

4. POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF ETHIOPIAN TELEVISION: EXPLORING CREDIBILITY AND HOSTILITY

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Abstract

Credibility and hostility are more closely linked than previous literature generally recognised. This article attempted to explicate factors associated with credibility and the presence of hostile media phenomenon in the Ethiopian private, regional and federal television channels. It used a qualitative research design with the classical grounded theory for data analysis and development of the conceptual theory and semi-structured interview to gather data. The Amhara and Oromia regional states and Addis Ababa city were purposively selected for the study. The selection of these two regional states and the capital city emanated from their influence in Ethiopian politics in the past and present, their substantial population and some evidence of ongoing attempts at mobilization. The snowball and convenience sampling techniques were applied to select respondents. Through the sampling technique 19 respondents were selected for the semi-structured interview. The study purposively included Fana television (FBC), Walta television (WT), Ethiopian television (ETV/EBC), Addis Television, Oromia Broadcast Network (OBN), Amhara Television (AMC). The responses indicated that ethnically undiversified newsrooms and media in the regional television channels were a cause of conflict and violence. Also, the interviews appeared to show that the private, regional and federal television channels were not credible but the contribution of the regional television channels to the hostile media phenomenon was more intense than the federal and private television channels.

Keywords: credibility, hostile media phenomenon, Ethiopian Commercial Television Channels, Ethiopian Regional Television Channels, Ethiopian National Television Channels, cadre, polarization, conflict

Introduction

Credibility and hostility are the two sides of the same coin, and perceptions of the two have largely been examined separately (D'Alessio, 2003; Eveland & Shah, 2003). It is reasonable that these two concepts are more closely interconnected than previous literature has generally recognized (Choi et al., 2006; Tsfatı & Cohen, 2005). A few studies have discovered this possibility. For example, Tsfatı and Cohen (2005) demonstrate that hostile media perceptions about the Gaza settlements were negatively linked to trust in media, which further impacted trust in democracy. Trust and credibility have been used interchangeably, or with one seen as a component of the other (Kiousis et al., 2001). In addition to this, Palestinians and Israelis are more likely to mistrust coverage of the Middle East than US citizens who have had no direct ties with, or experience in, the Middle East. These findings point out that much of audiences' trust or mistrust in media is explained by their own biases (Gunther, 1992).

In Africa, even though the numbers of media companies are increasing, studies indicated that the mainstream media are sceptic of the fairness, accuracy and trustworthiness of media reports (Adeyanju, 2015; Ezeah et al., 2017). Ethiopia is one of the multi-ethnic African countries where more than 85 ethno-cultural groups are found and 80 languages are spoken. Amharic, Afaan Oromoo and Tigrigna are among the most widely spoken languages in the country. The three

ethnic communities also dominate the politics and demography of the country which covers 68% of the national population figure (Ado et al., 2021). Even though, the number of Ethiopian private, regional and federal broadcast media is increasing, studies indicate that the audiences' satisfaction with the broadcast media is decreasing because of various reasons (Kassahun, 2017; Birhane, 2017). The media is described as a polarized state of affairs between the state media and private media outlets (Price et al., 2009). The intensified media polarization in Ethiopia is "one of the unsolicited secondary effects" of the new-born media pluralism. Today, with the rise in regional mass media agencies, the state media entity has seen different regional outlets nurture their own respective distinct identities in line with the most prominent ethnic group in the region where they are based (Reuters, 2021). In this regard, it is impossible not to draw parallels between Ethiopia and Rwanda, a country where news media, sharply divided along ethnic lines, helped transform a political crisis into a genocide that led to the killing of nearly a million people in the early 1990s. Or between Ethiopia and Kenya, where a journalist was accused of using his radio show to fan the flames of the post-election violence that claimed hundreds of lives and led to the displacement of thousands of others (Reuters, 2021).

