the state paper under study.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

|       |       |   |
|-------|-------|---|
| CPJ   | ----- | Committee to Protect Journalists                  |
| CUD   | ----- | Coalition for Unity and Democracy                 |
| DPL   | ----- | Draft Press Law                                   |
| EDP   | ----- | Ethiopian Democratic Party                        |
| ENA   | ----- | Ethiopian News Agency                             |
| EPA   | ----- | Ethiopian Press Agency                            |
| EPRDF | ----- | Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front |
| ICHRP | ----- | International Council on Human Rights Policy      |
| IFJ   | ----- | International Federation of Journalists           |
| IPI   | ----- | International Press Institute                     |
| MIC   | ----- | Media and Information Commission                  |
| NEB   | ----- | National Electoral Board                          |
| NEBE  | ----- | National Electoral Board of Ethiopia              |
| Proc. | ----- | Proclamation                                      |
| RSB   | ----- | Reporters without Borders                         |
| TPLF  | ----- | Tigray People's Liberation Front                  |
| USIA  | ----- | United States Information Agency                  |
| WIC   | ----- | Walta Information Center                          |

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Many people are heard complaining that they do not have interest in following the state media because they do not give due attention to ethical journalistic principles needed in news reporting. The state media, according to these people, do not consider fairness, independence, responsibility and other ethical issues. At times they make errors by distorting sources.

Basically the media have the responsibility of serving the people by providing fair, balanced and accurate stories in a responsible manner. As they are described as being the fourth estate, it is their primary duty to play a role of supervision against governments. “Ideally, one of the powers of the media is to act as a check against government, and to defend public interest by uncovering abuses of power in private and corporate enterprises.” (Ronning, 2002: 60).

The major causes for the loss of interest in the media in Ethiopia are believed to be ethical problems such as acts of being irresponsible. When the media act irresponsibly, several things can happen. Ethical issues that should be given due attention may be neglected and the media lose credibility. This weakens the media's vital role as watchdog. As a result the wellbeing of democracy suffers (Retief, 2002: 5).

*The Ethiopian Herald* is the sole state daily newspaper published in the English language. Like the other state media, this paper has also suffered a lot from ethical problems. Many of the news stories are published without taking into consideration the major ethical

principles like fairness, responsibility and independence. Because of these ethical problems, the paper is seen losing its readers.

The purpose of the media is to provide accurate and well balanced information to the public. "... [T]he proper role of the press is to provide editorial content that responds to the interests of the public..." (Baker, 2002: 24). But unfortunately many state media, especially in Africa, have failed to do so. As a state-owned paper *The Ethiopian Herald* is believed to face similar problems. Therefore, it is this researcher's belief that the study will do its level best in identifying these problems.

Thus, the research tries to identify ethical problems observed in news reporting in the national English daily. To achieve this well, the study attempts to respond to the following major questions:

1. What are the major ethical problems in news reporting in *The Ethiopian Herald*?
2. What are the causes of these ethical problems?

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

The study is conducted with the objectives of:

1. Identifying the ethical problems in news reporting in the national English daily;
2. Indicating the causes of the problems; and
3. Providing possible solutions and recommendations to the ethical problems identified.

## **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Since ethical issues in the state media seem to have not yet been given due attention, the study will be of paramount importance in discussing the issues, which have impact on

credibility of state media. Accordingly, the study is made with a view to imparting the following specific and practical benefits.

1. It will try to indicate where the real ethical problems lie so that the concerned bodies can take measures to address them.
2. It may help others who are engaged in the media sector not to commit similar mistakes in the future.
3. It may also provide other researchers with ideas that are useful for their studies, etc.

#### **1.4 Limitations of the Study**

Due to time constraint, the study is conducted on six months issues of a single state medium, *The Ethiopian Herald*. The researcher doesn't miss the fact that it would have been more advantageous had the study involved other state media.

#### **1.5 Organization of the Study**

The study is composed of five chapters. Chapter one, as already indicated, gives the overall picture of the study; embracing statement of the problem, objectives, significance, limitations and organization of the study.

Chapter two of the study deals with the review of related literature incorporating ethical concepts, its definition, the significance of code of ethics, ethics and censorship, principles of ethics and other related issues.

Chapter three of the study deals with methodology. Chapter four discusses the analysis and presentation of data, while the last chapter deals with the summary, conclusion and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Defining Ethics**

Taking into account the purpose of the study attempts are made to define ethics in terms of journalism. This is done with a view to strengthening the issues that are discussed all the way through the study.

In defining ethics various scholars commonly raise the issue of moral. According to them, ethics is concerned with moral concepts and its judgment on the rightness and wrongness. Kruger (2004:1) states that ethics “deals with morality, moral judgments and the meaning of concepts like right and wrong”. To give moral judgments or decisions of the rightness and wrongness, there needed to be considered certain issues among which culture is the major one. Intensifying this point Day (2003:5) says that “ethical decisions are always made within a specific context, which includes the political, social and cultural climate”. Thus ethics is described as “laying down norms or rules of right or of good behavior”. (Ross, 1968: 311)

As Kasoma (1994 (b):5) puts it journalism ethics is concerned with making sound decisions in journalistic performance, and it assumes the presence of societal morality. Morality has to do with actions guided by generally acceptable human values and responsibilities.

Obligation of the journalists for the social and individual responsibility is given emphasis in media ethics. This is nothing but in reporting news the media practitioners are expected to make sound decisions to abide by the generally acceptable human values and responsibilities. Providing truthful information to the public is the major responsibility of journalism. Some intensify the point by saying that truthfulness is one of the primary ethical concerns in news and information. (Baker and Michael, 2003: 554)

This study advocates the idea that to maintain truthfulness in news reporting the journalists are expected to act ethically. This means they need to fulfill the basic components of truth in journalism, which include “factual accuracy, balance and fairness and adequate context” (Baker and Michael, 2003:554). To implement all these journalists need to act responsibly, independently and ethically in general. On the other hand failure to provide truthful information responsibly, independently and in a fair manner, is a serious violation of journalism ethics.

## **2.2 Ethics and Freedom of Expression**

In discussing freedom of expression, it is appropriate first to say a few things about democracy because there can never be freedom of expression in a country where there is no democracy. This is to say that freedom of expression and democracy are two sides of the same coin.

According to Abraham Lincoln, democracy is a government “of the people, by the people and for the people”. Thus democracy most commonly defined as “rule by the people” (Mason, 1994:4). The decisive power in a democratic country, according to the definition, is people. Sovereignty of the people, government based upon consent of the governed, majority rule, minority rights, guarantee of basic human rights, free and fair elections, equality before the law and others are referred to as the pillars of democracy. Where one of these pillars is missing, it is hardly possible to say that democracy is prevailing. “There can be no doubt that two of the most important characteristics of a healthy democracy are free and independent media and free and fair elections.” (Schnellinger, 2001:15).

Dhal (1998:48) says that basic human rights “are among the essential building blocks of a democratic process of government”. Under these basic human rights, we have freedom of speech, expression and of the press, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly and association. These rights are referred to as inalienable to indicate that, as they exist independently, they cannot be legislated away.

Freedom of speech and expression is given special emphasis in democracy. It “is the life blood of any democracy. To debate and vote, to assemble and protest, to worship, to ensure justice for all-these all rely upon the unrestricted flow of speech and information” (USIA, 1991:9).

Any government that claims to be democratic encourages the existence of a free press. When there is a free press, other liberties are secured. The people will be free to convey their thoughts to one another without any external interference including that of the government; because people are born free to speak their minds.

Speech is natural and inseparable from the human person, the breath of his social existence, and so intimate a tool of all mental life that without free speech thought itself could not be fully free. The press, by contrast, is an institution of developed society, a machine-using institution, and one whose role tends to enlarge as new instruments are devised. (Steinberg, 1996:152)

All views that are believed to be valuable should be disseminated for public hearing. This, however, ought to be handled in a responsible way. “The watchdog role of the press has...duties and responsibilities.” (Kasoma, 2000: 41).

Serving the public is the major responsibility of the public media; in doing so they are also responsible to provide accurate, unbiased and fair information. According to the social responsibility theory, “freedom of expression is a moral right with an aspect of duty about it”. (Siebert, 1956:96) MacDougall (1977) underscores this in the following way: the public's right to know of events of public importance and interest is the overriding mission of the mass media (MacDougall, 1977:24).

Taking this into consideration, journalists have to make efforts to gather facts and communicate them “in language that is stylish, accurate and instantly understood. They must also lead the way in integrity, honesty and tenacity. They have to be ethical.” (Herbert, 2001:12). In this way journalists are expected to live up to public expectations.

Being free does not mean journalists are absolutely free to publish or broadcast whatever they wish. They should note that there are ethical and legal limitations against free speech. “One’s right to free expression must be balanced against the private rights of others and against vital social interests.” (Siebert, 1956:97) Violating privacy, defamation in the name of free speech, may result in unexpected consequences. “There are grounds for limiting free speech, which are recognized in law, such as libel, slander or incitement to riot. Apart from these legal limitations, there are ethical limitations, taken in a broad sense, where the value of free speech conflicts with other values of society.” (MacDonald, 1998:6)

## **2.3 Principles of Media Ethics**

There are certain issues that should be considered as cornerstones of media ethics. These are, among others, independence, truth, impartiality, fairness, decency, accuracy and responsibility. Some scholars add “minimizing harm” and “accountability” to their list. But here as the study has its major focus on independence, fairness and responsibility, attempts are made to discuss only these three principles of ethics.

### **2.3.1 Independence**

Independence is one of the major principles of ethics that should be given due emphasis. On the other hand it means that “...the question of independence is crucial to journalism ethics.” (Kruger, 2004:54). The free dictionary (Free Dictionary, 2005: Internet) defines independence as freedom from control or influence of another or others. This part of the study discusses issues in the realm of independent journalism on the basis of this particular definition.

In the same way as the above mentioned definition, independent media is a media that is free from any external influence. According to Black (1995) in Retief (2002:22), independent media remain free of associations and activities; seek out and disseminate competing perspectives without being unduly influenced by those who would use their power or position counter to public interest. If journalists are needed to seek the truth and report it fully to the public, they should be allowed to act independently. They are

also expected to keep themselves away from activities that may compromise their integrity or damage their credibility. It is only then the press has been said to have played a watchdog roles or regarded as fourth estate. Yes, “Public trust relies on journalists being able to remain independent of outside agendas” (Kruger, 2004: 54). On the other hand any journalistic work that is not accomplished independently may raise the question of credibility.

