

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY STUDIES (IPSS)

**AN ASSESSMENT OF HATE SPEECH, SOCIAL MEDIA AND
VIOLENCE IN ETHIOPIA: THE CASE OF FACEBOOK AND
YOUTUBE**

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AUGUST, 2021

ADDIS ABAB, ETHIOPIA

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APPROVED BY BOARD OF EXAMINERS

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ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Charters on Humans and People Rights
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EPRDF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Committee
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IRA	Russian Internet Research Agency (Russia)
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ODP	Oromo Democratic Party
OMN	Oromia Media Network
TPLF	Tigray People’s Revolutionary Front
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USA	United States of America

ABSTRACT

This research aimed at assessing hate speech, social media and violence in the Ethiopia: The case of Facebook and YouTube. The study tries to explore hate speech, social media and violence landscape, mainly categorizing the context of hate speech and violent incident scenarios into two major phenomenon. Firstly, the periods from 2014 up to the reform was considered as a time of social movement or protest, particularly protest by Qeerroos of Oromo, Fannos of Amhara, and Ejjettos of Sidama ethnic groups. In these periods, hate speech rhetoric was against the EPRDF regime-led by TPLF. The second phenomenon, which came after the reform, hate speech context seems to have changed to ethnic and religious aspects. Because in the name of freedom of speech, some politicians started to misuse, and employ social media platform, particularly Facebook and YouTube to express hate speech rhetoric, and disseminate rumor as well as disinformation messages. Moreover, to achieve the thesis' objective, the researcher employed explanatory and narrative qualitative research design. Most importantly, data has been collected through interview, Focus group Discussion from politicians, senior officials of Oromia communication Bureau as well as Addis Standard experts and journalists.

Based on the data analyzed, the finding of the study indicated that multi-faceted factors which can be categorized as underlying and triggering factors incited violent incident in Ethiopian politics. The underlying factors include historical grievances, the injustice system, institutional ineffectiveness, lack of common understanding and national consensus. Moreover, the rumor message dispersed online, misuse of social media platforms, mainly Facebook and YouTube, some political activist's and insurrectionist group's irresponsible characteristics of expressing hate speech rhetoric content to others on social media as well as perpetrators' political culture of taking little death and exaggerating online has triggered violence in Ethiopian political system. Hence, information gathered from the participant informants indicated that violent incidents were mainly exacerbated due to these underlying, and fueling violence instigative factors.

Key words: Hate speech, social media, violence, Ethiopia

CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Background of the Study

Conflict circumstances and the triggering factors of violent-conflict vary depending on local, national and international context. Nowadays, social media is used for various purposes. It mobilizes rebel groups for violence, by disseminating hate speeches message contents in addition to challenging the authority of the autocratic regimes (Breuer and Groshek, 2014). This thesis examines hate speeches, social media and violent incidents landscape in Ethiopia. The rumor message disseminated online, some political activist's and insurrectionist group's irresponsible characteristics of expressing hate speech rhetoric content to others on social media has exacerbated violent incidents in the Ethiopian political system.

In the international contexts, scholars of various disciplines conceptualize, frame, scrutinize, define and problematize hate speech divergently and context-specifically. Due to the contested and ambiguous nature of the concept of hate speech, different authors use their own methods in defining and conceptualizing the terminology. Accordingly, for instance, in violent conflict circumstances, the concept of hate speech is correlated with hateful speech act in the peril of genuine world violence and genocide (Benesch, 2014).

However, scholars of peace and conflict studies have engaged in this contestation (debate on the concept of hate speech) with a focus on how violent-conflict gets (de-)escalated in the international context (Buyse, 2014). One of the categories of social media, Facebook, is cited for escalating devastating violence towards minority groups in Myanmar and Sri Lanka (Naughton, 2018). Likewise, research conducted in Germany discovered that the view against refugees rhetoric circulated on social media precipitated the intensification of the offline hate crime (Muller and Schwarz, 2018).

The above arguments do not necessarily mean that all social media platforms and governments are ignorant in discovering pragmatic solutions to the problems of online hate speeches. Evidence shows that solely in the first quarter of 2018, by employing algorithmic filtering method, Facebook deleted two million contents it deemed injurious from its platform (Facebook, 2018).

Therefore, these pragmatic methods of finding solution among online behavior and media conversation facilitated for the institutionalization of civil right organizations in raising concerns about the problems of accountability, bias, and transparency engaged in expansive discarding of the content of social media excluding due process (Article 19 and Privacy International, 2018).

Moreover, independent of whether the message is erroneous, correct, or highly overstated, hate speech can be equally injurious (Maynard and Benesch, 2016, p. 78). Video clips starting to circulate infectiously on the WhatsApp platform during 200 million people use the platform in mid-2017 in India (Elliott, 2018). On the other hand, in Myanmar, most people get information from government-controlled media outlets until they emancipated from the military ruling system until 2012 with merely a few citizens used the internet. However, within four years after 2012, among Myanmar's population, half accessed mobile phones, and most of them had started to use Facebook (Stecklow, 2018).

Stecklow (2018) argued that the deceptive Facebook messages inciting violence against Myanmar's Muslim minority stated that "they will kill off the whole Muslim population and feed them to the dogs" (Stecklow, 2018). Therefore, such kind of hatred sentiment towards the residents of Muslim brother in Myanmar circulated on Facebook (online behavior) precipitated violent conflict (offline violence) which resulted in the loss of life from both religions.

Moreover, many individuals receive various social media messages to them without approving the existing phenomenon or the real fact that occurred on the ground. Some people are inclined to commit violence in certain circumstances particularly when they are conscious that the message will cause an imminent threat to themselves and their co-ethnics or co-religion followers (Maynard and Benesch, 2016, p. 78).

In addition to the context, it is not merely the message that sways audiences, but also the social and historical context in which the speaker makes a speech to the audience will play a paramount contributing role in determining the extent of the dangerousness of the speech act (Benesch, 2014). Scholars argue that the social boycott and religious oppressive the Ahmadi's beliefs faced in Pakistan are due to their religious minority and legally considered worthless (Khan, 2003). This indicates that historically in Pakistan, the followers of Islam religion called "Ahmad's

belief' suffered a lot due to this religion was considered as valueless among the majorities of Pakistan residents.

By ignoring the anti-Ahmadi sign (Hashim, 2017), the Pakistan Supreme Court convicted those three Ahmadi's men responsible for death in October 2017. Moreover, the particular language used by the speakers has an influencing role in escalating violence. Benesch (2014) argues that while striving to prevent violence, fieldwork held after the elections of 2007 and 2008, Kenyans listen with the head the messages transmitted by the English language, more rationally and less emotional as well as hear with their heart the message conveyed to them by local language or their mother tongue-Kiswahili, thus becoming more emotional (Benesch, 2014, p. 25). Thus, content in the mother tongue is more likely to cause offline violence.

Therefore, many countries have their own hate speech prohibiting laws, and social media companies comprising of Facebook and Twitter to forbid certain kind of contents that lead to the instigation of violence (Facebook, Inc., 2018; Twitter, Inc., 2018). Even, the Ethiopian government has experiencing banning and restricting social media, particularly Facebook accessibility during political entrepreneurs use it as a means to attain their goals, during ethnic conflict and violence becomes escalated.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Currently, using social media in politics is at an alarming rate (Onydikachi, et al., 2017). Hate speech propagators are among the users of the Internet and use novel mediums as potent equipment to transmit or publicize their information to new audiences, recruit novel members, and to construct communities (Gerestenfeld, Grant, and Chiang, 2003; Schafer, 2002). Moreover, in addition to the above argument, propagators' of hate speech employ a new medium to disseminate and propagate extremist propaganda as well as to precipitate offline violence (Berlet, 2001; Chan, Ghose, and Seamans, 2014; Levin, 2002; Whine, 1999).

Some scholars place right-wing extremist groups and their online behavior for violence in 2014 in the US (Kurzman and Schanzer, 2015), and the emerging far right-extremist groups shocked Europe (Gunduz, 2010). As such, human rights groups express concern about using the internet and social media platforms to practice online hate speech (Anti-Defamation League, 2015; Simon Wiesenthal Center, 2012). A case study on the Facebook platform in Spain indicates that

racism on the internet is on the rise at an escalating rate (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2011, p. 22) and expressing extremism and anti-Semitic views via social media are a challenging and critical issue for legislators as well (Garea and Medina, 2014).

The first convention signed concerning cybercrime in 2001 by the Council of Europe and other collaborating countries shows that there is a challenging issue in determining the demarcating line among criminal hate speech as well as the legalized free speech (Council of Europe, 2001). But despite this convention indicated the appearance of constraining issue between criminal hate speech and legitimate free speeches, however, it left aside the criminalization of dangerous speech to further contestation (Council of Europe, 2003).

To reduce explicit dangerous speech on public web sites and to differentiate hate speech crime from freedom of expression and defend the freedom of expression as well, legislation and regulatory policies get designed (Banks, 2010; Foxman and Wolf, 2013). Therefore, concerning the above argument, it seems that those regulatory policies and legislations are promulgated to some extent to address explicit hate speeches on public websites, but, doesn't necessarily for the implicit ones.

Social media has its own negative sides, and also has a positive contribution in different aspects. Bland (2014) argues that to observe and accord electoral processes, and inspecting of official announcement against election frauds, civil society groups are currently using social media. On the other hand, during the 2014 Afghanistan election, partisan of foes candidates use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to widely spread deceptive messages content of religious and ethnic characteristics (Bezhan, 2014).

In the Ethiopian context, several hate speeches defamation message content speeches are circulating on social medias including Facebook. But I focused on the violent incidents that took place in Ethiopian politics from 2014 up to 2020, the underlying factors that fueled the violence, and hate speeches circulated on social media. The EPRDF government blames and accuses some activists and political parties to mobilize the youth. The 2015 Oromo protest against the Addis Ababa Master plan was reported on the world news (Mulualem, 2019). Moreover, in Ethiopian politics, most people choose online Facebook for information among other social media and akin issues (Abreham and Tibebe, 2019). But politicians and some political activists disseminate

rumor messages on social media to precipitate chaos, violence and ethnic-based conflict. This caused many displacements, social tension, property destruction, economic crisis, and life loss. This escalation of ethnic tension currently influencing the government as a national security concern (Borkena, 2019)

In Ethiopia, by using social media platforms such as Facebook, political activists targeted to express hate speeches and disseminate fake or false videos, messages, and images. This kind of hate speech and deceptive messages circulating on social media platforms has been precipitating and triggering factors for violent incidents in Ethiopian politics. Several works have been written on the conflict in Ethiopia, but not so much about the causes of violent conflict triggered by hate speeches navigated on social media.

Tsegaye (2010), correlate ethnic conflict in Ethiopia with resource and power competition. Another scholar, associate ethnic conflict in Ethiopia with a rising nationalism (Merera, 2003). This indicates that a violent attempt by insurgency groups cause and intensify ethnic-based conflict in the Ethiopian politics. However, very few studies conducted on hate speeches circulated on social media and violence from 2014 up to 2020 in Ethiopian politics. Therefore, to fill the gap, the researcher examined hate speeches circulated on social media, underlying and the fueling factors that instigated violence in Ethiopia.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

This research thesis has both general and specific objectives

1.4. General Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess hate speeches circulated on social media and violent incidents in Ethiopia.

1.5. Specific Objective of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are;

1. To assess major hate speeches narratives issues circulated on social media in Ethiopian politics from 2014 up to 2020;

2. To investigate the causalities of hate speech navigated on social media and the pattern, significant cases of violence from 2014-2020 in Ethiopia;
3. To scrutinize the underlying factors that fuel violent incidents between 2014 and 2020 in Ethiopia;
4. To examine the challenges of online behavior and offline violence Ethiopians encountered;

1.6. Research Questions

To accomplish the general and specific objectives of this research, the following questions supported the researcher to guide the research:

1. What are major hate speeches narratives circulated on social media on issues relating to Ethiopian politics between 2014 and 2020?
2. Which pattern and significant violent cases happened by hate speech navigated on social media in Ethiopian politics between 2014 and 2020?
3. What are the underlying factors that fueled violent incidents between 2014 and 2020 in Ethiopia?
4. What are the challenges of online behavior and offline violence Ethiopian people faced between 2014 and 2020?

1.7. Scope of the study

This research had focused on how the content of hate speeches narratives circulated on social media precipitates violent incidents in Ethiopia. Therefore, the researcher assessed online behavior and offline violence, limiting the scope of the study to social media, mainly Facebook, and YouTube and the violent incidents that happen between 2014 up to 2020 in Ethiopian politics.

1.8. Significance of the Study

In Ethiopia, concerning how hate speeches circulated on social media can be a triggering factor among violent incident happened in Ethiopian politics has been not as such given more attention, particularly in front of some activists, and policymakers. Pohjonen (2019) focused on how to

understand the controversial concepts of online hate speech. Moreover, another researcher assessed the role of state in regulating hate speech online (Workneh, 2020). However, many scholars and studies didn't as such explore the content of hate speech narrative issues circulated on social media, mainly Facebook and YouTube incited violent incidents between 2014-2020 in Ethiopian political system. Therefore, to fill the gap, researching how hate speech circulated on social media precipitate violent incidents help to understand the deceptive nature of message swayed via social media and to awaken the communities' awareness level, not to be driven by such emotion circumstance, at least reduce offline violence caused due to hate speeches circulated on social media, and defamation message content of online behavior. Moreover, this thesis will give a clue concept and insight about hate speeches circulated on social media and violence in Ethiopia for other researchers who wants to research on the study area.