Ethiopia experienced a political transition in 2018 and since the transition, no study has assessed the reasons for the decline in the credibility and presence of hostility between the various regional, commercial and national television channels. In this context, this study was meant to fill the knowledge gap on the reasons for the decline in the credibility and hostile media phenomenon in the Ethiopian commercial, regional and national television channels. Based on the current literature on the topic and the observed gap acknowledged regarding the reasons for the decline of the credibility and presence of hostility in the Ethiopian media, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1- What are the audiences' reasons for the credibility of the Ethiopian commercial, regional and national television channels?

RQ2- What are the audiences' reasons for the presence of hostility in the Ethiopian commercial, regional, and national television channels?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research approach and a classical grounded theory method of data analysis and interpretation. Among the various grounded theory approaches, the Classical Glaserian Grounded Theory (CGGT) is applied to explain audiences' reasons for the decline in the credibility and presence of HMP in the Ethiopian regional, private, and federal television channels. The Classical Glaserian grounded theory (CGGT) has made great contributions to discovering an explanatory theory and identifying variables (Kendra, 2018).

Sampling Size and Technique

Two Ethiopian regions, Amhara and Oromia, and a city-state, Addis Ababa, were purposively selected. The selection of these two regional states and capital city emanates from their influence in Ethiopian politics, and their substantial population (Semir, 2019). From the three entities, 19 participants were selected purposively for an interview using convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Purposively, Ethiopian Broadcast Corporation (EBC), Fana Broadcast Corporation (FBC), Walta

Television (WT), Addis Television, Oromia Broadcast Network (OBN), and Amhara Broadcast Corporation (AMC) television channels are included.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

A semi-structured interview was applied to collect the data. Semi-structured interviews, according to Byrne (2004) "... are likely to get a more considered response...and therefore provide better access to interviewees' views, interpretations of events, understandings, experiences and opinions". The collected data were analysed using qualitative software called Atlas-Ti. The software was employed to transcribe, code the data, and build concepts with the application of Classic GT. The coding procedures of Classic GT focused on two flexible steps: (1) substantive coding, and (2) theoretic coding (Bruscaglioni, 2016; Holton & Walsh, 2017). The substantive coding incorporated two sub-phases of coding, which are open and selective coding (Glaser & Holton, 2004; Holton, 2010). This coding was a major step in producing categories and identifying their properties. Also, thematic analysis was applied to interpret and explain categories in the data.

RESULTS

The classical grounded theory approach was applied in this study to find out and organize the sub-categories and core categories, in addition to the theory grounded on the categories that emerged from the data. Unfairness, bias, polarization, conflict, and not having ethnically diverse journalists were the main categories that emerged from the data. Bias and unfairness can be viewed as forming the two weighing plates on the scales. Unfairness and bias are able to intensify the impact of the political appointees on the television channels mentioned. The next section expanded on the categories of unfairness, bias, polarization, conflict, and not having ethnically diverse journalists, and how these featured in the analysis and as experienced by the participants. The explanations in each category demonstrate how they are grounded in the findings.

1. Presence of Unfairness

Unfairness is the lack and absence of accuracy and truth in reporting and slanting a news story so that audiences draw the reporters' and the channel's anticipated conclusion. It mostly happens when news coverage often represents the voices of those only on both extremes of the spectrum, or the voices of those who are the most powerful. The presence of unfairness in the Ethiopian private, regional, and federal television channels was one of the categories that formulated the core category of the study. For instance, the informants mentioned the detention of journalists and the closing of media organisations. This explanation was in regard to what had happened to the media and journalists, what is going on currently, and how it is seen and perceived with regard to the detaining of journalists and the closing of the media organisations+.

"Surprisingly, activists and citizen journalists who are reporting the displacement and killings of millions of people, in addition to the lack of good governance, are detained and sent to jail, maltreatment." (Informant 18; June 27, 2022)+

Informants mentioned social media as their major source of such news regarding the government actions in the detention of journalists and the closing of media organisations, and mentioned that they have trusted sources of social media channels and sites to get such news.