Commercial, proprietor and governmental interferences are believed to be the major factors that influence the independence of journalism. Many agree that the government or the private media owners can employ journalists, but should leave them alone to proceed with their job in accordance with the editorial policy of the respective media. “In any democratic society individual media organizations and journalists should be free to choose their own role without interference from governments or other outside groups.” (Dadge, 2005: Internet). However, the existing reality in many countries shows the opposite. Mostly the media are under strict control of the government. “...The African government has never left the press alone to operate freely with the minimum interference within and outside the law like most democratic governments do” (Kasoma, 2000: 88). Regarding the situation of the state media in Ethiopia, Kruger, (2005: Internet) said, “[t]he heavy-handed state control...caused considerable discomfort to the journalists working there.” According to Kruger, journalists in state media in Ethiopia “felt unhappy and deeply compromised by the tight controls being exercised over their work”. (Ibid)

For various reasons, particularly impositions, certain media tend to be partisans. They do not act independently. They prefer to stick to one side. This is clearly reflected in their reporting and editorial policies. For instance, after the 9/11 attacks on the United States “the US television network Fox News Channel came to incarnate this school of thought, by adopting the news of the US Administration and criticizing media positions that sought to report in a more independent or more critical manner” (ICHRP, 2002: 86). Serving the public honestly is the duty of a good journalist. To accomplish this well s/he must remain independent from any engagement that affects journalism. Freedom of the press by itself does not mean any thing but being free from imposition from government

and proprietors. “What is special about the principle of free speech is that it provides a degree of immunity from government control” (MacDonald, 1998:5). In countries where media are under the strict control of the state, there is much violation of independence and events will not get fair coverage. For instance, “In many African countries government-controlled media are not allowed to cover activities and speeches of the opposition.” (Mwaura, 1994:107)

There are many African countries that are dangerous for journalists according to CPJ. For instance, in 2005 many journalists were harassed, imprisoned and attacked in Uganda, Niger, Kenya, Mozambique, Mali, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Burundi, and other African countries (CPJ, Cases, 2005:Internet). The legal actions being taken against journalists in some of these countries violate the independence of the journalists. Where there is no independence, it is hardly possible to expect authentic information. Regarding the point Kovach (2001) says the following:

The notion of freedom of the press is rooted in independence. Only a press free of government censors could tell the truth. In a modern context, that freedom was expanded to mean independence from other institutions as well-parties advertisers, business, and more. The conglomeration of the news business threatens the survival of the press as an independent institution as journalism becomes a subsidiary inside large corporations more fundamentally grounded in other business process (Kovach, 2001:32).

In Zimbabwe government took measure in 2003 to ban the country’s only daily, *The Daily News*. This shows “the complicated challenges of a legal and economic kind, including government interference, undemocratic laws...the independent press faces in many parts of Africa”. (Ronning, 2005)

Media in any democratic country act as a watchdog regarding the activities of the incumbent government. “... [T]he press should play a watchdog role by altering the citizenry against misuse of power and governance.” (Kasoma, 2000:40) To implement this in a better way the media are expected to act independently without the interference of government or proprietors.

In the same way the media must not lose their editorial independence due to commercial interference. Commercial interference affects the independence of media for it is always after its interest, which is definitely profit. They do not bother about the interest of the readers (audience). “Often advertisers want different editorial content than do readers or viewers...” (Baker, 2002: 24).

Conflict of interest is also the other factor that affects independence in journalism. Therefore, journalists are to guard themselves against all such things like party partisanship receiving offers and invitation. These highly affect independence.

Independence is one of the fundamental principles of journalism ethics because it sets up a defense against conflicts of interest and competing loyalties. It says publicly that our work is guided by no allegiance except that to professional standards and the audiences... Journalists must remain free of associations and activities that may compromise their integrity or damage their own or their organization's credibility. (Kruger, 2004:95)

Therefore, journalists should do their level best to avoid this; because their “real social responsibility is met by doing [their] job, providing trustworthy and independent accounts of what is going on” (Kruger, 2004:99).

### **2.3.2 Fairness**

Fairness in news reporting, according to Kasoma, (1994 (a):336), “means that the journalist gives a hearing to all the contending sides in a story”. He further states that fairness gives “the accused the right to reply in the same story not waiting to publish what they say in a subsequent issue or, worse still, never giving them a story at all”. (Ibid: 336-337) It is only when these sides have equal opportunity to reflect their views, a news story said to be fairly reported.

Pavlic (2001:93) says that fairness means nothing but “providing balanced coverage reflecting all sides of an issue”. It also includes completeness, relevance and honesty. It implies impartiality that the journalist has nothing personal to gain from a report, that there are no hidden benefits to the reporter or to the source from the story being presented

(Biagi, 1999:346). When it is said a news story should be fair and balanced, it means that it should be impartial and without bias or the journalist is expected to give all sides of the argument a fair hearing (Frost, 2000:36). The reporting must be made in such a way that it is not focused on a particular point of view. The issue of balance should be given due focus of attention. However, the reality on the ground in many countries is different. Let us look at an example. This refers to the 2000 Ethiopian elections.

Although there was a more active debate in national newspapers, there were only minor columns on the elections in the regional newspapers during the week before the election. In the government owned *Herald of Tigray*, [?] one article presented general information about the meaning of elections, but also campaigned unapologetically in favour of the ruling party. It stated that EPRDF's five-year programme should be a model for other parties that spend most of their time making false promises to the people and criticizing their rivals (Aalen, 2002: 89-90).

Kruger (2004:83) says that while reporting journalists should put into consideration whether all affected parties have been spoken to, if efforts have been made to give the appropriate weight and consideration, whether the report has gone beyond the obvious sources. A review of ethical violations committed by newspapers in Ghana since 1992 shows that “journalists did not bother to check up on the information before reporting them as facts. In short, biased coverage, partial coverage, partisan coverage, gossipy headlines and unfair reporting were painful manifestations of the period under study”. (Koomson, 1996:55)

To ask for fairness and balance is to ask that evaluative language be avoided, that the material should not be slanted (MacDonald, 1998:60). However, many media scholars argue that journalism can never be value-free. A report that is written by a journalist is expected to reflect his or her feelings, opinions and values. Ronning (2002:86) states that news media tend to construct accounts of events that are structured and framed by the dominant values and interests of the society in which they exist. That is why MacDonald (1998:62) says: “Journalism's failure to be objective is because it can not free itself of value judgments”.

Though any reporting cannot be free from value judgments, it does not mean that one should not be concerned to maintain fairness in news making at all. Since efforts are made to represent relevant viewpoints on matters of importance, it is definitely said the issue of fairness has been considered. On the other hand the more unfair a journalist is the greater harm s/he is likely to cause. After all “[N]o journalist can do without a commitment to fairness” (Kruger, 2004:83).

Mostly media in many African countries seem to be negligent in reporting news fairly. A senior reporter for one private news paper in Ethiopia said: “because of the fact that many officials and organizations are not willing to talk to us we often publish unbalanced stories....” (Kruger, 2005: Internet). This is one of the causes for journalists in third world countries not to report with due fairness. “For the media to be fair and free and to effectively check abuse of power, journalists must have access to information”. (Mason, 1994:52)

### **2.3.3 Responsibility**

We focus on this particular principle of ethics to give emphasis on its significance in fair and independent reporting. Responsibility in the media means that reporters and editors must be careful as to how they should use the information they gather (Biagi, 1999: 361). This means that journalist should feel responsibility in reporting a story. A report that does not entertain different sides fairly is not expected from responsible journalists. “The news media are the central nervous system of society and ought to act responsibly and constructively to help the public better define and develop democracy.” (Dennis, 1998: xvi)

Ethical journalism acts responsibly facilitating the democratic process and serving the public interest (Belsey, 1998:11). According to a review of ethical violations committed by newspapers in Ghana since 1992, journalists acted irresponsibly. “...Others freely dug into people’s past, when it was not pertinent or important. What is worse, the language was mostly offensive, scurrilous or lacking in elegance and precision.” (Koomson, 1996: 55)

A good journalist accomplishes his/her duty with ethical decisions, which emanates from individual responsibility. This is to say that “good ethical decisions require individual responsibility” (Kruger, 2004:14). An interview conducted for research in Nigeria revealed that government owned broadcast media could not be trusted for their irresponsible behaviour. “One of the respondents cited the instance of the widely reported death in 1990 of Dr. Nnambi Azikiwe, the first indigenous Governor-General of Nigeria. Dr. Azikiwe, however, died six years later, in 1996” (Soola, 1996:111). This shows how responsibility is of paramount importance in fairness.

Here one can say that a reporter is free to do whatever s/he likes so long as freedom of expression is in place. But “[t]he notion of freedom raises the issue of responsibility, attending to the consequences of our actions” (Sanders, 2003:74). One may be said to have freedom in calling others in bad names, cause terror. But is s/he right to do so? Why does s/he do this? What kind of person does s/he want to be? The individuals must inquire these kinds of moral questions. These may help them to gain some clues as to how they should act. “If we accept that we are, to a certain extent, free, we can accept too that we can be responsible.” (Ibid: 75). By responsible journalism is meant journalistic action that takes into account its effect on people both as news /information sources and news/information consumers.

The opposite, irresponsible journalism, is reportage that does not care about consequences to the people arising from what is reported (Kasoma, 2000:82). News stories that were reported irresponsibly created dismay among people. For instance, coverage of the ethnic conflict in Northern Mali, especially after the slaughter of innocent populations by armed movements created unfavorable situations among people. Some publications caused the readers to be suspicious of all persons (Sangho, 1996:71). Retief (2002: 216) indicates that “[T]he freedom of the press can never mean the absence of responsibility...Real freedom should always be accompanied by responsibility”. Yes, “[p]ress freedom only has a meaning when it is used responsibly” (Kasoma, 1994

(a):339). Therefore, as the media have influence on people, programs should be entertained with a sense of responsibility.

## **2.4 Significance of Code of Ethics for Journalists**

Many journalists in various parts of the world adopt codes of ethics to guide themselves in a responsible manner. As journalists do their duties “not for themselves but on behalf of their public” (Kruger, 2004:3), they need to have codes of ethics, which suggest that news must be accurate and error-free.

Having codes of ethics is of paramount importance for journalists that shoulder the big responsibility of serving the public. Kruger (2004:3) says, “[c]odes of ethics are a good place to find lofty and sometimes even elegant expressions of the view that journalism is basically about public service”. Apart from this, the codes outline the conditions of journalists’ accountability, responsibility. This indicates that having or adopting code of ethics obliges the journalists to be accountable to the public, their sources, to their professions and accomplish their duties in a responsible way.

Code of ethics also plays significant roles in protecting the freedom, integrity and identity of journalism (Campbell, 2004:148). In particular codes are very essential in Africa, where there is no much freedom. This would play a role in easing pressure of interference. “If African journalists observed professional ethics, governments, individuals, groups, organizations and other pressure groups would find it more difficult to intervene and interfere with the practices of the profession” (Mwaura 1994:113).

Many media scholars say that lacking codes, among others, is one of the causes for journalism not to be considered as a profession. Having codes of ethics and enforcing journalists to abide by them, like other medical and legal professions, can help journalism to be taken as profession. Ronning (20002:61) says supporting this that codes have been seen and developed as part of a process giving journalism a professional status. MacDonald, (1998) also says the following:

One way of asserting professionalism is to have self-regulatory councils and codes of practice. These have come into being in an attempt at self-regulation in the face of public criticism and also in an attempt, it might be suggested, to gain or maintain public credibility, to establish journalism as a profession. The adoption of a code can be seen as an important symbol of the fact that the occupation is seeking to justify itself in terms of professional norms. (MacDonald, 1998:78)

Keeble (2001:131) adds that professionalism is usually linked to the promotion of codes of conduct. “Ethical codes, in effect, serve to create a collective conscience of a profession.”