1.9. Organization of the Study

This thesis has five chapters. The first chapter comprises the background of the study, statement of the problem, general and specific objectives of the study, basic research questions, significance, scope, limitation, and organization of the study. The second chapter deals with related literature review and conceptual framework as well. In this chapter, concepts and articles, documents, or other journal articles relevant to the study were conceptualized and framed. The third chapter deals with the research methodology: the research design, sampling techniques, methods of data collections, and analysis. The fourth chapter is considered with data analysis and interpretation. Chapter five concludes the thesis and provides recommendations.

1.9.1. Limitation of the Study

Due to the scope of this thesis, a researcher didn't investigate how hate speech circulated on other social media categories precipitated violent incidents except Facebook and YouTube. While researcher was conducting the study, there were limitations such as unwillingness of some informants (Interviewees) to provide information about the study. Moreover, the other main limitation a researcher encountered is some famous political activists who assumed to give more information regarding the study were imprisoned. Also the official online pages of some political activists were inactivated.

1.9.2. Ethical Consideration

A researcher takes into consideration about the anonymity issues of the informants in this study. This indicates that while interview and focus group discussion moments, the researcher kept the confidentiality, request for the consent of the respondents, highly concern for interviewees, and attempted not to expose the respondent's secret to others. In addition to this research ethics, the researcher took official letters from Addis Ababa University, Institute for Peace and Security studies to acknowledge the informants that there is no other hidden politics behind the study.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the conceptual framework and relevant literatures are systematically reviewed. It focuses on hate speech content circulated on social media, freedom of expression on social media, the underlying factors that contribute to incited violent incidents, and offline violence precipitated due to online behavior.

2.1. The Concept, Contested Definition of Hate Speech, and Social Media

2.1.1. The Concept and Contested Definition of Hate Speech

The concept of hate speech is contested. Because scholars of various disciplines define hate speech from different viewpoints. Hate speech is conceptualized and defined as a malevolent, inhospitable language aimed at defaming or causing harm towards an individual or a group of people due to their actual or ideal characteristics (Gitari et al., 2015). This type of hateful and adversarial content is widespread in social media concerning various circumstances and could be categorized as a causal factor for hate crime (Burnap and Williams, 2014).

Moreover, various scholars define hate speech based on the violence criteria and language content. Because some violence happened due to a certain content of hate speech while others are not. Thus, this indicates that it doesn't mean all violent incidents are necessarily happened by hate speech as a driving factor. Hate speech is defined as bias-motivated, adverse, and injurious speech targeted to harm an individual or the groups due to either their actual or perceived inborn behaviors (Cohen, 2011). However, because of the difficulty in defining online hate speech as well as its ambiguous nature, Brown (2017a, 2017b) advocates that using hate speech as legal and ordinary concepts require making a critical identification.

He further argues that the conceptualization of hate speech is contested as it doesn't have scholarly agreeable universal or singular definition (Brown, 2017b). But to define the concept of hate speech, Brown (2017a) correlates the meaning of hate speech to problematize hate speech as Islamophobia, racism, xenophobia, homophobic, etc. that is targeted against minority groups by undermining the core democratic principles (tolerance, solidarity, respect, etc.).

A report of the 2018 cyberhate monitoring organization called International Network Against Cyber Hate indicated that the most noticeable hate speech groups dispersed online, or on social media are motivated because of racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, Xenophobia, and Homophobia (Devinat and Berez, 2018). An individual or groups used social media platforms to widely spread online rumors, anonymous, fake, and defamation message contents as a whim of their sentiments, belief, and opinions to cause harm to those they hate, and target (Daniels, 2008). Moreover, as long as hate speech incited dehumanization and defamation to the dignity of the targeted ones, but also, creates unity between those who think that their members are injured by words, actions, or the sole existence of the former systems (Waldron, 2012; Yong, 2011).

The broadest conceptualization of the European Court of Human Rights taken from a recommendation of the 1997 of the council of ministers conceptualized hate speech as any kind of expression that instigated as well as promoted, justified, or spread racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and other forms of hatred based on intolerance. Therefore, all the above, and others definitions indicate that the concept of hate speech is debated, divergent, ambiguous, and context-specific.

In the context of this study, hate speech is defined as in-group prejudice toward the out-group and motivated to defame, and harm an individual, identity, religion, or other ethnic groups. It could be associated with an ethnocentric environment in which in-groups attempt to denigrate, devaluate, and harm the out-groups' identity. In this case, hate speech is intensified as well as inflicts offline violence in the prevalent existence and in the effects of hostile ecological factors. These effects of hostile ecological factors include prejudice, stereotype, racial segregation, intimidation, fraud, and discrimination. It also comprises exclusiveness, historical oppressiveness, direct or indirect (structural) violence, economic frustration-which provoke hatred sentiments towards other ethnic, nationality or identity groups.

2.1.2. Social Media

Social media is defined as an electronic communication platform through which people can communicate online and share their information, viewpoints, and messages (Downes, 2005; Seimens, 2006). It includes different outlets (Urista et al., 2009) such as videos or audio calls,

blogging, communicating, texting, sharing content globally, and has many features (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Keith, 2006).

Social media is used for different purposes. For example, Western countries are anxious due to the deceptive use of Social media, and rumor propaganda by ISIS to recruit members, and the escalation of violent conflicts (Koerner, 2016). Moreover, social media was used in geopolitical episodes like during the rise of ISIS, the control of Crimea by Russia, and the 2016 presidential election in the USA. These events attract the attention of policymakers and various scholars that social media matters (Howard, 2010; Tufekci and Wilson, 2012). Therefore, scholars argue that social media plays a paramount role in disseminating information, and messages about the mistakes of the ruling government, mobilize, as well as coordinating protests against incumbent governments (Shirky, 2011).

The policy guiding removal of injurious content from Facebook pages is different depending on the countries' specific context. Content's associated with Nazism are prohibited in Germany but not in the United States, thus what is posted in the US could be viewed and cause issues in Germany (Toledo, 2012). However, viewed from the perspective of discriminatory practices, Nakamura (2014) scrutinized that the extent to which the users of social media and image boards wrongly spread racist visual content on Facebook platforms. Another scholar further argues that web anonymity and the absence of censorship are among the challenging factors further constraining the ability to limit hate speech messages (Rajagopal, 2002).

In contentious politics, activists, and politicians use various disruptive methods. Among these methods are social media, misinformation, and hate speech, and defamation rhetoric played a pivotal role to mobilize groups, challenge, or support the incumbent government. Social media is used to make a supportive environment for activists to communicate to the people, mobilize and get feedback online about the protest (Berkowitz, 2017). Moreover, scholars have their views about the use of social media in antagonistic political systems. Accordingly, many scholars emphasize the extent to which the group challenges incumbent governments via protest, insurrectionism, and the methods that the incumbent government used to respond to the protest (Francisco, 2005; Mc Adam et al., 2001).

However, other scholars advocated that communication has paramount contributing roles for sharing information as well as mobilizing the group against authoritarian regimes (Shirky, 2011). In this case, what intensified violent conflict in various contexts is the extent to which information and speeches are dispersed on social media and how the incumbent governments responded to the protest. This seems that misinformation, hate speech, frustration, economic marginalization, patriarchal system, defamation rhetoric navigated on social media, and the mistreatment of protesters' human and democratic rights has more likely to mobilize the group as well as escalate violent incidents.

2.2. Conceptual Framework: Ecological Approaches that Contribute to the Instigation of Offline Violence

In this sub-section, I use ecological approaches to examine different factors that pave the way or provoke harassment and violent conflict. A human being evolves and flourishes within the symbiotic or mutualism systems-which bring conflict, violence, confinement, restrictions, and possibilities (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The following ecological approaches are framed and explore ecological factors of understanding violence that instigated pre-condition for violence occurrence, incited harassment, and violent conflict as well. Therefore, the violent conflicts Ethiopians encountered are not merely driven due to hate speech circulated on social media; but it is the contributions of the following ecological factors.

2.2.1. Weak Social Cohesion

Weak social cohesion is the interplay of the socio-ecological factors which is determined in the extent of feasibility, effective and ineffective processes of socio-environmental conditions. Currently, albeit social cohesion has no agreeable universal or single definition, and specific instrument to be measured, it is significant among ecological factors or facilitates human harmonious relationship needed for the humanity of every society (Pahl, 1991; Friedkin, 2004). Other scholars advocated that social cohesion is a complicated concept of social construction because of various societal problems, geographies, political representation, and economic systems of different societies (Bruhn, 2019b). On the other hand, social cohesion is created in the environment of social solidarity and accommodation of unity with diversity regardless of their differences which strange for some leaders (Novy et al., 2012).

The way governments' institutional system is organized has played crucial roles to make the compatibility or incompatibility of socio-economic difference, and undermining the resilience nature of each social cohesion (Vale, 2014). This scholar further argues that considering social infrastructures and social dimensions, the failure to make distributive justice in the societal system has deteriorated the resilience of each society and individual to properly function together in economic, social, and political aspects (Ibid).

Moreover, lack of social cohesion is the result of various perceptions in the social, or government organizations which occurred due to conscious incompatibility, unfair distribution of infrastructures, institutional malfunction, and mal-administration systems (Sanchez, et al., 2018). Therefore, social cohesion crisis could escalate at different societal or organization levels due to human being's subjective nature of understanding things and their surroundings (Kearns and Forrest, 2000).

In this case, it seems that issues of social cohesion such as inequality, injustice, and uneven distributions of all types of the justice system have play a pivotal role in determining the cohesiveness of a particular society. In a sense, unaddressed justice systems, unfair distribution of infrastructures, ineffective institutional system, narrating hate speech about other identity intensifies hate, violent conflict; fragmented social solidarity, and leads to weak social cohesion, and visa-vis.

The above argument indicated that weak social cohesion is more intensified in the exclusive, and oppressed political situation. This undermines the core values of democratic principles like solidarity, and toleration. But also, employing social media, some activists express hate, disseminate misinformation to create stereotype attitudes toward other ethnic or religious groups. This could erode and fragment social solidarity, cooperation, accommodating diversity, and finally, weakens social cohesion as well as leads to violent conflict.

2.2.2. Social Stratification (Hierarchy)

Human beings want to be free from a hierarchy based on race, religion, gender, economic status, oppressive political system, and social norms (cf. Robbins, 2013a). However, historically, different societies of the world had experienced and faced social stratification based on various

subjective criteria. For example, the concept of royal families and landlordism seems among the marker line of social hierarchy in Ethiopia.

At the beginning of the 21st century, many of the poorest urban Latin Americans faced violence like homicide without going to war (Bourgois et al., 2015; UNDP, 2013). The urban poor were marginalized from political engagement and economic benefits. As they encountered interpersonal violence, and unable to gain free and fair decision based on rule of law, the social system was stratified as the government official at the top, the urban rich at the middle, and the urban poor at the lower level.

Moreover, there were social hierarchies in Western Europe and Greece respectively: First, in Western Europe: Bourgeois: These social groups were the middle class societies. Proletariat-were laborer or the industrial working class in Western Europe. The lowest social hierarches in Western Europe were named as serf the servants of the highest social group called bourgeois. Second, in Greece: the upper class-the most privileged, power holder groups; the middle class-not privileged and enslaved but free men class society; the lower class-even if they become the rich, unable to acquire the Athenian citizenship rights. The last social class was the slave-the miserable, brutalized non-Greeks. Even, this social class was the most vulnerable, violated and undermined their fundamental human rights.

In Ethiopian history, slavery as an institution has a debatable concept, however, there was a social hierarchy or stratification based on the feudalism system (Teshale, 1995). Historically, in the noticeable economic history of Ethiopia claim was based on the hierarchical system such as landowners, the peasant, and the *gebbar* (tribute) system (Paul, 2000). The *gebbar system* is mainly known in the northern part of Ethiopia, and it is an exploitative system even landlords attempt to protect the security of the peasants (Edward, 1982). This indicated that the landlords are considered as the hegemonic social class which considered as to provide security to the peasants, and the lower class societies.

Accordingly, during the Imperial regime, the stratification of the social class in Ethiopia seems like the following: The Emperor at the top, the royal families at the middle, and the subjects-ordinary people at the bottom. Such types of social hierarchy in the Ethiopian political system most likely bring horizontal inequality between different societies and ethnic groups (Zewde,

2008). The subjects or the lower social hierarchies were the most marginalized social groups from political, economic, social, moral, and cultural mainstreams.

Therefore, such hierarchic social systems, exclusive and oppressive political system made the marginalized Ethiopian societies have grievances towards the Imperial regime. This indicated that the “subjects” were the most vulnerable, harassed, abused, violated social class in the history of the Ethiopian political system. Generally, such social hierarchic system and exclusive political culture and an oppressed political system led politicians to focused on the misdeeds and faultiness the past. Furthermore, such politicians retroactive characteristics of narrating past faultiness on social media led to ethnic-lines mobilization-which intensifying prejudice, stereotype, and hateful attitude towards others.