"I don't trust the media organizations in the country especially that of the private, regional and federal states television channels; I prefer to get news and other information from social media or antagonistic mainstream media. Because of lack and decline of credibility in the Ethiopian private, regional and federal states television, I am increasingly reliant on information sources that are incomplete and may be misleading or deceptive. But with some efforts I am able to get my news from trusted social media outlets" (Informant 13; June 3, 2022)

Because of the unfair news stories of the regional television channels while reporting news about other regional states, one of the informants mentioned that he dislikes watching both OBN and Amhara television channels.

"As I am from Amhara, I really hate to watch news from both OBN and Amhara television channels itself because of the hate news they air. I couldn't see fairness in the news of Amhara, OBN, EBC, Walta and Fana news channels. They tend to hide the truth and they allow the public not to know the truth and learn from it or correct it. Generally, the mentioned television channels are fabrications of lies and propaganda." (Informant 1; April 1, 2022)

One of the informants explained that he observed that in the combat of racism or ethnic media, the public's problems like good governance, corruption and law and order are not getting media coverage and attention from the responsible bodies. Additionally, he mentioned that the ruling party can get media coverage any time.

"As we are not the ruling political party, it is impossible for our party members and other to get media coverage from all the state television channels. But a moment after we are denied of a media coverage, the ruling party officials were able to get a media coverage unjustifiably. The politicians have direct control of each and every media company in the country and anyone without their authority can't use or say anything against their interest." (Informant 3; April 4, 2022)

Because of lack of media coverage of important public issues, most citizens and activists are forced to use social media for uncovering wrong actions and doings of the government officials and the response to such activities the actions by the government were unlawful and unacceptable.

"It is almost common to observe and see the arresting and detaining of citizen journalists and activists for reporting corruption done by government officials and lack of good governance in Addis Ababa. So, the Ethiopian media and journalists are less free than it was in the previous regime. People use the social media to report the problem of good governance and corruption because the regional, private and federal television channels don't present accurate information. This is the reason why citizen journalists are increasing in the country from time to time. Additionally, anyone who report and write problems of good governance and corruption are always under serious control of government politicians and they might send him to jail." (Informant 4; April 7, 2022)

Most of the private, regional and federal television channels and other types of media in Ethiopia are blamed for having the same content and indirect control of government officials.

"Hereafter, their voice is all in all very similar and their contents have no variety and difference across the board. As long as these television channels are pro government and the mouthpiece of the ruling political party, they rely on the sources they think are

speaking for the government rather than blowing the whistle of different wrongdoings in different government institutions.” (Informant 14; June 6, 2022)

2. The Presence of Bias

Bias is another category that emerged from the findings which formulated the core category of the study: the cadre-oriented media. The presence of bias was the main consequences of a media which is directed by cadre-oriented approach. There is a strong acceptance and belief by the audiences that bias is common and constant issue in the news reported by the Ethiopian private, regional and federal television channels.

“The journalists from both OBN and Amhara Tv were the role taker in the conflict among the Amhara and Oromia regional states people and they report what the regional government politicians gave them to report. Currently, even though there are a lot of issues in the community like corruption, good governance and security, the media is not willing to voice those important issues. I thought the practice in media had changed and we were expecting a news and program that is different from the previous government which voices the voiceless but the old ways are still here.” (Informant 2; April 3, 2022)

According to some audiences, the television channels always use an intricate and complicated collection of techniques that leads journalists and the television channels to organize and report news stories in favour of particular groups or interests.

“In Ethiopia, media often function as mouthpieces of political philosophies and government officials in addition to local activists narrowed personal politics.” (Informant 18; June 27, 2022)

According to informant 3’s understanding which was documented on April 4, 2022; as he is one of the proponents and audiences of the “OBN Television Channels”, he argues that the regional media coverage is influenced by only the regional governments

“Currently, the regional media are to function in their own interest and the previously centralized media managing and controlling is not working. But, instead of using the media in voicing the communities’ issues, the politicians are using it to fulfil their own personal interest that is safeguarding their political seat in the government wing.” (Informant 4; April 7, 2022)

Additionally, informant 4 added that, it is why the media in those regional states failed to be the mouth and ears of the public and lost credibility.