Journalists who are bound by their codes gain credibility from the wider public. They use freedom of expression in a responsible manner. They are committed to protect their confidential sources. Ronning (2002:61) says that apart from restricting certain immoral practices on the part of journalists, codes of press conduct have another function to safeguard press freedom itself. “... Media ethics becomes a guarantee for media independence. It is for this reason that press codes, for example, commit journalists to protecting confidential sources of information.”

Some principal underlying values in codes throughout the world, according to Keeble (2001:14), are fairness, the separation of fact and opinion, the need for accuracy linked with the responsibility to correct errors, maintaining confidentiality sources, upholding journalists’ responsibility to guard citizens’ right to freedom of expression, recognizing a duty to defend the dignity and independence of the profession, protecting people’s right to privacy; respecting and seeking after truth, struggling against censorship, avoiding discrimination on grounds of race, sexual orientation, genders, language, religion or political opinion; avoiding conflicts of interest (particularly with respect to political and financial journalists or editors holding shares in companies they report on).

Therefore, journalists, including senior editors are advised to unite with others to adopt common codes of ethics, which are believed to improve the ethical environment of media institutions. Moreover, “such codes can also be cited as evidence of socially responsible institution that is unwilling to condone unethical practices.” (Day, 2003:441)

Some may say that codes established at national level can serve all these purpose. However, the national codes are so general that they can hardly serve as a basis for genuine ethical blue print. "... [T]he detailed standards of some news papers and the commercial TV networks, for example can be valuable in at least serving as guide posts for journalists and other media practitioners as they confront moral dilemmas." (Day, 2003:441).

African journalists, in particular, need protection from the state, their editors and employers. However, they themselves are the best ones to secure their protection. This can be implemented through the amelioration of journalistic standards and observation of a strict code of professional ethics.

## **2.5 Ethics and Censorship**

Receiving and imparting information are among the basic rights of human beings. That is why nations across the world enshrine this right in their respective constitutions. Article 19 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights also states that "[e]very one has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

In a country where democratic rights of the public have not been well protected, governing bodies regard the press as a threat. Due to this, they never leave a stone unturned to stifle it. They use censorship to stop direct opposition against their ruling. "Governments control the media by censoring what is reported or by prosecuting those who write or say things critical of the government." (Mason, 1994:52) This trend, which is unethical in journalism, has long been a common practice in many African countries. Reporters without Borders (RSB) indicates in its 2003 report that about 180 journalists were detained in Africa during 2002, and more than 80 news media were censored in the region during 2002. (Ronning, 2005) Restrictive media laws are also taken as direct censorship that threatens freedom of expression. The recent draft press law of Ethiopia is

a good example. Commenting on the draft press law, The IPI Editor and African Coordinator, Dudge, (2005: Internet) says the following:

The DPL carries articles on Licensing, Registration, a Media Council, a Freedom of Information section, as well as proposed offences, the judicial process and possible penalties. Many of these Articles are unnecessary for a healthy media environment while a number of others do not provide sufficient detail, particularly the articles dealing with freedom of information. The overall result is unwieldy law that is in immediate need of revision and further discussion. (Dudge, 2005: Internet).

Thus the DPL is restrictive or a direct form of censorship. The surprising thing is that the Ethiopian Constitution Article 29 (3a) stipulates the “prohibition of any form of censorship”. Proclamation 34/1992 also states that censorship of the press and any restriction of a similar nature are prohibited. In this way censorship is used by many governments to prevent journalists from reporting independently, fairly and responsibly.

Mwaura (1994:107) indicates that freedom of expression and speech, investigative journalism, freedom of movement, self-censorship and newspapers and magazines, are regarded as the major areas of censorship.

As investigative journalism is after corruption, misappropriation of responsibilities and misconduct, in government and private sectors, the ruling body of a country, especially in Africa, regards it with suspicion. “The involvement of government in the press in Africa has throughout history been so heavy that it can rightly be said that the African government is obsessed with the press.” (Kasoma, 2000:88). For instance, the government-controlled Media and Information Commission (MIC) in Zimbabwe shut down the independent regional newspaper *The Weekly Times* after just eight weeks of publication, saying the newspaper violated the country’s media legislation. “Local journalists told CPJ the closure was part of a systematic clampdown on critical media in the run-up to parliamentary elections scheduled for March 31.” (CPJ, Protests, 2005: Internet).

There should be freedom of movement in a country so that a journalist is able to seek stories worth publishing or broadcasting. However, many undemocratic nations do not

abide by this universal rule. They bar journalists from areas where anti-government movements are thought to be observed. In Africa, a journalist should have special permission from a government to enter into an area.

As indicated above newspapers and magazines are targets for censorship. A government may issue a guideline for magazines or newspapers that obliges the publishers to fill a written form, or submit a general report about the issues before they are published. The other way of censorship can also be implemented in the form of “economic pressures”. The government may impose taxes on papers to discourage publishers. It can also withdraw advertising from the private press or push, through various means, the private sector to do so. This is commonly practised in Africa to cause the collapse of the threatening newspapers or magazines. In this way the government indirectly implements censorship, which in turn stops the journalists not to implement journalism ethics.

The other tactic the government may use to suppress the press is by becoming the media owner itself. This is quite common in Africa. Governments take measures to put the media under their ownership. For instance, the *New Nigerian* newspaper owned by the federal government has been consistently supportive of federal government, particularly in times of national crises (Soola, 1996:113). Wilcox (1982:209) as quoted by Sandbrook (2000: 41) says that in 1980, about 90 per cent of Sub-Saharan Africa’s ninety daily newspapers were owned by governments or governing parties in single party states. As the top management bodies, including editors and reporter, are government employees, they do not have the courage to speak out against the wrongdoings of their employer (the government). States try to control the media using different “techniques ranging from outright censorship and expression to more subtle means, which often combine state ownership of the media with a system of economic awards to journalists who tow the line and reprisal against those who do not” (Ronning, 2005). Editors-in-chief in most state media in Ethiopia are government appointees. This is the same in many other African countries. For instance, *Le Soleil* (A pro government daily) is a state monopoly of information in Senegal. The state is the majority shareholder of this paper and its board chairman is an advisor in the president’s office (Ndao, 1996:130). “In such

situations, the media become nothing but mouth pieces for ruling individuals or parties.” (Mwaura, 1994:109)

Self-censorship is also against the ethics of journalism. A journalist, who restricts himself or herself from providing the truth, in a journalistic manner and frequently uses unnecessary adjectives, is practising self-censorship.

When journalists feel obliged not to publish information, which might otherwise be deemed suitable for publication or to publish such information, because of fear of reprisals or to please certain quarters, they are engaging in self-censorship, the most malignant journalistic disease in Africa. Self-censorship has become so endemic among African journalists that it had turned into a culture, complete with its own vocabulary in which terms like 'patriotism', 'nation buildings', 'responsibility', 'peace', 'love and unity' feature prominently to justify blatant censoring and doctoring of news. (Mwaura, 1994:109)

Broadcasters in Nigerian media are accused of doctoring news and information to suit their ends and those of government (Soola, 1996:111).

Censorship is the enemy of press freedom and journalistic ethics. It aggravates disagreements and causes undesired results. Moreover, it “makes counter arguments silent. Under censorship difference is portrayed as enmity opponents are demonized. Censorship makes people stupid and fanatic.” (Demszky, 1998:76)

## **2.6 Role of Journalists in Election Coverage**

“Print and electronic journalism is arguably of prime importance in securing accountability when elections are far apart and manipulated and party systems and legislatures weak.” (Sandbrook, 2000:40)

It is unquestionable that journalism plays a pivotal role in promoting democracy in general. As a free and fair election is one of the pillars of democracy, the involvement of journalism is of considerable importance here. Basically, maintaining objectivity, impartiality and balance are the challenging characteristic of journalism. However, this gets most challenging in political elections. “The election provides a further challenge to

media because it brings into sharp focus the need of media to provide citizens with access to all the facts, opinions and ideas being canvassed in campaigns.” (IFJ) But the reality on the ground is very different. For instance, during the 2000 national election, *the Ethiopian Herald*, the national Daily, published the following.

Woreda Council Elections conducted smoothly. EPRDF wins 98 per cent of votes in Addis. [These two sentences seem to be headlines]. The government media, EPRDF and NEB stated that the elections were ‘free and fair’. Private newspapers, on the other hand, published the opposition’s claims about the misdeeds of election officials, local administrators and the ruling party during the polls. Opposition leaders voiced their disappointment with the process, but stress the need for a long-term approach to the development of democracy. (Aalen and Siegfried, 2002:196)

Therefore, the larger public or voters need to have well-balanced and impartial reporting on elections. It “must also provide access to media so that citizen's voices can be heard above the babble of political debate” (IFJ).

Media scholars urge that journalists should have the right to do their reporting without any external interference. State-owned media in particular should not become propaganda machines of the ruling body. During the 2000 national election in Ethiopia “Radio *Woyane*, the local radio station owned by TPLF, was frequently used as a channel for propaganda. The fact that there are no privately owned media in Tigray region ensured that the opposition had and continues to have a hard time getting access to channels for spreading its idea” (Aalen, 2002:90). Such issues must be considered in order that the media can produce free and fair reportage of elections. Therefore, the real media freedom is essential to enable journalists, editors and publishers to advance the public interest by publishing, broadcasting or circulating facts and opinions without which a democratic electorate cannot make responsible judgments (IFJ). “[Journalists] can watch over the electoral campaign to guard against abuses of the process and distortion of the truth.” (Schnellinger, 2001:15)

During an election, the voting public learns about electoral process through media coverage. This can include information on the election, on candidates and thought of the voters on campaigns as well as on candidates. Such information on electoral process can

be used by the voters to make an informed choice on election day. In doing so journalists must do their duties in a responsible way.

Reporting on elections is an important responsibility. For the press to fulfill its election integrity role, its reporting must be responsible, accurate and professional. Uniformed or biased reporters can spin a story, giving the public an unfair and inaccurate perception of a candidate or the process. Given the nature of public trust that most of the press enjoys, the press must have the highest standards for accurateness and fairness. (Nelson, 2000: Internet)

During an election editors in particular are expected to discharge their responsibilities in an ethical manner. They should check that candidates are given, in the media, equal opportunity to reach the voters. Editors have also the responsibility to make sure an election news story is fair, relevant, balanced and accurate.

Experiences during the past Ethiopian elections show that media coverage was not fair to all contending parties. Most of the state media gave wider coverage to the incumbent government.

...Media coverage of and public interest in the elections were meager. They paid little attention of the programs of the political parties and the public debates in the pre-election period....The government media aired reports on EPRDF accusations that EDP was 'trying to make the EPRDF a scapegoat for their weakness' and beating up their candidates, but no evidence was provided. (Aalen and Siegfried, 2002: 189)

Sometimes state media are seen giving full support to the government during election. This is not expected from a media, whose role is to serve the public fairly, independently and responsibly.

## **2.7 *The Ethiopian Herald* (Background)**

The English daily, *The Ethiopian Herald* is the sole state owned newspaper which was launched in 1943. It is among four state papers that are published under EPA. Currently there are about 32 people working for *The Ethiopian Herald*. Some 17 of them are journalists while the rest are supportive staff members.