2.2.3. Patriarchal System

Concerning patriarchal system, and context, domestic violence against women is related to cultural values and norms that define masculinity as dominance over women. This concept, which views women as inferior to men, gives social legitimacy to male dominance over their wives, even to extent of violence (Kasturirangan et al., 2004). Therefore, due to some of these root causes of violence lie in the cultural norms of the individual's ethnic group, it is important to engage in community and group works that include preventive education (Raj and Silverman, 2002).

In African context, little attention has been given to intervention focuses on addressing the barriers which lead to teenage pregnancy and male abandonment such as gender stereotype (Vargas, 2010). Most of the time, Scholars employ the terms such as sexual violence, and gender-based violence narrowly focused on rape. However, Carpenter (2006) argues that rape is one form of gender-based violence escalated during the mass conflict. According to him, gender-based violence constitutes an extensive range of physical and psychological action. This includes sexual assault, genital mutilation, coerced pregnancy, culturally inappropriate actions that sexually harass, humiliate, and non-sexual acts perpetrated based on gender, such as sex-selective killing (Ibid).

In the Ethiopian context, a feminist perspective argue that the patriarchal approach prevailed as reflected in the traditional division of roles between spouses which is characterized by the code

of honor. In this case, the hierarchy of honor is determined by age and gender. Accordingly, women and children are placed at the bottom of the ladder (Ben-Ezer, 1989). Rural women are encountered with various challenges including violence against their human rights, rape, abduction, property expropriation as well as early marriage.

The provision of the Ethiopian Federal state constitution grants each nationality the right to exercise customary law in conflict with other parties, also granting women the right not to be subjugated by the cultural domination (Smith, 2009). However, some norms are male-dominated and undermining the human rights of women, lead them to psychological harm, physical assault, structural inequality, as well as women exclusiveness in decision making. In this case, particularly, I refer to the women in the rural areas (women of the rural communities in Ethiopia).

Some authors argue that Gurage is described as a traditional patriarchal society that contains an oppressive culture and male dominance in various aspects of social realms, especially in marital status (Zewde, 2008). But the above argument does not necessarily mean that Gurage is the only traditional patriarchal society in Ethiopia. There might be others society particularly, in the rural areas which want to practice patriarchy system. In a tradition where the group decision is more important, the women's rights seem to be insignificant (Ndashe, 2005; Bennett, 1995). The Ethiopian traditional cultural norm which limited “the role of women in the house” indicated a patriarchic system, gender prejudice as well as inequality among men and women. Accordingly, the man who grows up or matured in such a cultural norm is highly likely to bit, abduct, rape, and violate his wife or other women.

This cultural norm reinforced pessimistic conditions in which women are harassed and harmed both physically and psychologically. Therefore, despite the feminist attempt to problematize the existing or established truth, rather than accepting it, domestic violence against women’s rights is prevalent relating to cultural norms and values. This implies that conceptualizing masculinity as dominance over women-which view women as inferior to men and allow social legitimacy to male dominance over their wives.

2.2.4. Structural Factor

Structural violence such as ineffective institutional system, inequality, corruption, and cultural violence are among the prominent constraints of development, and precipitating ethnic mobilization in developing and underdeveloped countries. Institutional system is defined as culture protected, and accepted mode of human behavior including laws, rules, regulations, cultures, tradition, and established code of conduct (Powelson, 2000). Even though poverty and economic recession are the most noticeable issues of institutional failures, the concentration of power on the hands of a few elites has been the prominent one in Ethiopian politics (Ibid).

Because the institution has a crucial role to flourish economic system in the process of power decentralization due to power is influential to other's behavior (Powelson, 2000, p.4). Therefore, it seems that the absence of genuine practicable power de-centralization, unemployment, mal-administration, rent-seeking, clientelism, and concentration of power on the hands of few elites led to institutional ineffectiveness in Ethiopia. Moreover, this brought social frustration and ethnic line mobilization against the EPRDF-which in turn led to many violent conflicts.

Ethiopia is among countries of the founding member of the United Nations (BBC News, 2018a). But Ethiopian governing system, even during the EPRDF was considered as the authoritarian regime due to the political system being characterized as excluding public majorities from practicable autonomous political involvement (Freedom House, 2018). This corrupt behavior and ineffective institutional system of the EPRDF undermined many population's living styles (Hailu, 2018). Therefore, caused by this and other triggering factors, widespread unrest, and demonstrations against the government commenced. This resulted in the 2015 demonstration against the EPRDF's political exclusiveness, and human rights violation (The Guardian, 2018).

The country-wide political unrest was incited due to the frustrated ethnic groups marginalization from the political, social, and economic mainstreams (BBC News, 2016). Moreover, the expropriation of the land rights, unemployment situation, corruption, vulnerability, and mal-administration provoked expansive political protest (BBC News, 2017). This impracticable EPRDF's governing system incited the 2016 Oromo protest against the Addis Ababa Master plan which culminated with huge destruction of property, and violent conflict (Heritage Foundation,

2018). Generally, the above argument indicates that structural violence also played paramount contributing roles in aggravated violent-incident in Ethiopian politics.

Therefore, bearing in mind that the ambiguity, and 'context specificity' of the hate speech concepts, but in the Ethiopian case, it seems that the major problem of hate speeches circulated on social media or other mainstream media is different. Unlike others countries such as USA, Germany, Spain, and etc., the serious problems which incited violent incident in Ethiopia does not necessarily concerned the hate speech hallmarks like xenophobia, homophobia, Islamophobia, and anti-Semitism. However, it has been associated with the following Structural problems of three crucial hate or hate speeches instigative factors:

The first hate speech instigative factor is politicians' frequent narration of the conquest and oppressive nature of state formation in Ethiopian history on social media platforms. In this case, I'm not advocating that using force is wrong. But merely narrating about the past phenomena to incite ethnic and religion based violent conflict is not correct. The second factor is the nation, and the state-building attempt itself is criticized, questioned, and undermined by some politicians due to aristocratic, monocratic, and authoritarian features of the regimes in Ethiopia. The third and the main fueling factor of hate speech is the extent to which political activists, ethnic-nationalists as well as ethnic entrepreneurs narrate these phenomena', and their attempt to relate the situation in the Ethiopian context with ethnic affiliation, religious aspect, and then dispersed mythic, rumor and deceptive message on social, and other mainstreams media as well.

Thus, the major serious issues most of Ethiopian facing is that hate speech propagators, and perpetrators political culture of highly focused on the past. Rather than seeking a mechanism to reach on national consensus, some political activists narrate the misdeed and faultiness of the past by using social media platforms to provoke violence. These drawbacks, and other factors inserting hatred, and pessimistic attitudes between different ethnic, nationality and identity groups, afflicting political turmoil, instability as well as violent-incidents in the country.

Therefore, the political turmoil in the Ethiopian politics seems exacerbated due to the above-mentioned factors, and the burst cumulative effect of the historical grievances some ethnic groups have toward the systems, structural violence, oppressiveness, and ineffective and

exclusive political institutions. This undermines other different ethnic groups and competing political parties from mainstreams political and economic dimensions or aspects.

2.3. Review of Related Literature

2.3.1. Hate Speech, Dehumanization, and Violent Conflict

Dehumanization is among the hallmarks of hate speech which incites violent-conflicts in different parts of the world. Scholars argue that hate speech speakers convince the audiences by degrading and refuting others' humanity as well as their moral concern (Maynard and Benesch, 2016, pp. 80-81). Therefore, dehumanization drives people particularly, the audiences of hate speeches to engage in suffering, to have hostile attitudes towards other identities, nationalities, and ethnic groups.

Evidences show that before the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, the hate speeches, and defamation message content of Rwanda Hutu extremists' equated and co-related Tutsi ethnic groups with insects like cockroaches, which finally led to killing of hundreds of Tutsis (Forges, 1999, p. 66). In a similar vein, during the Cambodian genocide, the government's rhetoric stated that the foes of the Khmer Rouge regime was equated with microbes and the regime want the foes of him to totally exterminate (Hinton, 2005, p. 147). At the end of the day, such kind of hatred sentiment led to the cruel death of over one million Cambodians by the regime soldiers in 1975 and 1979.

Unlike 'de-humanization forms' which aimed to undermine people of other ethnic origins, however, 'metaphysical de-humanization' is mainly focused on energizing, and strengthening beyond the capacities of humankind. During the Second World War, Japanese Propaganda depicted as well as the amount of British and American Leaders as a ghoul, and evil spirits (Smith, 2011, p. 22). Similarly, the propaganda war of USA posters on the newspaper the evilness of Germany, and Japanese people (Brcak and Pavia, 1994, p. 682; Lane, 2014, pp. 49-53). This indicates that the above arguments deal with metaphysical dehumanization-which has similar rhetoric context during the second world war of Japanese propaganda against USA and British people as well as USA propaganda against Germany and Japanese people.

Moreover, after ten years of the Civil War of the United States, and emancipation, white supremacists portray the injured black people as they are not human, not natural, and the threat to

white communities (Smith, 2018). In Myanmar, a rumor message posted on Facebook in 2017 stated that they related Bengalis with not human, color dogs, created to misuse their land, water, injured their ethnicity, and some Myanmar's citizens attempted to exterminate Bengalis' race (Stecklow, 2018). On the other hand, Facebook has emerged as the most influential medium in these countries to disperse rumor messages to motivate minority Rohingya Muslims and cause devastating effects including murder, emigration, and rape (Specia and Mozur, 2017). Albeit there was no de-humanization rhetoric, hate speech during the 2008 Kenyan election stimulated and emotionally derived Kalenjin tribe to exterminate their antagonist tribe-the Kikuyu (Thuku, 2014). Therefore, having such prejudice and stereotype perception towards the Kikuyu race precipitated devastating human and material losses such as massive displacement, violent-conflict, and killing each other's ethnic group.

Even, some government uses hate speech rhetoric in the policy of the country to violently expose alien, and exclude other ethnic groups to emigration. Evidence shows that there was a secret plan to selectively brutalize Armenians, an ethnic group from Ottoman Empire by exterminating what they called Armenians as the malicious "weeds" (Kuper, 1981, p. 91).

The above argument contains, and expresses two types of de-humanization-among one of the hate speech hallmarks. Firstly, de-humanizing form-mainly deals with leveling the human being to the weakest positioning, and equating humankind with non-human beings such as insects, animals, plants, and irrational beings. Whereas, the second, metaphysical de-humanization-is ranking the people, the groups of communities, or identity groups beyond its human capacity. Therefore, I argue that both types of hate speeches denigrate humanity, abrupt discrimination, and finally can be among triggering factors of violent-conflicts.

2.3.2. Hate Speech, and Islamophobia

At the international level, Islamphobia, racism, and xenophobia are among the hate speech rhetoric which has been navigated on social media or other mainstream media. This hatred sentiment towards others can be considered as one of the underlying fueling factors that precipitated violent conflict as well as intensified extremism, abrupt discrimination in various parts of the world. Therefore, having such kind of hostile attitudes, and pessimistic views of each

other undermine minority groups, erode solidarity, constrain enhancing democracy, violate human, and democratic rights including the freedom of religion.

Furthermore, some scholars argue that the reason behind anti-Muslim sentiment enduring from the 20th century up to present, and reach its climax and become an instantaneous crisis is due to the Iran hostage crisis of 1979 and after the 9/11 terrorist attack that intensifies the hate crime against Muslim in the United States. It is because of this issue why the United States is currently practicing other issues (FBI, 2016).

Some American politicians, for instance, as President Trump has expressed Islamophobia online and offline as well. During the 2016 election in the USA, the “group Muslim advocates” differentiated more than eighty anti-Muslim campaigns. For example, many news during the election was a rumor, and disinformation campaign disseminated by Duncan Hunter, the Californian congressman against his antagonistic Ammar Campa-Najjar was accused as he was the supporter of the terrorist group (Muslim Advocates and Lartey, 2018).

In the United Kingdom, after the Brexit Referendum, instantaneity of disinformation in Europe, and during the 2016 USA election, anti-refugee attitudes intermingled with Islamophobic sentiments (Evolvi, 2019; Benkler, et al., 2018). Therefore, domestic actors and foreign states used disinformation as well as stereotype sentiments to intensify Islamophobia and exclude Muslims residents in British and Europe from political engagement. For example, evidence indicates that one of the state-run operations, Russia's Internet Research Agency (IRA) used Islamophobic ideas to instigate turmoil in the United States, United Kingdom, and European Union (Howard, et al., 2018). Moreover, the serious problem is that during the 2016 USA election, foreign actors used social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to escalate coordinated fake news and misconduct (Facebook, 2018; Roth, 2019).

Different authors argue that even though the focus was the involvement of foreign actors in the circulation of domestic information during the 2016 election in the USA, however, the major aim was to widely spread Islamophobic sentiment by the indigenous residents of the United States (Pakzad and Salehi, 2019). According to these authors, the current studies found that practicing comparable false news disseminated on Facebook were swayed by the extremist evangelical Christians.

Some scholars argue that foreign actors and extremist evangelical Christians employed social media, particularly the Facebook network to disseminate stereotype and prejudice attitude towards Muslim communities (Kasprak, 2019). Not solely social Media, but also, the anti-Muslim groups including supremacists disperse their rumor messages by controlling, and labeling algorithms of the more important mainstream platforms (Daniels, 2018). Therefore, nowadays, it is due to these problems that domestic extremists especially in the name of white nationalism provoked novel policies as well as asks the service durations of Facebook and, Twitter (Koebler and Cox, 2019).