“Because of the government politicians direct and indirect control of the television channels most of the news and programs were full of bias and mis information. The biased news media affected the people of different regional states’ daily social, economic and political interaction and living environment.” (Informant 4)

The bias in the television channels is impacting individuals and groups on the collective perception of news and programmes.

“Extreme personal politics undermine mainstream media so people believe their alternative facts of what they read, listen and watch on social and other media outlets.” (Informant 9; April 20, 2022)

Informant 9 added that even though, the television channels found in different parts of Ethiopians’ regional states are free from the federal government centralized control, still the government officials in those regional states are using the television channels in their favour. The public believes that the regional states including the federal and private television channels are not trustworthy and believable.

“Most government officials believe that if the conflict among peoples of different regional states continues, they will be able to secure their political seat and continue to be benefited. But, if the people of different regional states of Ethiopia live in peace and harmony, the people will be able to question their power and contribution to the people and that is why the politicians found in different regional states use the media in a manipulated and biased manner to safeguard their interest.” (Informant 11; April 23, 2022)

Informant 11’s explanation based on his observation that the Ethiopian people generally don’t trust the regional television channels enough, because the channels lack of truthfulness and malfunction.

“The television channels and other media organizations in Ethiopia don’t try to report news on social issues, events and playing a watch dog role for the citizens. But the decline in credibility is not specific to the Ethiopians regional television channels and also the federal television channels are biased in their reporting.” (Informant 11)

Informants in their explanations have mentioned that the public trust in the media has declined after the two years of prime minister Dr Abiy Ahmed took power. Informant 10 added that nowadays, the television channels are known to report news in a biased mode, highly affecting the beliefs of news audiences.

“This television channels have increasingly become more biased and have been gradually become to lose their credibility because of its inability to report the news in a non-bias manner. This has taken us down into the regional states’ television channels level where you routinely have “reporters” going on camera to report news stories that reflect their personal bias or the bias of their superiors like political officials.” (Informant 14; June 6, 2022)

She also underlined the television channels being full of extreme bias, which has a form of propaganda and misinformation, and which led the people into conflict and war.

“I hate to view the Ethiopian regional television channels, especially those of the Amhara and Oromia. In the last two years, I have observed that the two were misleading us by reporting biased news and releasing propaganda.” (Informant 13)

Subsequently, informant 15 explained that the mentioned private, regional, and federal television channels lack credibility as they fail to entertain a variety of sources in their reporting.

“And yes, all the private, regional and federal states television channels can be and often are bias based on the political leanings of the politicians and regional governors.” (Informant 15; June 7, 2022)

3. Cause of Polarisation

The views of the respondents show that it is the rising political polarization that is contributing to the fragmentation of news media and the spread of misinformation on the mentioned television channels.

"The current regional aggression and violence within the regional television channels have proven that the feeling of isolation among consumers of the two regional states and one capital city has increased." (Informant 1)

Informants 1 and 2 denoted OBN and Amhara television channels as the major media organizations in the country for not reporting truthful news stories and working on television programs that strengthen the commonality the two regional states have.

"So, the regional television channels and other media types, like even the radio in this regard, take an agenda from politicians that could apart groups of ethnicities from each other and create conflict and displacement instead of being a means of bringing people into one citizenship and common understanding." (Informant 2)

The Ethiopian private, regional, and federal television channels are not credible among the viewers of any person living in any of those regional states, especially in Oromia, Amhara, and Addis Ababa.

"The Ethiopian private, regional, and federal television channels are biased in their reporting and instead of voicing the voiceless and being the mouth and ears of the people, they always deliver polarized news that apart citizens and leads to conflict. We are told that Fana and Walta are the private television channels that are working in the interest of the public, but that is a big lie, and their news and programs are full of party-focused or government propaganda." (Informant 5; April 9, 2022)

The highly polarized media environment in the Ethiopian private, regional, and federal television channels have contributed a lot to creating and building antagonism between different ethnic groups, generating political deadlock and confusion in the country.