*The Ethiopian Herald* newspaper, which is published every day except Monday, entertains home and world news including various soci-economic and political issues in nine daily as well as weekly columns and pages. Most of the local news stories published in the paper are dispatched by two government, ENA, and party news agencies like WIC. A very limited number of news items is written by staff reporters. As the staff reporters are too little to cover all daily events, the paper is highly dependant on the above mentioned state news agencies as its major news sources.

Two editorial meetings that are conducted two times a day are most important in determining the day to day activities of the paper. These meetings attended by editors-in-chief and chaired by a department head, who is the second top official of the agency, EPA, next to the general manager. Various issues that should receive coverage by the paper get their final decisions at these meetings. Every conference participant receives copies that carry tip off (List that indicates events to be covered by the media). Theses copies are distributed to every conference participant ahead of the meetings. Most of the time the tip off is commonly sent from ENA. By reading the lists one by one the conference participants, mostly editors-in-chief, discuss which of the four papers (including the Amharic Daily, *Addis Zemen* the weeklies *Berissa* and *Al-Alem*) should cover which events. If an event is assigned to be covered by *The Ethiopian Herald*, the editor-in-chief of the paper will assign a reporter. It is in this way events get coverage in the national English daily. The daily circulation of *The Ethiopian Herald* is between 9-10, 000.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

#### **3.1 Design of the Study**

The major purpose of this study is to find out ethical problems *The Ethiopian Herald* faces in its news stories coverage and suggest possible solutions that may help to solve the problems observed. The study focuses in particular whether the ethical principles, independence, fairness and responsibility, were given due consideration in news reporting. Thus, news stories selected for the study were examined to identify how far ethical principles and related issues were taken into account in reporting them.

In finding out the ethical problems the study analyses election news. Thus data were gathered from purposely selected election news stories published in *The Ethiopian Herald* newspaper within six months of time. Due to time constraint, the study has been limited to only six months issues of the paper. Moreover, as the election news taken for the study should entertain the views of the ruling and other contending parties, the researcher had to base his study only on a few selected ones. Apart from analytical analysis, interview and questionnaire were also employed as supportive sources of information for the study. As this study can be regarded as pilot study or a kind done as experiment, only basic statistical analysis, interview and questionnaire were employed.

#### **3.2 Source of Information**

##### **3.2.1 The Election News Stories**

The primary data for the study was collected from election news stories published in *The Ethiopian Herald*. Three issues of a week published between March 01, 2005 and August

30, 2005, totally 79, were randomly selected for the purpose. The election news stories published during the third national election in the above stated time were the unit of analysis or sources of information for the study. Accordingly, 79 issues of the paper were selected for the study. Of these issues only 55 were found to have carried the election news appropriate for the study. As the rest 24 issues neither carried any election news stories nor had the ones with themes compatible with the study, they were discarded. All the 55 news stories selected for the study were either the ones that entertained issues of both the ruling and contending parties or the ones that state views or any thing related with these political parties.

### **3.2.2 Questionnaire and Interview**

Fifteen journalists working with *The Ethiopian Herald* and an official with EPA, publisher of *The Ethiopian Herald*, were also involved in the study as sources of information. The journalists, reporters and editors, working for *The Ethiopian Herald* were made to fill in the questionnaire. Their responsibilities in writing and editing news stories made their inclusion crucial. An Interview was also conducted with a senior government official of EPA. This individual is a responsible government official who has the power to decide whether a news story should be published or not. Due to his decisive responsibility, his involvement for the study was significant.

## **3.3 Sampling Procedure**

### **3.3.1 Samples of the News Stories**

Due to time constraint, the researcher determined to limit his study to some selected issues of the paper. Therefore, he applied a random sampling technique to select sampling population from issues published between March 01, 2005 and August 30, 2005. Thus the selection of newspaper was done starting from Tuesday, the first day of the week the paper is issued, and skipping a day. Accordingly, issues of Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday were selected. Besides, as the Tuesday's issue of the paper has a

weekly column, "Home News", it was essential to include it with the assumption that it would carry election news stories. It is the researcher's belief that the sample is large enough to be a representative one.

### **3.3.2 Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis of this study is election news. Election news reported during the third national election and in particular the ones that carried issues on both the ruling and other contending political parties were examined carefully using five categories that were employed for the study. The analysis was done in order to assess whether contending political parties in the third national election were reported on fairly in the news coverage under study.

### **3.3.3 Samples of Journalists**

*The Ethiopian Herald* Newspaper is the sole daily English state paper with entire staff members numbering about 32 of whom only 17 are serving as journalists. The rest are supportive staff members who are not involved in the actual news production process. Fifteen reporters and editors working for the paper have direct contact with news making. Due to this, the researcher selected all of them to fill in the questionnaire. Moreover, the election conducted for the third time across the nation required active participation of the entire journalists working for the paper in making election news. This has made the involvement of all reporters and editors significant.

### **3.4 Instruments of Data Gathering**

The necessary data were gathered using categorical analysis (for the content), questionnaire and interview. News items numbering about 55 were analyzed for their fairness using five categories. Journalists that are working with the paper were made to fill in the questionnaire. The interview was also conducted with a government official at EPA. The questions in both instruments of data collection were designed in such a way

that they could help the researcher get the needed information about ethical issues in news reporting in *The Ethiopian Herald*.

### **3.4.1 Content Analysis**

Seventy-nine newspapers (three issues per week) of *The Ethiopian Herald* published in six months were employed for analysis. Of these, only 55 were found to have carried the election news appropriate for the study. This means the publications picked for the study carried election news on contending political parties or views or other issues that concern them. Once having the sampling of content, the next step was to construct categories that enable the researcher to identify the fairness of the sampling election news stories. Accordingly, five categories were established. These are tone, order of appearance, quoted sources, headlines and pictures.

Furthermore, the researcher used certain techniques to determine the tone of the election news stories. For instance, in the news stories if more paragraphs were given to a political party named 'A' than the other political party named 'B', then the tone of that given election news would be determined to be positive towards party 'A'. Here the number of paragraphs is taken as one of the techniques used to measure the tone of the election news under study (see appendix IV). In this way all the 55 election news stories were analyzed to identify their fairness. As 24 issues of *The Ethiopian Herald* newspaper didn't carry election news stories that were believed to fit the study, they were discarded. Let's see the techniques applied to determine the tone of the election news stories.

Name-calling: This is taken to be the negative labeling of contending parties. Words or phrases that might prompt readers to take side with a party are given due consideration in this section. Moreover, if a contending party is named 'anti-peace elements', it is believed the naming will have negative connotation. It will be much better if political parties involved in the election are called 'contending parties', 'contesting parties' etc. Some of the election news taken for the study used these terms.

Highlighting: This technique is examined to identify if additional backgrounds are given to a contending party to promote it or distract readers' attention. Highlighting depends on background paragraphs or statements that recount the positive sides of a contending party.

Direct agitation or promotion: Here the technique is considered when readers are pushed or agitated to vote for a political party. This can be used in various ways to distract attention or prompt readers. Words or phrases like 'patriots' choice', 'peace loving', and the like were given special consideration to determine the tone of the news.

Paragraphing: Here the numbers of paragraphs given to every contending party in the election news stories were examined as they are believed to have influences in attracting or distracting the attentions of the readers. If the news story gives more paragraphs to a single party than the other one, and uses various techniques in support of one party, then it can be concluded that the story's tone is positive to one side.

Let's see few more sentences about some of the categories. 'Order of appearance' is one of the five categories used in the research to identify which party was given prominence in the story. Basically prominence in news stories has impact on issues that are coming next. Due to this, 'order of appearance' was employed as a category to determine the fairness of the news stories.

'Headline' is the other category. In news reporting headline plays significant roles in determining the fate of a news story. Is the headline favored to one party? Or is it neutral? Or which party has repeatedly been mentioned in the headlines? This by itself is believed to bring about positive or negative impacts to a given contending political party.

Whose pictures (photographs) have been used repeatedly for the news? This was also considered to identify whether the contending parties were represented fairly in the news stories. It is the researcher's belief that all the categories employed for the study enable him to judge whether or not the election news stories are fairly reported.

In counting and coding items, the researcher being assisted by two individual coders analyzed every news item, headline, paragraph, etc. The researcher believes that having assistant coders helps to avoid subjectivity, ensure accuracy and consistency as much as possible. The group of two coders including the researcher worked on the selected election news stories individually. Then they came together to code or insert the final results, which were common for both. Total consensus was reached between the researcher and a group member before any result was taken. When there was not agreement in the coding process, another individual was invited and consulted for a final decision. All the coding and counting process was finalized in full agreement in this way. Presentation and analysis of the data were carried out being supported by SPSS computer data system.

### **3.4.2 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire used in the study was composed of both open and closed-ended questions. The entire questions can be categorized into two parts. In the first part attempts were made to collect personal information like job title, experience and educational background. The second part was dedicated to questions that enable to gather as much information as possible on censorship, code of ethics, and some ethical principles such as independence, fairness and responsibility. Efforts were also made to produce the questions with simple and easily understandable sentences. The questions were designed in a bid to systematically elicit the needed information on the stated issues. Fifteen copies of the questionnaire were distributed to journalists working for the national daily, *The Ethiopian Herald*.

### **3.4.3 Interview**

Interview was used in the study to enrich information collected through content analysis and questionnaire. Here also the interview was composed of two parts. The first part was about personal profile of the interviewee. Age, job experience and educational background were included. The second part of the interview included questions that were

thought to help elicit information about censorship, and certain ethical principles like independence, fairness and responsibility. The information obtained through the interview was presented and analyzed along with the questionnaire.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The information gathered through categorical analysis, questionnaire and interview will be presented and analyzed separately in the next section of the study, chapter four. As indicated all the way through the study, the contents of the election news stories will be analyzed to find out ethical problems in news reporting in *The Ethiopian Herald* newspaper. This is done in particular by showing whether or not all the election news stories were reported fairly.

The data gathered through questionnaire and interview will also be presented and analyzed together to discover how far censorship, fairness and independence including code of ethics as well as responsibility were considered in news reporting in *The Ethiopian Herald Newspaper*.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

As stated in the previous chapter, categorical analysis or content data (for the content), questioner and interview were used as data gathering instruments in this study. Almost all the questions distributed as questionnaire and interview were filled in properly and returned. The government official at EPA gave response to the questions posed as interview in a hand written Amharic language. (See appendix III) All the data collected in this way are presented and analyzed being supported by SPSS computer data system.

In the first section of this chapter attempts are made to present and analyze the data collected through categorical analysis of the content. In the same way, the second part deals with the data gathered using questionnaire and interview. The last part of the chapter discusses the ethics and the consequent legal issues.