2.3.3. Hate Speeches and Ethnic Politics in Africa

Some politicians attempt to take and stay on their political power by defaming other ethnic and nationality groups as well as through ethnicity manipulating methods. Despite the flourishing of democratization in the 1990s that led to the multiparty competition on election, and governance based on the democratic system, but, the extent of democratization still infant, and inadequate in most of the sub-Saharan African countries' landscape (Cheeseman, 2015a). The reason behind utilization of ethnicity is to take political power and stay in power for resource capture-which led to ethnic antagonism, and exploitation (Irobi, 2013).

Likewise, African governments are characterized as “neopatrimonialistic” and totalitarian regimes after the independence from colonial powers due to their strife to stay in power by ethnic support (Cheeseman, 2006, 2015a). Therefore, for the sake of exploitation, manipulating resources, and remaining in power, various African states are oppressive, dictatorial, mobilize their ethnic affiliation for protest, and use hate speech rhetoric against other ethnic, or identity groups.

Evidence shows that using hate speeches, the African national elections held from 1990 up to 2008 faced extreme, serious extent of violent-conflicts (Straus and Taylor, 2012). Likewise, despite employing hate speech in the politics of Nigeria launched during the First Republic-between 1960 to 1966, but, the tension between the North and South Nigerian political situation was worsened during the general elections of 2011, and 2015. During these periods in Nigeria, the Northerners suppose not to win the presidential election unless mobilizing via their ethnic lines (Mwangi, 2015). This is the context of election which implies that unless African elites

mobilize ethnicity, and use hate speech to defame their competing political parties, the less likely to win the electoral process.

Accordingly, in these election moments, hate speech was turbulently employed to recall the fractionalization of ethnic, and religious groups between president Ebele Goodluck of the South, and the retired general Muhammadu Buhari of the North in which the Northerners won by mobilized ethnicity (INEC, 2015). In addition to this, during electoral campaigns, Nigerian elites used hate speech to incite electoral violence, and massacre from other political or religious sects (Adibe, 2015).

In the African context, why ethnic instability is apparent between those ethnically disunited societies which are not necessarily on their communal based organizations, rather due to the inefficient, and ineffectiveness of the national institutions to keep the interests of those ethnic-based separated societies, and accommodating them (Nnoli, 2008, p. 37). The institutional systems are weak, ineffective and inefficient as well as established mainly to keep, benefit the interests of the rulers rather than the ruled (people). Therefore, as long as the African elites are self-centered and power-seekers, they are not eager to compromise the incompatibility of interest and lack unity.

Therefore, the above arguments indicate that rather than building effective, and efficient institutional norms that benefited communities at large, some African elites use hate speech as a mechanism to mobilize protest among different ethnic, and religious sects, to instigate violent-conflict as well as to take, or stay on political power through their ethnic or religious affiliation. Their major target seems that it is not necessary to serve, and concern for the whole public irrespective of any ground. However, for exploiting the national resources, to preserve their interest, enhance their personal, and kin's well-being.

2.3.4. Hate Speech in Ethiopia

In the Ethiopian context, online hate speech conversation on social media has been correlated with having political hostility, and express grievances toward the government (Gagliardone, 2017; Legesse, 2012). Concerning this idea, issues with some activists, political entrepreneurs, and ethno-nationalists is using social media platforms such as Facebook, and YouTube to express hate speeches. In a sense, they use social media platforms, mainly Facebook, and You

Tube to express hate speeches against other ethnic groups, competing political parties, to seek power, to raise, or escalate an ethnic conflict, political turmoil, and for defamation purposes.

Ethiopia adopted federalism after the EPRDF's government came to power (after the ratification of the 1995 FDRE constitution) although there have been contested issues on the nature and genuineness of Ethiopia's federalism system. Irobi (2013) argues that the multi-cultural federal system is a pivotal method to harmonize multi-ethnic and religious diversities-which allow territorial autonomy to the minority groups.

The EPRDF government adopted federalism and incorporated the right to self-administration up to secession in its article 39 of the 1995 FDRE constitution. But this promised statement included in the article of the constitution doesn't allow any ethnic group even the right to self-administration until Abiy Ahmed came to power and realized Sidama self-administration system. Ake (1981) argues that African elites have become using ethnic politics as a means to attain their ideological politics and control resources. Therefore, in doing so, the African leaders despite not all, but, use or institutionalize ethnic centered politics. Therefore, most of African elites mobilize ethnic-based support politics based on the intimidation of those who do not support them will be excluded from the mainstreams of political empowerment as well as economic resources (Cheeseman, 2009).

Concerning this argument, I advocate that "ethnicity centered politics" is not necessarily explicit, formal, or legalized. But, it could be implicit, informal, and illegal. This implies that even though African elites incorporated some promises to do for the people, failure to do, and serving the public regarding what those elites incorporated on their constitutions has more likely to make these elites illegal, informal or implicit ethnic centered politics politicians. Accordingly, rather than realizing federalism, and the premised statements incorporated into the constitution, the EPRDF's government came up with the ideas of the Addis Ababa Master plan. This basically led to social chaos. But some politicians claim that the Addis Ababa Master plan led to the displacement of many Oromo farmers, and other poor communities nearby the capital city of Addis Ababa with disproportional, unfair compensation or without compensation to their land, and other properties.

In Ethiopia, protest against the EPRDF's government was mainly started in 2012 by the Muslim Protestors opposing governments' interference in religious matters with the slogan of *demtsachin yisema* 'let our voice be heard.' Scholars argue that this organized peaceful demonstration against the administration of Meles Zenawi by the Ethiopian Muslims was arguable the first public dissident after the 2005 controversial election-which led to huge destruction including the killing and forced migration of many Ethiopians (Reuters, 2007).

The secret behind enable the EPRDF's government ability to accomplish political power was the attempt to narrate the antagonism, and the enmity of Oromo-Amhara ethnic groups, to stop cross-ethnic harmony against the political dominance of TPLF (Tsega, 2018). As the protest became fueled countrywide, the EPRDF government started to use hate speech messages such as "*tebbab*" (narrow nationalists) to undermine the Oromo protestors as well as "*temkehitegna*" (chauvinists) to the Amhara ethnic group. Finally, Social Media including Facebook had played a crucial role in fueling protest, instigated violent incidents, internal displacements, ethnic based-violence, and undermining the domination of the EPRDF's government. This brought the afterward of the 2018 relative political reforms in Ethiopian politics (Workneh, 2020).

Moreover, Felix Horne, the Horn of Africa's senior researcher at *Human Rights Watch* stated that hate speech becomes escalating at an alarming rate both online and offline in Ethiopia. He further argues that hate speeches intensified "ethnic tension and conflicts in the countrywide-which led to above 1.4 million novel internally displaced people in the first half of 2018 alone" (Horne, 2018). Likewise, for the antagonistic escalation of political circumstances, ethnic-based violent conflicts, and internal displacement in Ethiopia, the dissemination of hate speech, and disinformation has played a paramount contributing role (Abraha, 2019).

Therefore, dominant Ethiopia's online news between 2018, and 2019 indicated that the crisis in Gedeo Zone, massacres in Jigjiga, and Burayu, the assassination of higher officials in Amhara Regional State, the riots in Sidama, as well as many violent-incidents were ethnic-based violent conflict which had incited by hate speech, disinformation, and misinformation messages circulated on social media, and become the serious issues in the Ethiopian politics (Alemu, 2019; Chala, 2019; Schemm, 2019). In the above argument, hate speech is not defined. I am framing that these violent incidents are incited due to hate speech that was used and misinformation navigated on the social media platforms.

Moreover, the rumor messages circulated on social media precipitated conflict across the countrywide, intensified ethnic tension, and brought several internally displaced people (Horne, 2018). Therefore, by using social media platforms, some political activists, and government officials disseminated rumors, express hate speeches, and defamation message content. This can be among the triggering factors for fueling violent-conflict as well as violent incidents.

2.3.5. Free Speech and Regulation

In 2008, an International Organizations called article 19 started expressing concern for freedom of expression, access to information, and free press due to the sudden changes regarding regulating freedom of expression and technological advancement (Article 19, 2008). However, in some African contexts, the promised freedom of expression and regulations remain not as efficient and effective in various socio-political realms. From 2001 onwards, free expression is limited and human and democratic rights are getting violated both in emerging and older democratic countries is contrary to what is promised in the principles of international, national human rights instruments and constitutions as well (Article 19, 2008: 12-13).

Lack of transparency and unaccountable characteristics of African governments can be considered as the hindrance to the effectiveness of regulations in protecting freedom of expression. Because African governments lack accountability, transparency and jeopardize the ruled but accountability is determined based upon the essence of power holders (Keohane, 2005: 2). The above argument indicates that African leaders are characterized by being undemocratic, and hence, oppress and suppress the people. As long as accountability and being answerable to the people require good governance, the realization of free speech and regulations also needs democratic and effective administrative systems. As transparency, accountability, and good governance are a double-edged sword, due to the good governing system, power is exercised in the principle of concerning justice for all and the public good (Van Gerven, 2005: 229).

Moreover, the United Nation Human Rights Committee emphasizes that "free expression plays crucial roles in a democratic society." (HRC, 1998.Para. 103). Likewise, the European Court of Human Rights substantiated freedom of expression is the core point of development, freedom of man and man's emancipation from the harsh environment, enhancing democracy and democratization process (ECHR, 1976. Para. 49). Similarly, the rights to free expression,

opinion, disclosure without interference, and access to information are also protected according to article 19 of the UDHR and ICCPR. But, is free speech always absolute? When and how free speech should be limited? Even though answering these questions take further investigation, the argument hereunder will give an insight into free speech, its limitation, and regulation.

According to Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, despite every individual has the right to free speech, opinion, receive and disseminate information, it should be limited by law and regulation of the country as well as the international, regional human rights standards. This indicated that in democratic societies, people have the right to free speech, impart and receive information unless it is not a threat to national security, public goods, and morals. Moreover, Article 19 (2) of the charter stated that law should restrict the dispersing of opinion as we like. Thus, I advocate that the great problem in Africa including Ethiopia is that some governments restrict the freedom of expression by violating the principles and regulations of the international and regional human rights instruments.

On the one hand, the African elites restricted free speech when the people criticized the incumbent governments. This indicates that African governments more concern for their interest rather than to keep the interests and enhance the welfare of the people. On the other hand, politicians, activists, and ethno-nationalists disseminate stereotype and prejudice sentiment speeches on social media and other mainstream media. This also aggravated the political tension and ethnocentrism among various ethnic groups and incited violence in different parts of the countries. Therefore, it is due to these problems that regulating hate speech seems not as such effective in the African context as such.

2.3.6. Hate Speech, Disinformation Prevention, and Suppression in Ethiopia: Proclamation No. 1185/2020

This proclamation defines hate speech as the speech that intentionally raises hatred attitudes, discrimination, and assault against other ethnic or identity groups based on any grounds like identity, race, religion, gender, and disability. It also defines disinformation as erroneous information dispersed on social media platforms by a person who knows the falsity of the information to the audiences (Proclamation No. 1185/2020). Relatively, new reforms, civil, and political liberties have taken place in governments' change in Ethiopia. As the freedom to use

social media platforms during different incumbent Ethiopian governments have varied, these different rulers of Ethiopia attempt come up with their own hate speech restricting methods. This can be either banning internet, particularly during the EPRDF regime (before the reform) or legislating hate speech and disinformation suppression law (after the reform).

Accordingly, the previous government blocked dissident online behavior. Whereas, the current Abiy's government administration system legislated hate speech, disinformation prevention, and suppression proclamation No. 1185/2020, which authorized the government to fine or imprison people for expressing hateful message content to their social media activities (Berhan, 2020).

The reason behind and necessity of enacting legislation concerning hate speech is that hate speech and online behavior disinformation can bring a threat to human dignity, national unity, social harmony, and public stability. Similarly, using hate speeches and dispersing disinformation online leads to undermine the core values of democratic principles, human right violation as well as marginalize minority groups, precipitate political instability and social tension as well. Scholars argue that despite the Ethiopian government reinforcing how to address hate speeches caused problems, however, its main focus has at speeches that instigate imminent violence or abrupt discrimination (Horne, 2018).

Therefore, due to the difficulty to control the rumor, deceptive, and fake message contents on social media in this digital world, it is to some extent unfair for the government to make every social media user's liable unless providing an enabling environment that enables them to access digital literacy mechanisms (Berhan, 2020).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Qualitative Research Method

In this study, the researcher used qualitative research methods to accomplish the thesis. Scholars argue that qualitative research method deals with careful, and detail looking with non-numerical data such as human perceptions, belief or analyze viewpoints in the social settings (Alok and Mishra, 2017). Researcher often uses qualitative research method in order to reveal the meaning and give insight about each circumstance in the study area (Levitt et al., (2017). Furthermore, the main purpose of qualitative research method is to carefully describe and interpreted phenomena and problems from various perspectives as well as to create new concepts or theories (Priya and Viswambharan, 2016). Hence, a researcher employed qualitative research method since it is explanatory, and allow the researcher to explain phenomenon of the study area in detail. This allowed a researcher to explore how hate speech circulated on social media, mainly Facebook and YouTube incited and exacerbated violent incidents in Ethiopian politics.