#### **4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Data**

##### **4.2.1 Data Gathered Through Categorical Analysis**

###### **4.2.1.1 Tone**

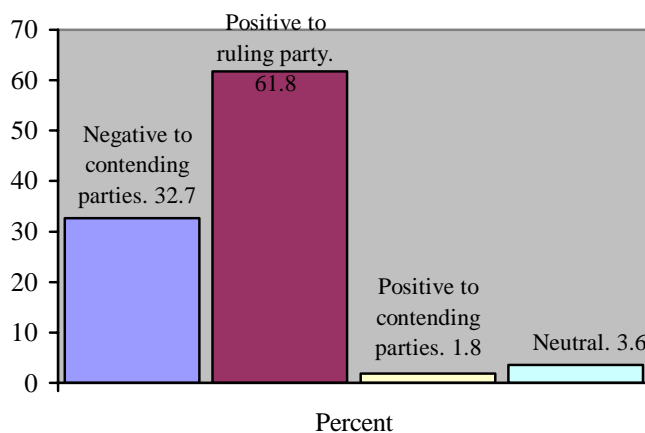
Here various techniques were employed to examine and determine whether the tone of the election news coverage was positive or negative towards one or other of the parties that took part in the election. The techniques investigated to determine the tone of the news were name-calling, highlighting, direct agitation, and paragraphing. So far as this study is concerned paragraphs, highlighting, and name-calling were the most frequently employed techniques in determining the tone of the election news in this paper.

**Table 1: Coverage of Tone**

|                                       | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Negative to contending parties</b> | <b>18</b>        | <b>32.7</b>    |
| <b>Positive to ruling party</b>       | <b>34</b>        | <b>61.8</b>    |
| <b>Positive to contending parties</b> | <b>1</b>         | <b>1.8</b>     |
| <b>Neutral</b>                        | <b>2</b>         | <b>3.6</b>     |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>55</b>        | <b>100</b>     |

It is evident from Table 1 or Fig. 1 that the tone of the examined election news stories favoured the ruling party. The coding evinces that 61.8 per cent of the news stories had favourable tone towards the ruling party, EPRDF, which was one of the contending parties in the third national election. This means that in 34 of the 55 election news taken for the study EPRDF and the government were portrayed positively. This does not mean that the remaining percentage of the news coverage were unfavourable towards EPRDF. The fact is the ruling party received more positive tone than the other contending political parties. On the other hand it is evident from the coding that news coverage numbering 18 or 32.7 per cent carried negative tone against the other contending political parties in general. This means the political parties were labeled negatively or made to have negative image in the reporting. They were not given equal treatment like the ruling party. Since unfair treatment of different sides in news coverage is quite beyond journalism ethics, the news reports taken for the study are judged as unfair.

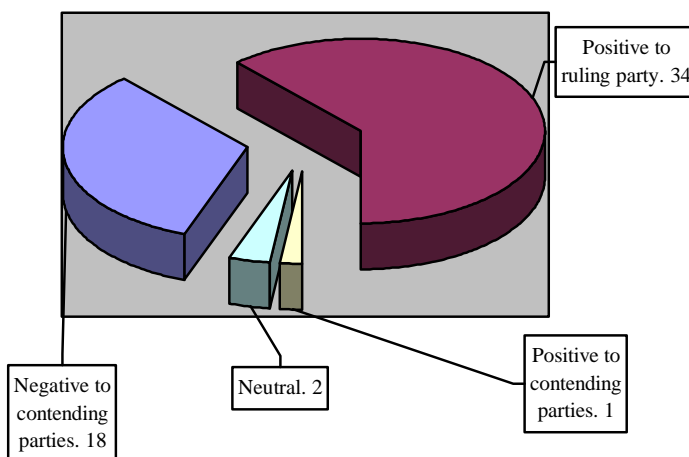
**Figure 1: Percentage of Tone**



As Fig. 1 and 2 indicate, there is a marked difference between the ruling and contending political parties in frequency and percentage of the tone. Apart from this, the news reports used name-calling, highlighting and paragraphing techniques (See Appendix IV) on one hand in support of the ruling party and on the other in labeling the other contending political parties negatively. “...illegal activities being waged by CUD (one of the contending political parties); opposition parties engaged in destructive activities...” These and other reports (read in the paper) with similar spirit are believed to have negative connotation towards contending political parties involved in the election. On the other hand, reports like, “EPRDF strengthens on going development;...speed up development, or livelihood,...”; and others that highlight election victory in some parts of the country prior to the official announcement of NBE including reports that give wider coverage to demonstrations ‘staged’ in support of the ruling party give positive image to EPRDF.

Thus, the coding revealed that the tone of the news coverage was highly positive towards the ruling party, EPRDF. Based on this it can be judged that the news taken for the study had been reported without fulfilling the basic principle of ethics; fairness. This seems to have been done with a belief of promoting the political interest of the ruling party or winning the attention of the majority of the readership during the national election.

**Figure 2: Frequency of Tone**



#### 4.2.1.2 Order of Appearance

The order in which all contending political parties are reported on can show whether there is fairness or not in the news reporting. Taking this into consideration, the election news stories selected for the study were analyzed concerning the order of appearance of the parties in every news story.

**Table 2: Coverage of Order of Appearance**

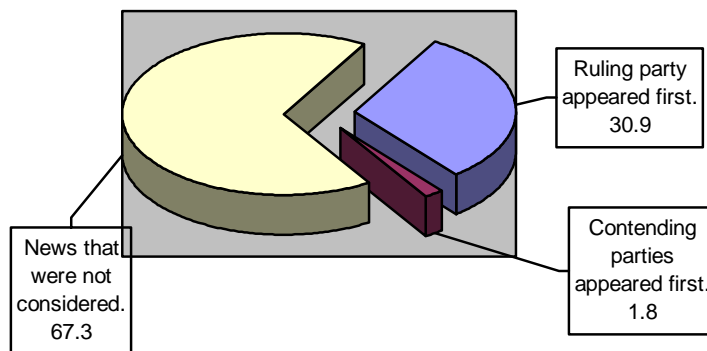
|  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Ruling party appeared first</b>       | <b>17</b>        | <b>30.9</b>    |
| <b>Contending parties appeared first</b> | <b>1</b>         | <b>1.8</b>     |
| <b>News that were not considered</b>     | <b>37</b>        | <b>67.3</b>    |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>55</b>        | <b>100</b>     |

Therefore, it is evident from Table 2 that the ruling party, EPRDF, appeared first in most of the news stories under study being supported mostly by background paragraphs. In some 17 news stories, 30.9 per cent of the entire coverage, the ruling party was given prominence. On the other hand, this means of the 18 news stories that were appropriate to be considered for this particular case here, 17 or 94 per cent, gave priority to EPRDF. News stories that were labeled ‘not considered’ in the tables (they are about 37) are the ones that state either about a single political party or other issues. Because of this they were not considered for this particular case.

As most of the time readers have their primary glance on the first few paragraphs of the story, the ruling party is assumed to have the chance of getting better attention of the readers for the election news under study. This is believed to have influence by itself on issues that come later in the news story. It was noted during the coding process that the issue of taking prior order of appearance in the news stories was seen to occur during the official campaign period. Other contending political parties were not given the same opportunity of appearance in the first few paragraphs of the news stories as the ruling party. It is clearly seen in Table 2 other contending political parties were given prominence only one time, which is 1.8 percentage of the total number.

Some news stories reported on the dissent of contending political parties appeared being patched up or connected beneath other news stories by ‘meanwhile’. Therefore, in this analysis, it seems that contending political parties other than EPRDF were not given fair order of appearance in the election news under study. This order of appearance in which other contending political parties were reported on far behind EPRDF can reveal an element of unfairness.

**Figure 3: Percentage of Order of Appearance**



#### 4.2.1.3 Quoted Sources

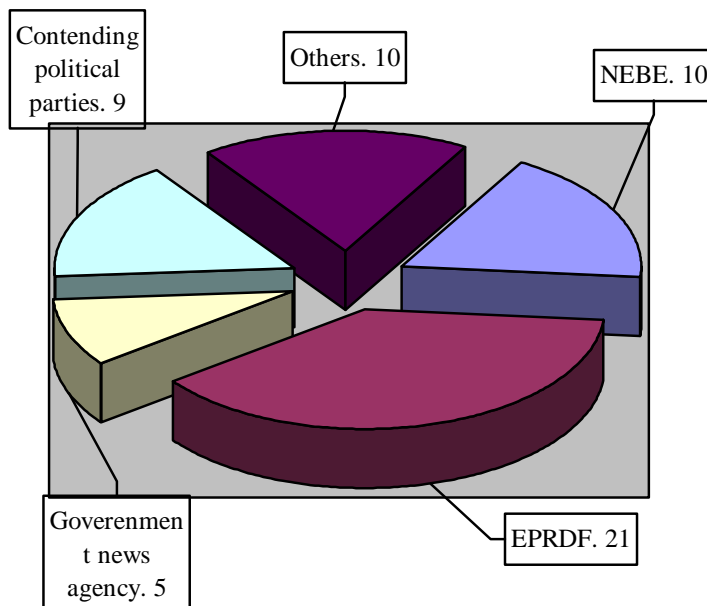
It is the researcher’s belief that agents quoted as sources of the news can play significant roles in determining the fairness of the entire news content. Taking this into account, attempts were made to code the quoted sources of the election news stories under study. Thus it is evident from Table 3 that most of the quoted news sources numbering about 26 (the aggregate of EPRDF and government news agency) or 47.3 per cent, happened to have direct or indirect relations with the incumbent government. Parties affiliated to EPRDF, Woreda (district) government officials, a government as well as party news agencies (ENA and WIC) and ministries were among the quoted news sources that took the lion’s share of the frequency of quoted sources in the news stories under study. Other contending political parties were quoted as sources only nine times in the election news under study. This is accounted for only 16.4 percent of the entire news coverage.

**Table 3: Coverage of Quoted Sources**

|                                     | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>NEBE</b>                         | <b>10</b>        | <b>18.2</b>    |
| <b>EPRDF</b>                        | <b>21</b>        | <b>38.2</b>    |
| <b>Government news agency</b>       | <b>5</b>         | <b>9.1</b>     |
| <b>Contending political parties</b> | <b>9</b>         | <b>16.4</b>    |
| <b>Others</b>                       | <b>10</b>        | <b>18.2</b>    |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>55</b>        | <b>100</b>     |

Depending only on the stated government agents as news sources highly affects the fairness of the news. Even if the information obtained from these sources is said to be genuine, ethical principles oblige that the readers should be given the opportunity of hearing the views of both sides. The news will have the chance of acceptance by various readers so long as due attention is given to the issue of fairness. Therefore, it is the researcher's belief that the fact that the quoted sources had not been balanced well blurred the fairness of the election news stories.

**Figure 4: Frequency of Quoted Sources**



#### 4.2.1.4 Headlines

In this study, headlines of the examined election news were analyzed in terms of whether they reflected a political party positively, negatively or neutrally.

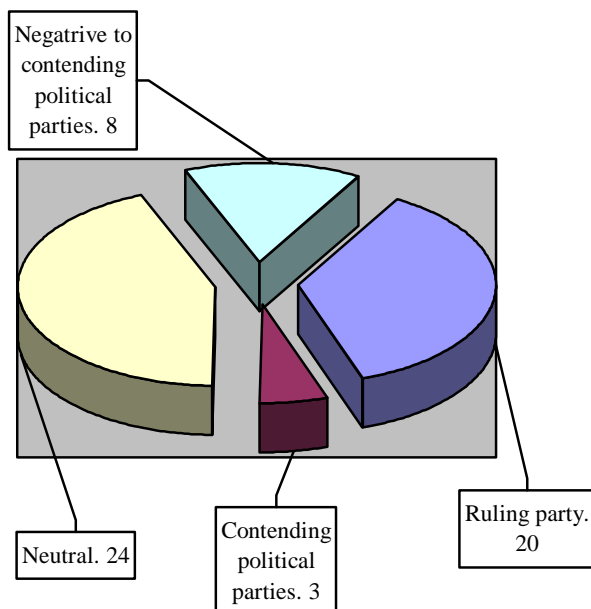
**Table 4: Coverage of Headlines Favoured to:**

|   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Ruling party</b>                             | <b>20</b>        | <b>36.4</b>    |
| <b>Contending political parties</b>             | <b>3</b>         | <b>5.5</b>     |
| <b>Neutral</b>                                  | <b>24</b>        | <b>43.6</b>    |
| <b>Negative to contending political parties</b> | <b>8</b>         | <b>14.5</b>    |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>55</b>        | <b>100</b>     |

Headlines have the power of stealing the attention of readers. Besides “[m]any readers are in the habit of reading only the headlines of most items.” (Hildick, 1966: 44) Thus a reader who grabs a newspaper by chance may have enough time only to glance at the headlines, which alone may have influence on his/her decision during election times.

It is thus evident from Table 4 that 20 headlines, 36.4 per cent, under study devoted more attention to EPRDF. This means that the headlines were not made in such a way that they should consider fair representation of other contending parties. This implies that by making the headlines to shout in favour of the ruling party, the paper did not discharge its responsibility of giving fair treatment for both sides. Even worse, other contending political parties received eight negative headlines coverage. Meaning, these parties were quoted in the headlines with terms that downgrade them. Some 24 news stories or 43.6 percent were coded to be neutral. The headlines that are favored to other contending political parties are only three, which accounts for 5.5 per cent of the total headlines coverage of the election news taken for the study. The data show that apart from being represented negatively in the headlines, these political parties were not given equal chance of having positive image as the ruling party.

**Figure 5: Frequency of Headlines**



Therefore, from the analysis of headlines, it is evident that the election news inclined to portray the positive picture of the ruling party. The coverage in this particular case thus violates the principles established for headlines in the editorial policy of the Ethiopian Press Agency, which is believed to be binding for *the Ethiopian Herald* newspaper. According to the editorial policy, the headlines should be concrete and fair. (EPA, 2002: 79).

The following are some of the headlines that are thought to have negative connotation towards the contending (opposition) political parties.

- Oppositions fail to show up for debate on youth issues. (March 15, 2005)
- Inmates say CUD campaign man has criminal records. (May 5, 2005)
- Government warns violence inciting opposition party leaders to refrain from their activities. (June 7, 2005)
- Associations condemn opposition parties. (August 13, 2005)
- CUD's position said contradictory. (August 18, 2005)

- Political parties urged to refrain from inciting violence. (August 20, 2005)

#### 4.2.1.5 Pictures

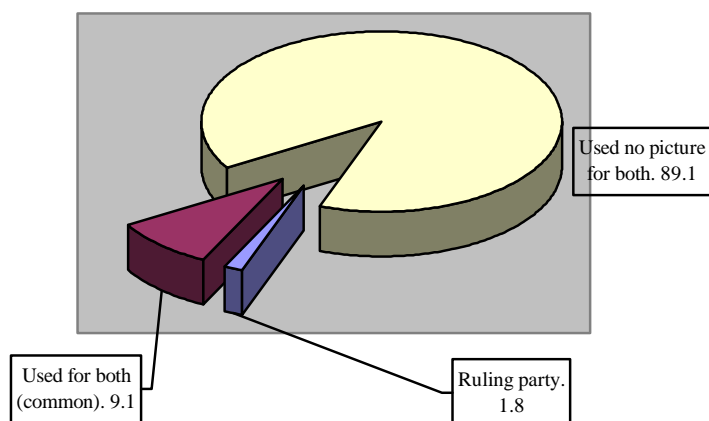
In the study pictures (Photographs) were used as a category to determine the fairness of the election news. It is thus evident from Table 5 that almost all pictures used in the news, even if they are very few, entertained all the parties fairly. Accordingly, 5 pictures, or 9.1 per cent, were used representing both the ruling and other contending political parties. However, most of the election news stories, 49 out of 55, were published without pictures.

**Table 5: Coverage of Pictures Published**

|                                 | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Ruling party</b>             | <b>1</b>         | <b>1.8</b>     |
| <b>Used for both (common)</b>   | <b>5</b>         | <b>9.1</b>     |
| <b>Used no picture for both</b> | <b>49</b>        | <b>89.1</b>    |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>55</b>        | <b>100</b>     |

In conclusion it can be said the once a reporter enters a working news room s/he acquires “access to one of society’s great powers, the power to give or deny information” (Teel, 1992: 132). Journalists in a democratic nation are expected to stick to the power that gives fair information to the public. However, as the data in this study evince, the same doesn’t hold true for *the Ethiopian Herald*. News reports taken for the study clearly acquired the power to deny fair information to the readers. In general, according to four of the five categories employed in the study, unfairness prevailed in the election news stories taken for the study.

**Figure 6: Percentage of Pictures Published**



#### **4.2.2 Data Collected Through Questionnaire and Interview**

Here follows the presentation and analysis of data based on journalists' (reporters and editors working for *The Ethiopian Herald*) response concerning their attitude towards ethical issues in general in news reporting. The response obtained from the interview, which was held with the government official at EPA, is also included in the presentation and analysis of data.

**Table 6: Journalists' Response on the Fairness of News Reporting**

| Items                 | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------|
| Yes                   | 2         | 13.3    |
| No                    | 12        | 80      |
| I do not know/No idea | 1         | 6.7     |
| Total                 | 15        | 100     |

#### **4.2.2.1 Lack of Due Regard to Fairness**

Journalists, nine editors and six reporters, involved in the study were asked to indicate whether news stories published in *The Ethiopian Herald* are reported fairly. Here the term fairness was taken in its sense that in news reporting the journalist should give equal balance to all contending parties. To avoid confusion with regard to the term ‘fairness’, the questions were posed in different ways. For instance, whether there is fair reporting in the paper, or the ruling and other contending political parties are given equal coverage. This helped the researcher to elicit the needed information on fairness of news reporting.

Accordingly, it is evident from the Table-6 that 12 of the 15 respondents, 80 per cent, indicate that the news stories published in *The Ethiopian Herald* are not reported fairly. Only two respondents, 13.3 percent, rated indicating the existence of fair news coverage in the newspaper. All the editors (they are eight) involved in the study also intensified the unfairness of news reports in *the Ethiopian Herald* by saying that they do not seem to be pushed to send reporters to report on the weak sides of the government. Stating their reasons some of them wrote the following:

- The government never likes its weakness to be printed.
- To avoid accountability. For there is no freedom of expression.
- Because it is the state media favoring itself.
- ...the media [are] the mouthpiece of the government...
- It is not allowed.
- Because there is always censorship.
- Conditions do not allow doing so.
- Bosses never allow that to happen.

The information obtained from the respondents here strengthens what has been found out through content analysis. Based on this we can conclude that the paper under study does not give proper attention to fairness in news reporting. Furthermore, the journalists are not in a position to implement fair news reporting.

The interviewee (the official at EPA) indicated regarding the raised issue that all news stories published in *The Ethiopian Herald* are reported fairly. Responding to a question that inquires whether all the contending (opposition) parties were treated equally in the paper, he said, “The [contending political parties] had equal chance, but they did not use the medium as desired”. He was also asked whether his agency encourages reporters to do reporting on the weak sides of the ruling party. In his response he indicated that the reporters “are encouraged” to report the weak sides of the ruling party.

However, what has been analyzed through content data and questionnaire clearly evinces the reality on the ground. Moreover, contending political parties “did not use the paper as desired” does not necessarily mean there is fair reporting in *The Ethiopian Herald*. Therefore, it can be possible to draw a conclusion that the data gathered through interview and questionnaire confirms the existence of unfairness in news reporting with *The Ethiopian Herald* newspaper.

**Table 7: Journalists’ Response on their Professional Independence**

| Items                        | Frequency | Percent     |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                   | <b>2</b>  | <b>13.3</b> |
| <b>No</b>                    | <b>10</b> | <b>66.7</b> |
| <b>I do not know/No idea</b> | <b>3</b>  | <b>20.0</b> |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>15</b> | <b>100</b>  |

#### **4.2.2.2 Stumbling Block against Freedom of Expression**

Here a few questions were forwarded to identify whether the journalists proceed their work independently without government interference. ‘Independence’ was used to indicate the journalists’ freedom in accomplishing their duties without undue interference from officials or government. Accordingly, it is evident from Table 7 that the items highly rated indicate most of the respondents, ten of the fifteen respondents or 66.7 per cent, seem to accomplish their respective journalistic duties under the influence of their employer, which is indirectly the government. The journalists are civil servants employed

by the top official of EPA. The general manager, who is appointed by the government, shall “employ and...fix the salaries...of journalists...” (Proclamation No. 113/1995 and the amended proclamation No.75/1997)

Thus all the responses forwarded directly or indirectly evince lack of independence in the journalistic profession. Two respondents indicated that they do their job independently. Considering the total number of respondents, which is 15, two is insignificant. The interviewee said that the reporters “are working independently”. Furthermore, he stated his view that government officials should not interfere in the day to day activities of journalists. However, what has been found out from the majority of respondents indicates that the journalists do not pursue their duties independently. Denying independence in journalism is tantamount to placing a stumbling block against people’s right of freedom of expression. This undoubtedly brings about unethical effects on news reporting.

**Table 8: Journalists’ Response on Censorship**

| <b>Items</b>                 | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                   | <b>11</b>        | <b>73.3</b>    |
| <b>No</b>                    | <b>2</b>         | <b>13.3</b>    |
| <b>I do not know/No idea</b> | <b>1</b>         | <b>6.7</b>     |
| <b>No given answer</b>       | <b>1</b>         | <b>6.7</b>     |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>15</b>        | <b>100</b>     |

#### **4.2.2.3 Gatekeepers against Freedom of Expression**

The journalists involved for the study were asked if they could witness the existence of censorship in whatsoever forms in the paper they are working for. With regard to the response it is evident that 11 respondents, which accounts for 73.3 per cent of the entire number, testify to the existence of censorship in its direct or indirect forms in the medium they are working for. Furthermore, a significant number of respondents (eleven out of fifteen) indicated that they are accustomed to practicing self-censorship while writing or editing news stories. Here the journalists act as gate keepers (Teel, 1992: 29) barring the

path to publication. They denied the public right of receiving information. Stating the reasons some of them indicated the following:

- The government is intolerant of reports that go against it.
- Not to be held accountable.
- For fear of the consequences.
- ...I expect that my editors do not allow it to be published.

The interviewee indicated in his response that self-censorship is practiced due to lack of confidence and insufficient journalism training. What one can understand here is that self-censorship is a real practice in *The Ethiopian Herald* newspaper. The respondent also stated answering question number 19 that at times journalists are given questions prepared by the editorial committee of EPA. This is taken as a guideline to limit the independence of the journalist not to pass a certain state-made boundaries. This is a manifestation of censorship.

#### **4.2.2.4 Special Emphasis on Responsibility and Code of Ethics**

Few of the questions in the interview and questionnaire were about ‘responsibility’ and ‘code of ethics’. With regard to questions on responsibility, the journalists were asked whether they observed any problems related to responsibility. Responsibility in the media was taken to indicate journalists’ obligation to be careful as to how they should use the information they gather. To avoid confusion regarding the term ‘responsibility’ the questions were posed in simple and clear way.