3.2. Research Design

The research design is the holistic and systematic way of combining various components of the research logically. It is inquiry based within three research methods approaches like qualitative, quantitative and mixed that gives a procedure direction in a research design (Creswell, 2014: 12). A research design is used to handle the problem of the study systematically, objectively, validly and indicates the accurate processes of data collections and analysis (De Vaus, 2006). This author advocates that most of the time, the statement of the problem have to be identified prior to research design to determine the research design. The researcher employed narrative and explanatory research design. I have focused on the hate speeches coincidence to issues circulated on social media from 2014 up to 2020 in Ethiopian politics, and the underlying factors that fueled violent incidents.

Moreover, after scrutinizing the prominent violent incidents that happened in Ethiopian politics between these years, the researcher critically explained and narrated the violent incidents that had taken place. Similarly, the challenges, and the effects of hate speeches, online behavior

circulated on social media as triggering factors and precipitating offline violence in Ethiopia were carefully explained.

3.3. Sampling Techniques

Sampling technique is a process in which a few informants and respondents are selected from the sampling population in order to acquire the unknown information, circumstances and results of the study area to predict about the larger groups (Kumar, 2011: 193). In this study, the researcher used purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The number of respondents and interviewees were selected by the judgment of the researcher himself from the population those who have better knowledge and awareness about the study area. In addition to this, the researcher used the social media pages of those public figures, those actively engaged in the politicized political exchanges which provided the context for violence. Due to those public figures, famous activists have many followers and audiences, the messages posted on their social media pages have more likely to convince, influence their followers and incite violent incidents.

Even though the number of the followers of these political activists varied depending on the type of the message they post online to their audiences, a researcher used Facebook pages of the following political activists,, and politicians with their significant numbers followers. Accordingly, Awol Kassim Allo has 169,265 followers, Henok Gabbisa has 201,288, Yaya Beshir followed by 606, 202, Taye Dendea has 473,000; Achamyelah Tamiru followed by 158,098, Christian Tadele has 268,528 followers, Meskerem Abera followed by 126,733 and Muluken Tesfaw followed by 186,692 people. Moreover, the number of the followers of these political activists is changing depending on the political context as well as issues of the post to their audiences.

3.4. Methods of Data Collections

In this study, different methods of collecting information, particularly primary and secondary sources of data were used. As the name indicates, primary data is the researcher's first time gathered data (information). Whereas secondary data is the result of reading various publications like journal articles, books, government reports and magazines.

3.4.1. Primary Data Sources

Primary data source is a method of acquiring firsthand information, and raw data about phenomenon of the study area (Kumar, 2012: 139). The primary data is a researchers collected data for the first time, and is characterized as original sources of information (Kothari, 2004; 5). The researcher used primary and secondary methods of data collection. The primary methods such as structure and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion as methods of collecting data to acquire relatively reliable information about the study area. The researcher conducted an interview with political activists, senior officials of Oromia Communication Bureau, Addis standard expertise and journalists, some ethnic nationalists, communication experts, and others. The researcher selected these participant informants based on their political influence, knowledge about the study area, willingness, and availability to the researcher.

The researcher also conducted semi-structured interview which helped the informants to be flexible, and gave a chance for a researcher to ask other questions depending on the response of the interviewees. This help the informants to had the freedom to talk about the issues raised concerning the thesis' questions without any constrains, and a researcher to acquire more data about the study area.

3.4.1.1. In-depth Interview

In-depth interview is a face-to-face communication among a researcher and interviewee in order to understand the informants' perception, viewpoints, understanding, experiences and circumstances that expressed by their own words (Kumar, 2005). The researcher conducted both structure, and semi-structured interview in this study. Moreover, the researcher used semi-structured interview due to it allowed more two ways of communication between a researcher and the informants (interviewee). Hence, during the interview moments, the necessary notes were taken based on the free willing of the informants in a manner that concerned for the confidentiality of the informants as well.

3.4.1.2. Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussion deals with scrutinizing human viewpoints, consciousness and experiences of groups of people who have some understanding concerning certain issues and

phenomenon (Kumar, 2005). In this study, the Focus Group Discussion participant informants were selected based on their consent, sex, political backgrounds from different ethnic groups, their influential role in politics as well as their roles in mobilizing ethnic or religious groups. But due to their lack of willingness in this study, female participants were smaller in number than male participant informants. Moreover, before the researcher started collecting data with primary sources of information such as interview and FGD, he made all significant preparation to the study.

3.4.2. Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data collection method is the researcher and people work outcomes preserved as publications, such as books, journals, articles and government reports. Most of the time, the main purpose of secondary data is to help the researcher to acquire information about the previous situation and give information about others experiences. Secondary data is the others pre-collected source of information which have reached others via the statistical process (Kothari, 2004: 5). Thus, the researcher reviewed, and then used articles, Journals, government report, newspaper, and etc. as secondary sources of data. The researcher knew, and understood more about the issues of hate speeches circulated on social media including Facebook and prominent violent incidents that happened between 2014 up to 2020 in Ethiopian politics via the data collected from the informants and respondents as well.

Moreover, the researcher tried to explore the violent incidents that happened in those years of Ethiopian politics by including informants and respondents of the residents of the study area from different ethnic groups, and actors of the event as much as possible. The researcher is to some extent be neutral, not influenced, and influence the ideas of the informants, was free from merely imposing my viewpoints on the interviewees. Finally, after collected data, the researcher is systematically, carefully transcribed data acquired from respondents and informants.

3.5. Method of Data Analysis

To accomplish the study, systematically transcribing and data analysis has a crucial role. The researcher employed contextual analysis qualitative research methods and the relevant data collected through various methods such as interview and focus group discussions, social media

pages were analyzed and interpreted based on the research question of the thesis. Qualitative research method is used to analyze the consciousness, belief, attitude and human behavior (Gough, 2002). It includes the overall pictures and used to examine words, context, texts, human's viewpoint, belief, participant's report and to conduct research in a social setting (Creswell, 2015). Therefore, the researcher tried to explore and analyze how the rumor message disseminated on social media influence the audiences, give meaning to the language content, and hate speech precipitated violent incidents. Thus, the researcher preferred to employ qualitative research methods in the study area.

CHAPTERFOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter aims to interpret and analyze data acquired from participant informants' divergent perceptions and viewpoints, and online behavior, particularly concerning the study (hate speech on online platforms, and offline violent incidents). The information collected regarding assessing hate speech, social media, and violence in Ethiopia. Thus, in its proper context, the discussion of gathered information has been interpreted and analyzed hereunder the following four themes. These are the major hate speech narrative issues circulated on social media from 2014 up to 2020, Causalities of hate speech navigated on social media and the pattern, significant cases of violent incidents that happened in these years; the underlying factors that fuel or exacerbated violence, and challenges of online behavior and offline violence Ethiopians encountered in these years. Moreover, for the sake of confidentiality principles, each name of the informant is kept anonymous.

4.1. The Major Hate Speech Narrative Issues Circulated on Social Media (2014-2020)

Hate speech is conceptualized context-specifically and has no single agreeable scholarly definition. Even though conceptualized differently in various contexts, hate speech is a speech that is targeted to dehumanize, defame and attack others based on ethnic background, religion, race, political affiliation, disability, and sexual orientation and minority groups to instigate direct violence. According to the finding of information gathered from participants in the study, multifaceted problems have incited violent conflict in the Ethiopian political system. Violent incidents are mainly exacerbated due to two major factors: underlying and fueling violence instigative factors.

A politician who participated in an interview stated that the hate speech problem and its intensity varied even from 2014 up to the reform and post-reform in the Ethiopian political system. The period from 2014 up to the reform is considered as a time of social movement, particularly youth Oromo protest and Amhara after 2016, against the old regime of EPRDF. A pessimistic sentiment during this time was against and portraying hate sentiments towards the EPRDF

regime, typically to TPLF who was leading EPRDF due to its discriminatory political characteristics¹.

In this case, social media, mainly facebook played a pivotal role in transforming the Ethiopian political system to a relative reform. The majority of the youth and political activists used social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube to reach the messages to their audiences. The second problem of this form of online communication is that hate speech targets ethnicity and religious groups became intensified due to the open political space made after a reform.

Furthermore, an assessment of Focus Group Discussion with Amhara ‘X’ politicians indicated that the most worrying scenario which led to violence among different ethnic groups has been due to some political activists irresponsible and misuse of social media. Those groups employing social media platforms to defame, dehumanize or denigrate other ethnic or religious groups are considered here².

Particularly, from 2014 up to 2018, hate speeches were targeted against the EPRDF regime. But due to TPLF’s political superiority for 27 years, unfortunately, some political activists perceived TPLF as a Tigrayan government and there was a context to hate the Tigrayan ethnic group (community). Whereas after the reform, ethnic-based violence became exacerbated. For example, the violent incident between Somali and Oromo, Oromo-Amhara, Gumuz-Amhara, Gedeo-Guji, etc. In this time, there were no hate speeches that targeted one ethnic group but there was a context, in which inter-ethnic-based violence reoccurred due to ego-centric traits of some Ethiopian political elites to prioritize their interests and benefits rather than the public at large³. In doing so, they instrumentalize ethnicity as well as social media to abrupt discrimination and incite violence (Interview with ‘X’ political activist). But this politician simplified the hate speech context. Accordingly, during these ethnic-based violent incidents occurred, some political activists used hate speech even if not as inference as in the pre-reform period.

Moreover, concerning hate speech problem after the reform, when the "Irreechaa celebration" was permitted in Addis Ababa for the first time, at “Hora Finfinne," one government official said

¹ Interview with ‘Y’ politician, 6 March 2021, Addis Ababa

²FGD with Amhara politicians, 6 March 2021

³ Interview with ‘X’ political activist, 7 March 2021

that we broke down the *neftegna* system⁴. Even if the term *neftegna* is the politics of representation which is problematic but the ethnic group categorized as *neftegna* is Amhara ethnic group as the term ‘*neftegna*’ currently considered as a political term to hate Amhara ethnic group. There was the slogan in which down down ‘*neftegna*’, ‘down Menelik’, and “*teregna*” terms are used in Ethiopian politics. In these last three years, ethnic-based violence became exacerbated rather than stopped on social media⁵. Because violent incidents are to some extent practiced rather than stop at mere expressing online hate speech to inter-ethnic groups.

Politicians disseminated online major hate speech content such as *neftegna*, Menelik settlers, and other rhetoric which attempt to equate human beings with animals, and de-humanization forms. They used Facebook and YouTube for bad things like inciting violent conflict, and fuel it. Therefore, in doing so, rather than using social media platforms to enhance democracy and the democratization process, some ethno-nationalists used the platform to express hateful speeches to provoke violence and attain their political goals.

The researcher interviewed one of the senior officials of the Oromia Communication Bureau. The informant focused on hate speech after the reform, particularly defamation context towards the current prime minister of Ethiopia. The hate or defamation rhetoric has two aspects. These are: Firstly, concerning defamation to his ruling style and secondly, his identity (whether he is an Oromo or not). He responded: Most of the time, hate speech comes from opposition groups or parties. Some propagators of hate speeches that have a pessimistic attitude toward Abiy Ahmed's ruling style claim that he is not a true federalist or he is an anti-federalist which is contrary to the reality on the ground. As federalism is the right to self-rule and he started to realize federalism by allowing the "Sidama ethnic group's self-administration system" which has never been practiced during the administrative eras of EPRDF government-led by TPLF⁶.

This indicates that there is a controversial concept about his ruling system, truth on the ground, and disinformation on social media, mainly Facebook and YouTube as long as allowing the right to self-rule is one of the integral principles of federalism. Hence, he answered and realized Sidama ethnic group's question about the right to self-administration. So, this fact indicates that

⁴ Interview with Amhara political activist, 9 March 2021

⁵ Focus Group Discussion with ‘Y’ politicians, 9 March 2021

⁶ A senior official of Oromia Communication Bureau, 13 March 2021

Abiy is a true federalist but propagators of hate speech and some political activists defame him and disperse false information on some social media platforms. In addition to this, for instance, “while Amnesty International's released report on violent incidents that happened in Wollega, Guji, and other areas which are committed by "OLF Shanee,” intensified Abiy’s naming as a dictatorial government⁷ (senior official of Oromia Communication bureau, 20 March 2021). The above argument indicates that political activists used not only hate speech, but, also defamation, false information and denigration message content to undermine others.

The second aspect of hate is defamation and refuting Abiy's identity. Concerning this issue, after he was assigned as the prime minister of Ethiopia at the end of April 2018, some politicians started to call him as he is not an Oromo. Some ethno-nationalists perceive those members of Oromo Democratic parties had strong relationship with the then EPRDF regime-led by TPLF as well as tried to hate and protest a person who is from the ODP party. Because they claim that the members of the ODP party were the members of the EPRDF regime-which oppressed the Oromo ethnic group. In this case, the major attempt of politicians is to put him under the negative image in front of the Oromo ethnic group, and to mobilize Oromo ethnic groups for protest.

Moreover, in addition to refuting Abiy’s identity which is disagreeable, also by focusing on his mere weak side part, some social media users of Oromo politicians call that he is *neftegna* and doesn't like either Oromo parties or the Oromo community. Because he came to power to bring the former predecessors' system called the *neftegna* system to the palace rather than responding to the one and half-century old questions of the Oromo. Therefore, this contains very consequential types of hatred sentiment toward the current Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed as well as to his ruling party⁸.