Accordingly, eight respondents, out of the fifteen, indicated that they witnessed the problems of responsibility in the profession. Some seven respondents, however, rated in the questionnaire that they “do not see” any problem of that sort. The interviewee stated in his response that such problems are interrelated with lack of trained human power. His response ensures the existence of irresponsibility. Nine respondents among the journalists expressed their views that the absence of code of ethics for journalists in Ethiopia seems to have affected journalism profession.

### **4.3 Ethical Problems and the Consequent Legal Issues**

*The Ethiopian Herald* is the first national English daily established in 1943. As a first newspaper it has played significant roles in reflecting the images of the country to the outside world. The paper had served the foreign readerships as the only source of information regarding the soci-economic and political situations of the country before other English papers and magazines were launched.

Apart from the news and opinions published daily, *The Ethiopian Herald* covers a wide range of politics and social issues using different columns and pages. 'Present Day Ethiopia' in which political issues of the country are entertained, 'Arts and Culture' for arts as well as cultural issues of the people, 'Society', 'The Battle against AIDS', 'Focus on Women', 'Herald Sports', 'Investment and Tourism', 'Just a few Points' (which entertains jokes and quotations), and 'Economy and Development' are the weekly pages and columns currently appear in *The Ethiopian Herald*.

The paper has made a successful step in granting contending political parties a forum for discussion during election periods. Moreover, the editorial policy of EPA, which is the publisher of *The Ethiopian Herald*, states that the editorial policy that determines the contents and working process of the newspapers as well as magazines published by it has its bases on the constitution of the land, Proclamation No. 113/1995 (a proclamation to provide the establishment of EPA) and Proclamation No. 34/1992 (a proclamation to Provide for the Freedom of the Press) (EPA, 2002: 7).

What we can understand here is that the papers that are published under EPA, including *The Ethiopian Herald*, are wanted to act in accordance with the constitution of the country, which grants in its article 29 (2) the right to freedom of expression without any interference. However, the freedom does not seem to be effective at least as far as this study is concerned. "It is not enough to tell a man that he is free to achieve his goals; one must provide him with the appropriate means of attaining those goals" (Siebert, 1956: 94). MacDonald (1998: 14) strengthens this point by saying that "Free speech will be

without value if the public can not obtain the information it needs from government and other bodies”.

It is evident from the data gathered in the study that the election news stories under study were reported unfairly. Contending political parties, other than the ruling EPRDF, were denied their right of expressing ideas fairly. They did not get the same chance of expressing their views as the ruling party. In the process of coding the researcher observed that some news stories that are about complaints or accusations of political parties were not reported in a fair manner. Simply the news stories either stated the accusation of a given political party or said nothing about the views of the accused party. Therefore, “[b]y giving the accuser exclusive publicity, the press treats the accused party unfairly” (Kasoma, 1994 (a): 337). This is what *The Ethiopian Herald* is doing.

We have seen in the previous section that the election reporting was unethical. The ethical problems identified in this study are believed to harm the democratic process the country has been engaged in. It is the sincere belief of the researcher that failing to maintain ethical issues in reporting news stories can have legal consequences too. Though law “functions as a system of externally imposed constraints on behaviour, whereas ethics functions as self-imposed constraints” (Herrera, 2005: Internet), the two have interrelations. Thus the impact necessitated the discussion of legal issues in this particular section of the paper.

It is evident from the data that by failing to give fair coverage to all, the paper under study ignored their constitutional right to freedom of expression without any interference. Or *The Ethiopian Herald* Newspaper is evident to violate Article 29 (1) of the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution, which states, “[e]veryone has the right to freedom of expression without any interference. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds...through any media of his choice”.

Furthermore, owing to its failure to entertain “diverse opinion” (Article 29 (4), the paper violated the people’s right to “receive...ideas of all kinds”, enshrined in Article 29 (2) of

the constitution. In doing so the paper also ignored the core purpose of the press stipulated in Proclamation 34/1992. The proclamation issued to provide for the freedom of the press states that “Freedom of the press is recognized and respected in Ethiopia”; “press stands for the pursuit of fundamental freedom...democracy...for the acceleration of social and economic development”. Moreover, the unfair reporting of the paper is quite contrary to the free flow of information, ideas and opinions that are essential to the functioning of a democratic order as stipulated on Article 29 (4) of the constitution.

Apart from this, the paper seems to take no heed of the editorial policy, which is supposed to be binding at EPA, publisher of *the Ethiopian Herald*. According to the editorial policy, views that are forwarded from any side should be entertained fairly (EPA, 2002: 21). Furthermore, the editorial policy clarifies its objectives stating that enabling political forces to have fair representation is one of the responsibilities of the agency (EPA, 2002: 25). In general, the negligence of the paper to do fair reporting is against the editorial policy, which underscores its concern on the constitutional right of the freedom of expression. (EPA, 2002: 14).

Above all, by denying the political parties equal forum, *The Ethiopian Herald* violates Article 3, 1(h) of Proclamation 6/1991. This proclamation issued to provide the determination of the application of state owned mass media states the following. “The mass media shall transmit criticisms and complaints made against the government by the different sections of the society...” Article 3, 1(h) of Proc. 6/1991.

The data evince that the journalists working for *The Ethiopian Herald* are engaged in their journalistic duties with interference from their employers; government officials. Mason, (1994: 121), states that freedom of expression is the right to communicate and to receive information and ideas without interference from the state or others. This is also clearly indicated on Article 29 (2) of the Ethiopian constitution. Article 29 (4) of the constitution also stipulates that “...the press shall...enjoy legal protection to ensure its operational independence”. The editorial policy of EPA also underscores that journalists should pursue their duties without any state interference. (EPA, 2002: 15)

Therefore, the ‘undue interference’ being practiced by employers, or on the other hand the government officials, is completely against the constitution and editorial policy of EPA. Thus it can hardly be said that, due to this interference, the journalists are accomplishing their duties in accordance with media ethics. Or we can say the paper does not give due attention to the principle of free speech or expression; because “what is special about the principle of free speech is that it provides a degree of immunity from government control” (MacDonald, 1998: 5). The consequences seem to have affected the credibility the paper should have among readers.

It is evident from the data that censorship is practiced in *The Ethiopian Herald*. Furthermore, journalists are likely accustomed to exercising self-censorship on their duties. It seems they prefer to save their hides. This indirectly affects the public right of imparting and receiving information without any interference.

Basically censorship is prohibited by the constitution and proclamation 34/1992. Article 29 3(a) of the constitution states that freedom of the press shall specifically include prohibition of any form of censorship. Proclamation 34/1992 also stipulates that censorship of the press and any restriction of a similar nature are prohibited. The editorial policy of EPA, which has its bases on these two proclamations in the same way, denounces any form of censorship.

Therefore, apart from its violence against rules and regulations of the land, censorship, which is evinced to be practiced in *The Ethiopian Herald*, can be taken as a stumbling block that bans people’s right of receiving diverse opinions and views. The fact that *The Ethiopian Herald* is practicing censorship can show attempts “to control what citizens see, hear or think” (Mason, 1994: 52). This is, then, believed to affect the authenticity of information disseminated through the paper in particular and harm the democratic process being built in the country in general.

“Newspaper is responsible for the public welfare, that its readers are entitled to sincerity and impartiality in news presentation, and that the principals in news stories are entitled to fair play, [which is] not only good taste, but the best preventive for libel suits” (Radder, 1942: 83). However, the reality with *The Ethiopian Herald* is the opposite. The data collected through content analysis, questionnaire and interview evince that unfairness, lack of independence and censorship have been reflected as major ethical problems in reporting election news examined for the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary**

This study was conducted with the major objectives of:

- Finding out ethical problems in news reporting in *The Ethiopian Herald* Newspaper;
- Indicating the major causes of the problems; and
- Suggesting possible recommendations that may help resolve the problems witnessed.

Therefore, the information gathered based on content analysis, questionnaire and interview depict that ethical problems are witnessed in news reporting in *The Ethiopian Herald*. Accordingly:

- 1 It was possible to find out in the study that the majority of the news stories in *The Ethiopian Herald* Newspaper are reported unfairly;
- 2 Journalists working for the paper do not accomplish their journalistic duties independently;
- 3 Journalists working for the paper are exercising self-censorship while accomplishing their journalistic duties; and
- 4 Censorship is practiced in the Newspaper.

#### **5.2 Conclusion**

Journalism ethics is among the very essential issues in public media in general. Journalism which does not give the proper attention to ethics can be counted as a failure.

It is on this fundamental principle this study was conducted. Accordingly, the study tried its level best in pointing out the major ethical problems witnessed in reporting news stories in a state medium, *The Ethiopian Herald*. Concerned bodies in the media sector, civil societies and any well-meaning individuals, who believe in the public right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds without any undue interference, are to give due attention to the recommendations forwarded in the study and put forth efforts towards its implementation.

The study indicates that of the five categories employed to judge fairness four have been found out to attest to the fact that there is unfair reporting in the election news taken for the study. This can lead us to conclude that there is no fair reporting in the paper in general under study. Therefore, this study, based on the major findings, forwards the following conclusion.

- 1 It is thus observed in the study that since the tone of the 61.8 percent of the election news is in favour of the ruling party, EPRDF, the paper has been proved to lack fairness. What can be drawn as a conclusion from the information gathered through the questionnaire is that *The Ethiopian Herald* does not give proper attention to fairness in news reporting.
- 2 Regarding order of appearance it can be said that contending (opposition) political parties were not treated in accordance with the ethical principles of journalism. It was found out that most of the election news stories were reported with EPRDF appearing first. Other contending political parties follow far behind paragraphs that state about the ruling party.
- 3 The study further indicates that the quoted sources used in the news reporting were not balanced well and as a result of this the election news stories taken for the study were found out to be unfair.

- 4 Similarly, headlines taken for the study were discovered to unfairly portray only the positive picture of the ruling party. On the contrary the contending political parties were treated negatively. This kind of reporting is against the ethical principles of journalism.
- 5 The questionnaire and interview employed in the study have also been seen strengthening the findings of the study. For instance, respondents of the questionnaire indicated that they do not pursue their duties independently. What they are saying is that they are under the strict imposition of their bosses. This undoubtedly affects one of the major principles of journalism ethics, independence.
- 6 Censorship which is believed to have adverse impact on journalism ethics has also been discovered to be one of the problems of *The Ethiopian Herald*. Respondents of both the questionnaire and interview indicated that censorship is being practiced in the paper directly or indirectly.

In general what can be concluded from this study is that *The Ethiopian Herald* newspaper followed partisan type news reporting in its coverage. This means the news reports are favourable to EPRDF and critical towards the contending political parties.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The media should represent the public and speak for and to the public interest in order to hold government accountable (Schudson, 1998:31). Taking this basic issue into consideration the researcher proposes the following recommendations.