Concerning the above informant’s argument, it is disagreeable with the idea that Abiy Ahmed came to power to bring *neftegna* system to the palace. But the major aim of some politicians were to defame, and denigrate Abiy and undermine his ruling system by narrating hate speech rhetoric, as well as giving misinformation about his ruling party to the Oromo people. In this case, not only hate speech but also, some politicians used after forms political speech,

⁷A senior official of Oromia Communication Bureau (20 March 2021)

⁸FGD with senior officials of Oromia Communication Bureau, 20 March 2021

denigration, misinformation, fake messages to mobilize the Oromo ethnic group against Abiy Ahmed's ruling regime.

For example, “when the campaign of using the term *neftegna* launched a few months before the Oromo popular singer called Hachalu Hundessa was assassinated, and when he gave the last interview with Oromo Media Network (OMN); he was forced to talk about *neftegna* to acknowledge whether *neftegna* is an enemy of Oromo or not [senior official of Oromia Communication Bureau]. However, after Hachalu was killed, many consequential effects and casualties such as loss of life, displacement, social tension, and destruction of property had happened due to false information and misperception that he is killed by *neftegnas*⁹.

Despite many consequential effects and casualties happened after Hachalu Hundessa was assassinated, but, the claim that the casualties were instigated by the mere misperception that he was assassinated by *neftegnas*. Because there is a doubt that some fault finder politicians and ethnic entrepreneurs to exacerbate ethnic-based violent conflicts. Furthermore, the intention of these politicians seems to try to relate that Hachalu was assassinated because of the *neftegna* ruling system of Abiy Ahmed¹⁰. Thus, whatever hate speech rhetoric, defamation, or political speech terms they used, the major aim of some politicians was to incite and fueled ethnic-based violence as a means to attain their political interests.

On the other hand, there is another politician who used political speech and called Abiy's ruling system a *teregna*, fascist, anti-federalist, system to make him an unpopular leader in front of different ethnic groups. Therefore, the main aims of such politicians are to undermine Abiy's administrative system and gain public support to hold power as well as to attain their political goals. They used not only hate speech terms but also, employed false information as a means to accomplish their political ends.

Moreover, the problem, in this case, is that, since hate speech has no scholars' agreeable definition, using hate speech interchangeably with political speech is employed to mobilize people. This implies that both political and hate speech contexts are used not only to instigate

⁹A senior official of Oromia Communication Bureau, 24 March, 2021

¹⁰Focus Group Discussion with ‘X’ politicians, 20 March 2021

ethnic and religion-based violence incidents but as a discourse to undermine the incumbent government or leader to mobilize people to protest.

4.2. Causalities of Hate Speech circulated on Social Media and the Patterns, Significant cases of Violent Incidents that Happened in Ethiopia Political System (2014-2020)

A politician who participated in an interview stated that in the Ethiopian political system, the patterns and significance of violent cases have mainly two dimensions. These are ethnic-based and religion-based violence¹¹. For example, the violent conflict formerly happened between Gedeo-Guji, Oromo-Somali as well as recently happening between Amhara-Gumuz in Metekel Zone, Oromo-Amhara, Gumuz-Oromo in Kamashi area, and massacre in Shashemene, Burayyu, and Wollega, etc. are mainly ethnic-based violent incidents. Concerning the pattern and significant cases of violent incidents that happened in Ethiopian politics, I interviewed an Addis Standard Journalist. He responded: Whether caused due to hate speech, misinformation, and disinformation or defamation message content circulated on Facebook or other social media platforms, we had been observing certain violence problems re-occurring in the Ethiopian political system. These communal violent incidents have ethnic and religious dimensions¹² (Interview with Addis Standard Journalist, 17 March 2021). Triggered by some irresponsible politicians, and misuse of social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube, the conflicts which happened even between two individuals of the different ethnic group has an element and perception of ethnic-based violence.

Similarly, if conflicts occur among the followers of different religions, the issue often escalated to a religion-based violent incident. Therefore, this indicates that the perpetrators of violence intentionally instigate ethnic-based or religion-based violent incidents. Concerning this, an interview with ‘X’ political activist stated that “politicians used ethnicity and religion as an instrument to accomplish their political dreams or ambition¹³”. It seems that politicians perceive that the violence which has ethnic or religious aspects has less likely to be de-escalated.

¹¹A senior official of Addis Standard expert, 17 March 2021

¹²Interview with Addis Standard Journalist, 17 March 2021

¹³Interview with ‘X’ political activist

In this case, it is better to see the context in which Ethiopian political activists disperse messages on social media mainly, Facebook or other mainstream media. Accordingly, those political activists can be categorized into two main groups. These are responsible human rights activists and irresponsible political activists or politicians¹⁴. Relatively seeing, the former strive to use social media to reach relatively reliable information and message to their audiences or the communities they represent. Thus, their main target here is to facilitate active community participation in politics rather than preaching hate speech and propagating hate among different ethnic or religious groups. It seems that by using social media platforms or other mainstream media, the major aims of responsible activists are to enhance the community's awareness level about politics and promote democracy and democratization.

However, the latter (irresponsible political activists) employ social media mainly, Facebook to disseminate rumors, fake videos, false information, or defamation message content to their followers. Because they disperse such a rumor message merely for the community they represent without calculating the consequences of their message on other ethnic, minority, or religious groups. Moreover, the main aims of those irresponsible politicians seem that either to achieve their goals or attempt to protect solely the interest of the community they claim to represent¹⁵. Concerning this idea, being a politician and advocating about ethnicity, promoting one's culture and language is not inappropriate. But the serious problem was that those politicians misuse social platforms to exacerbated inter-ethnic or inter-religion violence.

But the challenging and inappropriate problem is that irresponsible politicians aim to undermine others' culture, identity, and political viewpoints which pave the way to provoke violence. Thus, the major difference among responsible and irresponsible politicians is that the former concern for the enhancement of democracy and democratization, human rights, and raising communities' consciousness level about the political system. Whereas irresponsible politicians don't care about concern for the public at large¹⁶. The above informant's argument seems the main target of irresponsible politicians is to preserve and prioritize their political ends, agendas as well as that of the few groups they claim to represent. Those politicians were conscious that they can't reach their political whim unless they strife to intensify ethnic-based or religion-based violent conflict.

¹⁴Focus Group Discussion with officials of Oromia Communication Bureau

¹⁵Interview with 'X' politician, 17 March 2021

¹⁶Interview with official of Addis Standard Journalist, 20 March 2021

4.3. The Underlying Factors that Fuel Violent Incidents in Ethiopia Politics

Multilayered problems which can be categorized into two major factors have been incited and escalate violence in the Ethiopian political system. These factors include structural factors and triggering factors. These factors can be political, social, economic, or cultural. The violent conflicts Ethiopians are facing are not merely due to hate speech, and rumor messages circulated on social media. It is the contribution of the following root causes (underlying) and triggering (fueling) factors:

Political activists who participated in an interview stated that the following underlying factors fueled violent incidents in the Ethiopian political system in these years. These include:

Firstly, Lack of common understanding: Politicians or elites have no common understanding. Furthermore, the researcher interviewed an Amhara politician asking a question stated that why elites don't have a common understanding and consensus on Ethiopian history? He responded:

Lack of having common understanding and consensus among politicians of different ethnic groups concerning state formation in Ethiopia is among the underlying factor that instigated violent incidents. The informant responded rather than merely focusing on the past faultiness of the state formation of Ethiopia, we have to think about the mechanism which enable us to reach on compromise agreement regarding Ethiopian politics in the future¹⁷. Moreover, he responded again, the serious issue is that some of the political elites of Ethiopia are highly dependent on the historical narratives to dig out the faultiness of others. Their major aim seems to insert stereotypes sentiment toward the former country's rulers¹⁸.

Thus, from the above statement, it is understandable that even if state formation has its drawback and faultiness, the major problem inciting violence in Ethiopia is politicians' utilization of frequent faultiness narrative rather than providing compromise and agreeable ideas, solutions regarding the past events. These politicians' aim seems not merely to insert stereotype attitude towards the former countries rulers. They also mobilize people based on their ethnicity as a means to attain their goals.

¹⁷Interview with political activist, 23 March 2021

¹⁸ Political activist, 23 March 2021, Addis Ababa

On one hand, most Ethiopian politicians are trapped with debating the past. The other problem is that it is not merely the politicians' state formation faultiness narratives that provoke violence in Ethiopia. Rather the big issue is co-relating those misdeed rulers with the affiliation of current generations¹⁹. On the other hand, politicians preach those oppressed groups have to take vengeance over the current affiliated generation as compensation for what the former rulers had done. In this case, despite supporting the misdeed of the past is wrong, but, criticizing the way politicians and other irresponsible individuals instrumentalize ethnicity to achieve their goals is correct.

Not only politicians but also, some of the recent generations lack or have a lower level of self-criticism. Because having a lower level of self-criticism or people inability to filter out online deceptive and disinformation messages from the truth on the ground may probably be among the contributing factors which led to a violent incident in Ethiopia²⁰.

Some of the Ethiopian youth are not self-critical. In a sense, they are unable to evaluate their actions and behavior fairly. Engaging in self-criticism will make us discuss the past and bring a solution for tomorrow²¹. Thus, it is better if politics depend on today rather than merely influenced by the past phenomenon. Therefore, we have to develop self-criticism rather than solely blaming others.

Secondly, the other underlying factor which precipitated violent incident in Ethiopia is that politicians are more influenced by the past event rather than try to solve the problem through table discussion. Because even at the governmental level, lack of documented and unbiased historical facts at the country level may probably cause violence in Ethiopia. Almost all of the Ethiopian governments are not eager to preserve the documented unbiased historical facts due to they perceive that they may not stay in power while such scenarios prevail at the national level²².

However, the other problem which exacerbates violence incident in Ethiopia political system is some politicians narrate wrong messages to audiences. For instance, one of the TPLF officials

¹⁹Focus Group Discussion with 'X' politicians, 25 March 2021

²⁰Interview with 'Y' political activist, 25 March 2021

²¹Senior Official of Oromia Communication Bureau, 26 March 2021

²²FGD with 'X' politicians, 27 March 2021

said that "Oromo and Amhara are *Isat* and *chid*"²³. His intention seems that if those majority ethnic groups reach negotiated and reach a national consensus, the country may stabilize, and the power domination of the incumbent government official will not prolong²⁴.

Thirdly, another factor that could be considered as an underlying factor of violence in Ethiopia is political, many unanswered questions including the right to self-determination, the issues of the flag, federal language, remain unanswered yet. The right to self-administration given to Sidama regional state can be the result of the reform²⁵. Therefore, by using these unanswered questions, politicians attempt to mobilize their ethnic groups.

However, the problem is self-centered and egoist politicians agitated for their mere political ends and simply use these unanswered questions, demands to escalate the violent conflict²⁶. In doing so, they used ethnicity and religion as an instrument to attain their political ends. In addition to the above cases, some groups claim that they are marginalized, suppressed, oppressed, and discriminated against for so many years in the Ethiopian political system.

But even if their demands are considered legitimate, the problem is the mechanisms they used to address or realize their demands were not always lawful or legitimate. Some political activists and elites use hate speech, false information as well as force to attain their political goals. Fourthly, the other underlying factor of violence include youth unemployment, poverty, the decline of a culture of tolerance and unity with diversity, expressing hate to others as well as fake news on social media, mainly Facebook and YouTube.

Political activists who participated in an interview responded to the hereunder issues as triggering factors of violent incidents in Ethiopia. These include, firstly, the remnants of the EPRDF regime-led by TPLF at different administrative levels after the reform were among the aggravating causes which intensified ethnic and religion-based violent conflict in Ethiopia. Because TPLF attempt to regain its lost political power via instigating ethnic-based conflict²⁷. Then what happened was many people used Facebook to support their ethnic affiliation to respond to such ethnic-based violent conflict. The above argument indicates that not only hate

²³Focus Group Discussion with 'Y' politicians, 25 March 2021

²⁴ FGD with Amhara Politicians, 26 March 2021

²⁵ Interview with 'Y' Official of Oromia Communication Bureau, 28 March 2021

²⁶ Interview with Addis Standard Journalist, 29 March 2021

²⁷Focus Group Discussion with 'X' Political activists

speech, but some of the former members of EPRDF regime were among the triggering factors of violent incidents.

Thinking that they will come back to their former political domination, the remnants of the former EPRDF regime at various administrative positions launched different mechanisms which instigate violence. Creating pessimistic attitudes and dispersing disinformation about each identity group were among the ways used to escalate violence in Ethiopia²⁸. In addition to disseminating misinformation online, some political activists are self-centered and misuse social media platforms, mainly Facebook, and YouTube to exacerbate ethnic and religious-based violent conflict. Furthermore, the political space allowed after the reform paves the way for politicians to post what they want allowed dangerous speech on social media. Thirdly, it is the nature of reform that is always conflictual, destructive, and lost life.

However, the researcher had interviewed with Addis Standard journalist, and she responded: One of the fueling factors of violence is the disagreement between secessionist groups and multi-national federalism. Because these secessionist groups attempt to dismantle multi-national states²⁹. The other political group is those who support ethnic federalism. They advocate that they gain political power by empowering their ethnic groups. Therefore, the disagreement between those two sects has been also incited violence in Ethiopia.