- 1 Siebert (1956: 95) says “[t]he government must not allow freedom; it must also actively promote it”. Thus as government bodies, the Federal Ministry of Information and the Ethiopian Press Agency, publisher of *The Ethiopian Herald*, should first and foremost take the fact into account that the state

media is funded by the tax payer, the wider public. Therefore, they should abide by the constitution of the land which grants freedom of expression without their interference. It is only then they show government's commitment to the real implementation of democracy. This will help ensure that journalism ethics are well maintained in news reporting in the state media in general and *The Ethiopian Herald* in Particular. They should also discharge their responsibilities by encouraging journalists to provide fair and well balanced news stories to their readerships.

- 2 Concerned bodies like civil societies and others should devise ways (this can go to the level of compelling the government) that enable journalists to work independently without any 'undue' interference. This can include the establishment of an independent body that appraises the press performance.
- 3 Censorship is the enemy of press freedom and journalism ethics. Therefore, "[t]he government should not act with a heavy hand...Since freedom of expression is the key stone of political liberty, it must be especially protected" (Siebert, 1956: 95). This is a binding principle a country that promote democracy should stick to. Hence, concerned bodies in the media in general and the Ethiopian Press Agency in particular are duty bound to discharge their responsibilities in ensuring that the constitutional rights of every citizen is protected regarding the freedom of the press without any undue interference including censorship;
- 4 The quality of the journalists determines the quality of the press. Therefore, the journalists should do their work responsibly for the general good of the society. To enhance this, the Ministry of Information, the Ethiopian Press Agency and other concerned bodies must give due attention to the issue of training for journalists.

- 5 Code of ethics is of paramount significance in journalism profession. As journalists do their duties “not for themselves but on behalf of their public” (Kruger, 2004:3), they need to have codes of ethics, which suggest that news must be accurate and error-free. Therefore, journalists across the country need to join forces and chart out their own code of ethics. The government and other concerned bodies should also assist and encourage initiatives taken by journalists to have their own code of ethics without any interference.
  
- 6 Above all these, all stake holders; the people, civic societies, the government and others should take initiatives to help promote democracy in the media sector by involving in the establishment of press council, which can play significant roles in maintaining self-regulations or looking into readers complaints. It will also help the media to act independently. The independent council that may include non-press members can have contributions to protect press freedom and helps to promote responsible reportage.
  
- 7 Taking hold of the belief that an independent media should be encouraged to run the press, civic societies, non-governmental organizations and other concerned bodies including the government should live up to public expectations to work towards the transformation of the state media at large into a real public media that safeguard press freedom.

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## Appendix I

### Questionnaire to be filled in by journalists

Thank you for your cooperation to fill in this questionnaire. As the questionnaire is very essential for my study entitled “Ethical Issues of News Reporting with Particular Reference to *the Ethiopian Herald*”, I would like you to fill it in carefully. **This questionnaire will never be used for different purposes other than the one mentioned here.** So feel free to give the real answers you believe in. Show your answers by putting a  mark on the spaces provided. **You don't need to write your name.**

Thank you!

1. Your age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your responsibility with *The Ethiopian Herald* newspaper \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your academic background and in what field \_\_\_\_\_
4. Tell me your experience in the media in general?
  - A. Less than a year \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. 1 year \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. 2 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. 3 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - E. 4 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - F. 5 years and above \_\_\_\_\_
5. How long have you served in *The Ethiopian Herald* newspaper?
  - A. Less than a year \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. 1 year \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. 2 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. 3 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - E. 4 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - F. 5 years and above \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you ever had the opportunity of attending training on journalism?  
If yes, for how long?
  - A. Less than a year \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. 1 year \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. 2 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. 3 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - E. 4 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - F. 5 years and above \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you work independently; with out unnecessary interference of government officials on your journalistic profession?
  - A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. No \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. I don't know \_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you go out for reporting with questions prepared by your bosses?  
 A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No \_\_\_\_\_ C. No idea \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you think news stories in *The Ethiopian Herald* are reported fairly or in a balanced manner?  
 A. Yes, most of them are reported fairly. \_\_\_\_\_ B. No, most of them are not reported fairly. \_\_\_\_\_ C. I don't know. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Have the ruling and other contending parties been given equal chance to Forward their views in the news coverage during the third national election in your paper, *The Ethiopian Herald*?  
 A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No \_\_\_\_\_ C. I don't know \_\_\_\_\_
11. Do you think your editor will allow your story that shows the weak sides of the government to be published?  
 A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No. \_\_\_\_\_ C. No idea \_\_\_\_\_
12. Can you report the weak sides of the government in the same way as you do to the other political parties?  
 A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No. \_\_\_\_\_ C. No idea \_\_\_\_\_
13. If your answer for question number 12 is 'B', please state the reasons.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
14. (For editors) Have you ever asked reporters to report the weak sides of the government? A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No \_\_\_\_\_
15. If your answer for question number 14 is 'No', please state the reasons.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
16. (For editors) Do you allow a news story that shows the weak sides of the government to be published? A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No \_\_\_\_\_
17. If your answer for question number 16 is 'B', please state the reasons.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
18. (For editors) Do you believe *The Ethiopian Herald* treated the last election freely and fairly?  
 A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No \_\_\_\_\_ C. I don't know \_\_\_\_\_
19. (For editors) Do you believe that journalists working for *The Ethiopian Herald* report news stories in a responsible manner?  
 A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No \_\_\_\_\_ C. No idea \_\_\_\_\_

20. Are you really working without any unnecessary influences imposed on you by your employers? A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No \_\_\_\_\_ C. I have no idea \_\_\_\_\_
21. Do you remember a colleague who has been accused of defamation, violation of the cultures as well as values of the society or any other undisciplined problems? A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No \_\_\_\_\_
22. Do you practice self-censorship while writing your news stories?  
A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No \_\_\_\_\_ C. I don't know \_\_\_\_\_
23. If your answer for question number 22 is 'yes', please state the reasons  
\_\_\_\_\_
24. (For editors) Do you think there is direct or indirect censorship in *The Ethiopian Herald* Newspaper?  
A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No \_\_\_\_\_ C. I don't know \_\_\_\_\_
25. Do you think the absence of code of ethics for journalists in Ethiopia affects journalism?  
A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No. \_\_\_\_\_ C. I don't know \_\_\_\_\_
26. Are you satisfied with news reporting in *The Ethiopian Herald*?  
A. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B. No. \_\_\_\_\_ C. I don't know \_\_\_\_\_
27. If your answer for question number 26 is 'B', please, state the reasons.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**I really appreciate your cooperation to respond all the questions!**

## Appendix II

### Questions of interview posed to a government official at the Ethiopian Press Agency

1. Would you please tell me your experience in the state media?
2. Is your position in the Ethiopian Press Agency an appointment?
3. How long have you served with the Ethiopian Press Agency?
4. Would you please tell me your academic background?
5. Have you ever had the opportunity of attending training on journalism?  
If yes, for how long?
6. Do you believe that reporters of the state media in general and that of *The Ethiopian Herald* in particular work independently; without the unnecessary interference of government officials in the journalistic profession?
7. Do you oppose the interference of government officials in the day to day activities of journalists? Why?
8. Do you believe all the contending parties, were treated equally in news reporting with *The Ethiopian Herald* during the third national election?
9. Should the government censor the news stories before they are issued?
10. How do you think journalists can achieve fair reporting?
11. Do you think independence, fairness and responsibility can be decisive factors for journalism ethics?
12. Are these given due attention in your Agency?
13. Many people are not satisfied with the state-owned media in general. What do you think are the reasons?
14. Do you believe a journalist should proceed his/her journalistic work independently, without the interference of government officials?
15. Are there any problems of responsibility in the journalistic activities with *The Ethiopian Herald*?
16. Have you ever come across a reporter who has been blamed for irresponsibility in his job? If yes, explain about your experience.
17. What do you think are the causes of irresponsibility among journalists in reporting news stories in general and election news in particular?
18. Do you encourage your reporters to do reporting on the weak sides of the ruling party? If no, why?
19. Do you give ready made questions to journalists before they go out to interview some senior government officials?
20. Most reporters in the state media are heard practicing self-censorship. What do you think are the causes?
21. Most of the news stories in *The Ethiopian Herald* and other state media are said to give more positive light to the ruling party than others. Do you think this is fair?
22. What can you tell me about the circulation of *The Ethiopian Herald*?
23. What is your agency doing to improve the professional capacity of journalists?

**Thank you**

## **Appendix III**

### **Translated response of interview**

1. I have worked for over 15 years at Ethiopian Press Agency, the Ethiopian Mass media Training Institute and the Ethiopian Press Agency.
2. I secured the position on competition.
3. Six years.
4. MA degree in journalism
5. Attended various training on journalism
6. Yes.
7. I am of the opinion that government officials should not interfere in the day-today activities.
8. Yes, they had equal opportunity. However, they didn't use the media as desired.
9. No.
10. Yes.
11. These three basic issues are decisive in journalism profession.
12. Attention is given as far as possible.
13. The content and 'lay out' are the problems. The other may be due to our failure in reporting in due course.
14. (The respondent skipped question number 14.)
15. Due to lack of trained human power.
16. (No response was given.)
17. (No answer was given here.)
18. Yes, they are encouraged to do.
19. Some times reporters are given questions prepared by the editorial committee of the agency.
20. Lack of confidence occurred as a result of deficiency of sufficient training on journalism. Preferring to do what is likely the safest.
21. I don't think it is fair.
22. It is at its average distribution. Much is expected from it.
23. It trains in short and long term journalism courses.

## Appendix IV

# **EPRDF says on steady move towards reducing unemployment as oppositions put blame on ruling party**

ADDIS ABABA (ENA)- The Ethiopian peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) says it has been making steady progress to reduce the deep-seated problem of unemployment in Ethiopia.

Opposition political parties on their part said youths have been facing serious problems, some have even gone into exile, due to lack of employment.

The ruling EPRDF and opposition parties debated a relevant topic at a forum organized by a Youth Association of the Kolfe Keranio Subcity here Sunday.

EPRDF representatives said that a sizable number of young people have now become owners of their own enterprises in activities carried out to extricate the youth from the gripe of unemployment.

EPRDF has exerted utmost efforts to alleviate the problem of the deep-seated unemployment in Addis Ababa, the representatives said.

They said encouraging achievements were made in activities so far by organizing the youth in micro and small-scale businesses.

Indicating that some oppositions were accusing EPRDF that poverty was the legacy of the rule of the incumbent government, they said that it has been exerting utmost efforts to alleviate the complex problems inherited from previous regimes.

EPRDF has been providing the necessary support for the enhancement schemes, which by their nature are labour intensive, they said.

Considerable activities have got underway to open youth recreational centers, they said, efforts have also been launched to establish such centers at every Kebele, they added.

They also said that the necessary support is being provided towards strengthening arts and AIDS clubs by the youth.

The oppositions on their part said that a number of youths have gone to exile for failure on the part of EPRDF to give due attention to the problem of unemployment.

Youths get employment opportunity when they serve EPRDF and those who do not have access to any job, he said.

According to oppositions, sweeping political change is needed to solve the problem of unemployment, and vowed to live up to their words if they win the elections.

They said the right to organize is becoming increasingly difficult and to get organized civic associations are facing difficulties.

Represented at the debate attended by 800 youth, were EPRDF, Coalition for Unity and Democracy, United Ethiopian Democratic Force, All Ethiopian Democratic Party.

*(The Ethiopian Herald March 22, 2005)*