Moreover, one politician who participated in an interview stated regarding the other fueling factor of a violent incident in the Ethiopian political system. He responded as: The fueling factor for a violent incident behind the Addis Ababa Master plan was the historical grievances, some politicians' claim of the unequal treatment of the Oromo people was undermined by the predecessors of the EPRDF government³⁰. In this case, even though Oromo is not the only group that dominated by the previous regimes, however, Oromo youth including University students were the most vulnerable by EPRDF government starting from Addis Ababa Master Plan up to the reform. This can be arguably viewed from two perspectives. First, from a hate speech perspective: Some political activists and the Oromo elite claim that the EPRDF regime is an

²⁸Interview with 'Y' political activist, 29 March 2021, Addis Ababa

²⁹Interview with Addis Standard Journalist, 29 March 2021

³⁰Interview with 'Y' Oromo politician, 30 March 2021

oppressor to the Oromo ethnic group. Because the system itself is structured selectively to deprive their possession (i.e., their land, property, etc.).

Second, viewed from online behavior: The EPRDF governing system is oppressive due to it brutalized, killed Oromo students, and arrest Oromo politicians. These activists posted on their Facebook pages and other social media platforms that the main target of the EPRDF government like its predecessors is to undermine the Oromo ethnic nationhood from various mainstreams. These mainstreams are economic, political, social, and cultural aspects.

Finally, the people hear emotionally the political activists' message disseminated on social media and mobilized for a protest attempt to overthrow the then incumbent EPRDF's government. Therefore, the cumulative effects of these hate speeches, historical oppressiveness, and frustration, defamation message contents, as well as other factors navigated on social media incited and fueled violent incidents in Ethiopian politics.

4.4. Challenges of Online Behavior and Offline Violence in Ethiopia (Post-2018)

It is not only hate speech which had been challenging. Ethiopian people faced various challenges including both dangerous online behavior and offline violence in Ethiopian politics. Viewed from online issues, the anonymity of online behavior has been among the major challenging problems Ethiopians faced between these years. Because some political activists and individuals posted online the videos and images seem genocide, homicide, and brutal killing that occurred in other countries as it happened or took place in Ethiopia. On the one hand, some messages posted on Facebook by political activists contain deceptive, fake, and exaggerated³¹. This indicates that most of the time, the message disseminated on social media is fake and posted from unknown pages. It is not easy for the government to control such anonymous and fake messages. Thus, such types of online behaviors had major challenges to not only Ethiopians but also to governments.

On the other hand, Ethiopian political activists developed the characteristics of taking a few deaths and magnifying or exaggerating it rather than posting the appropriate data or information

³¹FGD with Addis Standard experts

they got³². This indicates that they use one incident to rally and mobilize people to set their own political agenda. This seems that some politicians do not get concerned and care about the acceptability and unacceptability of the truthfulness of their actions, but they are concerned for their mere political ends. Because they targeted to preserve and prioritize their narrow interest and benefit but ignore the public interest or common good.

Moreover, they posted human beings in the form of de-humanization. Further, hate speech speakers convince the audiences by degrading or refuting others' humanity as well as their moral concern (Maynard and Benesch, 2016, pp. 80-81). De-humanization form and metaphysical de-humanization are the two major types of de-humanization used by politicians or any extremist groups. Not only from political activists but also the use of social media in some Ethiopian communities have its own drawbacks³³. These politicians stated that the reason behind this is that liberal debate, consensus, or peaceful agreement is uncommon. In addition to having irresponsible politicians and citizens, most of the Ethiopian people are not well educated. Hence, unable to identify such fake, and disinformation into on Facebook. Thus, they are easily influenced by rumors messages, images or videos posted online and most likely engaged in violent conflict.

For example, during the 1994 Rwanda genocide, Hutu extremists equated the Tutsi ethnic group with insects like cockroaches (Forges, 1999, p. 66). Because de-humanization form deals with the issues of leveling and equating human beings with non-humans like insects and animals. Similarly, in the Ethiopian context, most of the pictures or photos posted online seem 'de-humanization form' rather than metaphysical de-humanization. Most of the time, politician activists posted de-humanization images on social media platforms, mainly on Facebook and YouTube to denigrate and undermine the popularity others ethnic, religious or political groups.

For instance, starting from the end of April 2018 or the reform, some politicians posted de-humanization images on Facebook and YouTube equating or attempt to co-relate some political leaders and religious leaders or other ethnic groups they hate as having donkey heads and other body parts of human, having a human head and snake body part as well hen body part and a

³²Interview with a senior official of Oromia Communication Bureau, 30 March 2021

³³Focus Group Discussion with 'Y' political activists, 30 March 2021, Addis Ababa

human head³⁴. Such images had observed online, particularly while the competition among the different elite and political landscape become escalated in Ethiopia.

Thus, the main aim of such an online poster was to denigrate and refute others' humanity, undermine their political viewpoints, and not be supported by the majority of the communities in Ethiopia. Therefore, the major serious issue, in this case, these online fake messages or de-humanizing image posters aimed to influence their audiences to instigate violent conflict. However, the above argument does not necessarily mean that violent incidents that happened in Ethiopian politics starting at the end of April 2018 was due to such de-humanizing or rumor messages. But it can be among online challenges as well as considered as the triggering factors of violent incidents in Ethiopian politics.

The other offline challenges are the lack of media and social media literacy in Ethiopia.³⁵ Ethiopian citizen's capacity to receive, impart, and filter true information from deceptive ones is low as well as being irresponsible to the consequential effects of the message, image they posted, and going to be posted. Thus, most people simply believe the messages posted by their friends and share, like, and comment on the message. Therefore, if the posted message contains pessimistic sentiment toward others, it creates groups or mob movements, and most likely leads to inter-ethnic or inter-religion violence. These are the most problem Ethiopians faced and facing in this ubiquitous social media era.

The following tables show the major hate speech content, actors, and issues that are categorized into two major divisions (from 2014-the end of April 2018; May 2018- 2020).

Table 4.4.1: Hate Speech rhetoric, Actors and Issues between 2014 up to the Reform

Hate Speech rhetoric from 2014 up to the reform	Actors	Issues
Narrow ethnic nationalist, Chauvinists	EPRDF regime, Qeerroos, Fannos, and Ejjetos, diasporas	The master plan, land dispossession, identity committee imprisonment, and quest for self-administration issues respectively.

Source: Workneh, 2020

³⁴FGD with senior officials of Oromia Communication Bureau

³⁵FGD with political activist informants

Table 4.4.1. Indicated that hate speech rhetoric from 2014 up to Abiy Ahmed came to power were mainly between the government and the particular ethnic groups or communities. Accordingly, some officials of the EPRDF regime called and aimed to denigrate some of the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups "*tebab*" and "*temkehtegna*" respectively due to the struggle against the EPRDF regime to protect their human and democratic rights.

Table 4.4.2: Hate Speech rhetoric, Actors and Issues from the Reform up to 2020

Hate speech rhetoric from the reform up to 2020	Actors	Issues
<i>Neftegna</i> , Menelik settlers. Targeted against Abiy Ahmed and some Amhara ethnic group.	Politicians, ethno-nationalists, youth groups, diasporas, insurrectionist, and other groups.	Deceptive, misinformation, fake and rumor messages, dehumanization images dispersed online that mainly exacerbated ethnic and religion-based violence.

Source: Alemu et.al., 2019

Table 4.4.2. This shows that hate and hates speech rhetoric content had changed from against government to mainly, ethnic and religion-based aspects. Because using the freedom of speech allowed due to the reform, politicians started to misuse social media and disperse rumor and dehumanization images as a means to achieve their own political interests.

4.5. Freedom of Expression on Social Media and Violence in Ethiopia

The rights to free expression, opinion, disclosure without interference, and access to information are protected according to Article 19 of the UDHR and ICCPR. But, is free speech always absolute? According to Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, despite every individual has the right to free speech, opinion, receive and disseminate information, it should be limited by law and regulation of the country as well as the international, regional human rights standards. This indicates that in democratic societies, people have the right to free speech, impart and receive information unless it is not a threat to national security, public goods, and morals. Moreover, Article 19 (2) of the charter stated that law should restrict the dispersing of opinion as we like.

Similarly, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian Constitution, Article 29 (2) allowed the freedom of expression to the people without any interference. Accordingly, these rights consist of the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information as well as ideas in the form of whatever he/she prefers. However, using freedom of expression, and opinion aimed to propagate war, and intend to harm human dignity is forbidden (Article 29 (6) of FDRE Constitution). This implies that even though every individual has the freedom of expression and opinion, but some scenarios restrict the above-stated freedom. On the other hand, the Ethiopian constitution also restricts disseminating information that instigates war and injures human dignity. Thus, the Ethiopian constitution limited dispersing information and opinion as we like.

Freedom of speech is not absolute or it does not mean that free speech of someone at any place without restriction. Freedom of speech has to be limited to law. If the freedom of speech is improperly used, it leads to violent conflict. Even though freedom of speech is one of the fundamental elements of a democratic system, but it has to have its limits. Accordingly, if freedom of speech is used absolutely or as someone's wishes, without taking into consideration of other's rights, it more likely to incite violent conflict and social tension. After the reform, people launched wrong use of words to propagate their political agenda at the expense of others. They use social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and their mainstream media. The government and activists have also done the same thing³⁶.

However, freedom of expression is important for the countries which started to exercise liberal democracy, or plural consolidated democracy. But the main problem is that under the semblance of freedom of speech, irresponsible politicians and individuals used to express hate toward the targeted group they hate or certain ethnic groups³⁷. According to one informant, there are two political spectrums in Ethiopian politics: The Unionist-who try to propagate the pan-Ethiopian political framework and the Federalist or ethno-nationalist group who try to propagate their ethnicity and federalism as their main political agenda³⁸. Therefore, the above argument seems that these groups have been using promoted freedom of speech for extra purposes like preaching of hate message content toward others identity, ethnic, religion or political groups.

³⁶Interview with 'X' Politician, 15 March 2021

³⁷Interview with 'X' politician, 18 March 2021

³⁸ FGD with 'Y' politician, 27 March 2021

Whether they are pro-Ethiopian or ethno-nationalists, politicians misuse the freedom of speech allowed after the reform, particularly on Facebook, and become self-centered by ignoring the casualties that may happen due to their improper use of social media platforms. This led to the minimization of the opened political space in the reform³⁹. Therefore, when there is recurring ethnic violence, the incumbent government obliged to limit the freedom of speech. Further, the irresponsible activists employ this political space and social media as a means to attain their political interests and benefits⁴⁰.

Therefore, it seems that the limitation of the freedom of speech can be viewed from two aspects. These are: firstly, freedom of speech may be limited due to the dictatorial and unaccountable traits of some governments. For example, some African governments are not accountable and transparent. They violate the human and democratic rights of individuals in contradiction with international, national, and regional human rights standards as well as constitutions. The second serious issue which enforces government to limit people's freedom of speech in addition to economic and political infrastructure in African context including Ethiopian is that society's low awareness level and failure to use their freedom according to democratic principles. This implies that when the government allows freedom of speech, impart and receive information, some politicians and other individuals go beyond the line of freedom of speech, and abuse, defame and denigrate and violate others' rights.

Moreover, they use either social media platforms or other mainstream media to disperse rumors messages rather than utilizing them for the democratization process and democratic system. This is what has been encountered in this pervasiveness of the information era. Thus, while such a phenomenon becomes a major problem, to eliminate violence and casualties caused, the government is obliged to limit some freedom of speech of an individual, or other politicians. This can be done by two major mechanisms: firstly, by banning either social media platforms or switching to other mainstream channels. Secondly, by declaring a state of emergency or bringing those hate speech and rumor propagators to jail⁴¹. Therefore, it is not so fair blaming of some democratic leaders who limited the freedom of speech as we like to save life, property destruction, and reduce violence.

³⁹ A senior official of Addis Standard expert, 28 March 2021

⁴⁰ Interview with Addis Standard Journalist, 28 March 2021

⁴¹ Interview with 'Y' political activist, 30 March 2021

I interviewed one of the senior officials of Addis Standard journalist concerning the effectiveness of the hate speech regarding disinformation law, particularly hate speech, disinformation law prevention and suppression in Ethiopia, proclamation no. 1185/2020. He responded: Despite this legislation is among an integral part of a reform, but it is not as effective to make politicians responsible who have been misusing social media. The anonymity nature of online behavior can be challengeable for the Ethiopian government to make fake new disseminators responsible and bring them to justice⁴². Thus, this proclamation is not effectively and efficiently applied yet due to this and other constraining problems. Some commentators argue that despite the Ethiopian government reinforcing how hate speeches caused problems, however, its main focus has at speeches that instigate imminent violence or abrupt discrimination (Horne, 2018).

Concerning this idea, it seems that targeting at speeches which precipitate imminent violence incident and provoke discrimination may be necessary to de-escalate injurious and violent conflict temporally although merely focusing on that cannot bring a lasting solution. Therefore, it is better to critically find techniques that curtail the root causes of hate speeches, defamation message content circulated on social media platforms, mainly Facebook, and YouTube.

4.6. The Role of Online Behavior in Exacerbating Offline Violence

In different parts of the world, atrocities and the abuse of human rights become a continued threat to minority and indigenous groups. This is because of the global pervasiveness of social media so it impacts the context in which genocide, mass killing, repression, and systematic violence is occurring. Accordingly, online behavior takes its major role in stigmatizing the targeted groups, recruiting killers, and precipitating violence.

Moreover, deliberate misinformation, false allegation, and dehumanization have played their parts in persistent violent conflict⁴³. Therefore, to worsen the problem, political activists, rebel groups, and other ordinary people used social media. According to Article 20 (2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, governments are unable to keep the

⁴²A senior official of Addis Standard expert, 30 March 2021

⁴³reliefweb.int/report/world/peoples-under-threat-2019-role-social-media-exacerbating-violence/

obligation to protect freedom of expression. Likewise, to prohibit any advocacy of hatred attitude toward national, racial, religious that provoke discrimination and violence remain unaccomplished.

4.6.1. The Role of Political Activist’s Online Behavior in Inciting Ethnic Violence in Ethiopia

Directed by the political activist, Jawar Mohammed and making its headquarter in Minneapolis, Minnesota, OMN has started to disperse different rhetoric. Thus, the airing programs on OMN equate the Addis Ababa majority residents, and nearby it and narrate the non-Oromo speaking groups in Oromia regional state as they are Menelik settlers or “Menelik sefari⁴⁴”. Such a message of labeling of non-Oromo speakers reached the activist’s mob followers called “*Qeerroo* and *Qarree*.” This pessimist rhetoric sent to the Qeerroos launched expulsion of non-Oromo speakers or what ethnic extremists say as Menelik settlers (alien) from what they self-claimed as the Oromo-Land. This caused harm, homicide, and violent conflict.

According to the Crime Watch, the hate speech propaganda of Menelik sefari (non-Oromo speakers) dispersed on social media, and OMN incited ethnic-based violence. This online hateful message activists posted result in many casualties. For example, Crime Watch indicates that on Sunday, September 16, 2018 '*Qeerroo* extremists' murdered non-Oromo ethnic groups. The majority of the murder was incited nearby the town of Addis Ababa like in Burayu, Asko, Ashewa Meda, and other parts of Oromia regional state including Shashemene. This is fueled due to intoxicated online activist's controversial rhetoric speeches.

4.6.2. Hate Speech Incited Anger among Many Ethiopians

OMN broadcasted hate speech to Amhara ethnicity sparked annoyance between many Ethiopians, particularly to Amhara ethnic group (Ezega.com, March 9, 2020). Different social media displayed an Afan Oromo speaker lady dispersing a hateful message to the audiences. She said that it is prohibited for all Oromo people to marry and live with a non-Oromo ethnic group, particularly with *Neftegnas*. She also repeated that “our struggle must start with the Oromo husbands who married to non-Oromo or *neftegna/Habesha* lady.” she said even if they have

⁴⁴ crimewatch.ethiportal.org/role-of-omn-media-for-inciting-ethnic-violence-in-ethiopia/

children, an Oromo husband or wife who had married with Habesha wife/husband or visa-visa have to divorce him/her⁴⁵. Her message seems that initiated hateful attitudes to non-Oromos not to have smooth relationships with non-Oromo ethnic groups.

The *Qeerroo* will fight against Oromos who have relationships with *neftegnas*. She continued, leave, ignore others and let marry us (Oromo girls). The beautiful Oromos who married non-Oromo *naftegnas* must divorce. Therefore, this message dispersed online has explicit and implicit hate speech contexts. Explicitly, the message aimed at disintegrating the harmonious relationships of the two ethnic groups. Implicitly, preaching hateful sentiments toward other ethnic groups.

Hate Speech Campaign is exacerbated due to the prolonged instability of the state for many years. Our political culture is based on hate itself, etc. Particularly, the reason behind driven youth Ethiopians to hate speech is that they just copied the behavior of the politicians and other influencers. Concerning this problem, the following issues have to be identified;

Sponsored people incited hate speech-they want to deceive someone's. They might be sponsored by the government officials purposively or opposition political parties or invisible force to disturb peace and stability of the country, and the societies as well.

What was the police reaction when an Amhara boy died in Adama? The family responded: As the son was killed in the violence and the police did nothing. The police have the responsibility to protect the areas. There are places where internal refugees are being sheltered, and where the situation is already tense and targeted areas. But the place where *sefaris* resided was not protected. Because the son's lost his life due to the insecurity of the area. Even after we were grieving, and our deceased boy is still in the house, the police dropped (*chis bomb* (gun fire) to our house). The family of the deceased boy responded.

One of the ladies of chief editor of Addis Maleda gazette (newspaper) responded that not merely in this event but also where the similar massacre happened, there may be some gaps in

⁴⁵<https://www.ezega.com/News/Newsdetails/7805/hate-speech-sparks-anger-among-many-ethiopians/>

communication between security forces, the national defense forces, the federal police, the special, and the local police. The government has to fail to handle the events. The government should be accountable and transparent and give reliable information about all affairs. This enables people not to disseminate misinformation and disinformation. They are not well-organized law enforcers.

Some informants say that we don't need an anti-hate speech law. Because the government uses the law to limit the freedom of expression. Whereas others said that an anti-hate speech law could help protect business and human lives. There was so much tension in the media right before the outbreak. If there were anti-hate speech laws, these hideous incidents wouldn't happen. The reason behind why many properties destructed was due to the police and law organs gaps. According to Focus Group Discussion with 'X' informant asked the question stated that what a solution of hate speeches is and ethnic tension in Ethiopian politics responded:

Anti-hate speech law leads to oppression and it can't be a solution for ethnic tension in Ethiopia. So, in order to eliminate violent incidents, the best solution is having a legitimate and accountable government that is elected by the people. Moreover, media literacy starting from primary school, civil participation in education about media literacy, make well-awarded generations who have combated hate speech and protest based on reasonable issue also play a paramount contributing roles to curtail and de-escalate violent-conflict in Ethiopian politics.

Moreover, the existing laws should be implemented as well as government should be strong. Therefore, the above message indicated that the other problem which incited violence in Ethiopia has been not merely hated speech circulated on Facebook. However, the disagreement among security forces at various levels, lack of education about media literacy as well as lack of enforcement of rule of law can be among the inciting issues of violent incidents. Moreover, focusing on a single factor of a violent incident in Ethiopian politics simplified the fact on the ground. Thus, it is due to the fact that the researcher advocated that multi-layered problems had been provoking violent incidents in Ethiopia.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusions

The finding of this study indicated that multifaceted problems have incited violent incidents in the Ethiopian political system. The rumor message dispersed online, some political activist's and insurrectionist group's irresponsible characteristics of expressed hate speech rhetoric content to others on social media has exacerbated violent incident. The violent incidents have provoked and instigated due to two major factors. These are the underlying and fueling or exacerbating factors. The underlying factors include historical grievances, the injustice system, institutional ineffectiveness, corruption, lack of common understanding, and national consensus. Moreover, state formation faultiness as well as its conquest and oppressive formation narratives are among the root causes of violence in Ethiopian politics.

However, politicians' retroactive historical narrative features, misuse of social media to create pessimistic attitudes toward others' ethnicity as a means to attain their political goals are the fueling factors that escalated the violent incidents. In addition to these factors, perpetrators' political culture of taking a few deaths and exaggerating online, Politicians' antagonistic nature, lack of praising the good deeds of others in an optimistic way had exacerbated also violence.

The study tries to explore hate speech, social media, and violence landscape, mainly categorizing the hate speech context and violent incident scenarios into two major phenomena. Firstly, the period from 2014 up to the reform was considered as a time of social movement. In these periods, hate and hate speech rhetoric were against the EPRDF regime-led by TPLF due to the injustice system, corrupt, and ineffective institutional systems undermined majorities from political and economic aspects as well as mistreated human and democratic rights of the people, particularly University students and opposition political parties. Thus, the main actors were political activists and different youth groups like *Qeerros* of Oromo, *Fanos* of Amhara, and *Ejjetos* of Sidama ethnic groups against the EPRDF regime concerning issues of land dispossession, identity committees' imprisonment, and the realization of the right to self-administration respectively.

Not only these factors but also despite federalism is contested among various scholars, the impracticability of federalism adopted in 1995 by the EPRDF regime and concentration of power on the hands of few elites can be one of the provoking causes of violent conflict in Ethiopia. However, in the second phenomenon, which means after the reform (starting from the end of April 2018-2020), things changed. Because, period is considered a time in which political space and relatively, freedom of speech is allowed in the Ethiopian political system. It was starting from this time that the hate speech context changed to ethnic and religious aspects.

In the guise of freedom of speech, irresponsible politicians and insurrectionist groups started to employ social media platforms, particularly Facebook and YouTube to express hate speech rhetoric, and disperse rumors as well as disinformation messages. Because their main target is to attain their own political goals and interests by misuse of social media that is likely to exacerbate social tension and violent incident in Ethiopia. Generally, the violent incident that occurred and reoccurring in the Ethiopian political system had not incited and escalated due to merely hate speech circulated on social media. It had triggered, escalated, and exacerbated because of multilayered factors.

5.2. Recommendations

Peace-building is not accomplished within a short period. Lasting peace may require commitment and is achieved through gradual processes. Therefore, based on the finding of the study and the above-stated conclusions as to the cornerstone, the hereunder points are recommended concerning the question of how we can relieve violent incidents to bring lasting peace in Ethiopia.

- Irresponsible political activists should abstain from using social media to disseminate hate speech rhetoric contents and deceptive messages for the sake of their mere political interests. It is better and advisable to employ social media to enhance democracy and the democratization process rather than instrumentalize it for their political goals by escalating ethnic and religious-based violent conflicts.
- Politicians should consider the consequential effects of the rumor message dispersed online to others. It is good to use social media to raise communities' awareness level about politics.

- Elites should seek a mechanism to reach on compromise and agreeable national consensus rather than always narrating the faultiness of the past state formation and misdeeds. Moreover, it is better to provide a mechanism to develop on how politics depends on today's context rather than merely influenced by the past phenomenon.
- The new generations have to develop the habit of self-criticisms, not simply driven by rumor and disinformation messages posted online. Such deceptive messages politicians post create pessimistic sentiment toward others and have most likely to escalate social tension as well as ethnic or religious-based violent conflict.
- We have to develop a culture of accommodating diversity, win-win approaches when the conflict happened, be open-minded and tolerant.
- More importantly, social media and media literacy curriculum should be introduced and developed in Ethiopia. This may enhance the conscious level of our community to filter out fact or truth information from deceptive ones, as well as not simply offline in violence without identifying the fake news of online behavior from the reality on the ground.
- We all, particularly the youth groups have to well aware that the propagators of hate speech and perpetrators of violence intentionally instigated ethnic or religion-based violent incidents. They know well that the violent conflicts that have either ethnic or religious aspects have less likely to be de-escalated. Therefore, all politicians, insurrectionists groups, elites, and communities should avoid such deconstructive ideas and habits of irresponsible politicians by eliminating violence as well as bringing social harmony to bring lasting peace to our country.

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APPENDICES

Appendix-1: Questions for the Informants (Interview guide questions)

1. What is hate speech? How do you define and understand hate speech in Ethiopian politics? Do you think is there a difference between hate speech and political speech?
2. Can you tell me the major hate speech narratives problems (issues) navigated on social media between 2014 up to 2020 in the Ethiopian politics?
3. Why hate speeches on social media, and ethnic based violence become exacerbate after the reform or post-2018 in Ethiopia?
4. Which pattern and significant case of violent incidents had happened in this year? What do you think the roots causes that intensified violent incidents?
5. How do you see the relationship between social media and freedom of expression, and its implementation in the Ethiopian political system?

Appendix-2: Questions for FGD participants

1. How do you think the political culture of activists and ethno-nationalist use of social media in Ethiopian political system?
2. What about each ethno-activists trend in responding to others on social media?
3. What are the challenges online behavior and offline violence Ethiopian people encountered?
4. Why elites lack common understanding about in the politics of Ethiopia

Appendix-3: Age and Academic Backgrounds of the key informants

Table 1: Age and Academic Backgrounds of the Interviewee

No.	Interviewee informant's profession	Age	Sex	Academic background
1	Senior official of Oromia Communication Bureau	45	M	Masters holder
2	Political activist	40	M	Masters holder
3	Addis Standard Journalist	38	F	Bachelor degree
	Addis Standard senior Journalist	40	M	Masters holder
5	Politician	50	M	Masters holder
6	Oromia Communication Bureau employee	35	F	Bachelor degree
7	Senior official of Oromia Communication Bureau	45	M	Masters holder
8	Youth groups (Qeerroos, Fannos, and Ejettos)	30	M	Bachelor degree
9	Political activist	38	M	PhD candidate
10	Politician	60	M	Masters holder

Table 2: Age and Academic Backgrounds of FGD Participant Informants

No.	FGD participants Profession	Age	Sex	Educational level
1	Senior officials of Oromia Communication Bureau	45	M	Master holders
2	Addis Standard Journalists	40	M	Masters holders
3	Politicians	43	M	Masters holders
4	Addis Standard Journalist	35	F	Bachelor degree
5	Oromia Communication Bureau employees	33+	F	Bachelor degree
6	Political activists, Addis Ababa	38	M	PhD candidate
7	Youth groups like <i>Qeerroos, Fannos</i> , Addis Ababa	30+	M	Bachelor degree
8	Senior officials of Oromia Communication Bureau	40+	M	Master holders
9	Addis Standard senior experts	32+	M	Master holders
10	Officials of Oromia Communication Bureau	35+	M	Master holders