"The regional states' media landscape is built always in misjudging and reporting news content against the political, social, and economic status of other regional states." (Informant 6; April 14, 2022)

The informant continued and explained that the Amhara and OBN television channels as the major agenda creators that led the two regional states into conflict and chaos.

"This has led to confusion and distrust among the people of different regional states of Ethiopia. For instance, during a conflict between the Amhara and Tigre ethnic groups, the job of the mentioned television channels was reporting the heroic deeds of the Amhara fano, a special force, and, to the contrary, the loss and damage of the Tigrayans." (Informant 8; April 19, 2022)

According to informant 12, a data recorded on June 2, 2022, explained how he was surprised by the two television channels (Amhara and Oromia), which were effective in their propaganda and biased news reporting, in addition to how they were misused and guided by politicians.

"It is a concerning issue in our country regarding how some political actors practice and publish hate speech in the regional media outlets, false narratives, and misleading advice on mass media platforms. This has shown me that the media, including politicians, do not have concern for the well-being of the public." (Informant 12)

4. Being Triggers of Conflict

According to the informants, the television channels are used to spread false information or rumours, propaganda, and can create tension between different ethnicities, religious institutions, opposing parties, and other stakeholders in the conflict.

"Especially, OBN and Amhara television channels were the major players in intensifying and creating conflict among the two regional states." (Informant 1)

In the middle of the war, the mentioned television channels and supporters of the government were also misleading the people by spreading military victories (breaking) news.

"The media organizations in those regional states and the country as a whole don't have concern for the well-being of the community; rather, they are always concerned for bringing a political agenda that leads groups of different ethnicities into war and conflict because the conflicts are a means of income for most of journalists and a means of safeguarding their political seat for politicians." (Informant 6)

Informant 10 from one of the study areas explained that the influence of political polarization, growing media distrust, and the rise in biased and subjective news reports is putting pressure on both the Ethiopian mainstream and alternative media outlets.

"The Ethiopian private, federal, and regional state television channels are not credible because the television channels are rich with misinformation, which has contributed to the increase of heightened political cynicism, misperceptions, and further exacerbates growing polarization and conflict among the Oromia and Amhara people, in addition to the Tigray. Additionally, the regional television channels were the major role players in the conflict among different ethnic groups." (Informant 12)

The informants in their interview mentioned that the absence of neutrality and impartiality in most Ethiopian media organisations during the war and conflicts in the country has contributed a lot.

"After the newly assigned transitional government, prime minister 'Dr Abiy Ahmed' took power, we hoped that the media would be free and able to exercise professionally but, after a short period of the transition, the government started to arrest journalists and stopped the media from voicing the communities' questions and critics regarding good governance, the issue peace and security, inflation and corruption." (Informant 2)

According to the informants, the television channels during the period between the Ethiopian government and TPLF focused on who was losing/ winning rather than covering the amount of death and destruction. However, the war between TPLF and the Ethiopian government ended after the loss of lives and economic damage.

"Because of the biased and unprofessional news report, most Ethiopians are left with civil war, and thousands have been killed, millions have been displaced from their homes." (Informant 18)

5. Ethnically Undiversified Journalists

The issue of ethnically undiversified journalists, according to the informants, means the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of other ethnic groups and minorities in the television channels. So, according to the informants, ethnic diversity has become one of the major challenges for the Ethiopian private, regional, and federal television channels.

"It is impossible to listen to and watch accurate news reporting from a certain regional media about the overall situation of the country, and that is why we couldn't hear and watch news that is trustworthy and accurate." (Informant 17; June 15, 2022)

Additionally, informants 12 and 17 explained that the lack of presence of diversity in every Ethiopian private, regional, and federal state television channels is a major reason for a monumental decline in the quality of journalism, and because of such reasons, especially in the regional media organisations, most of the news reports have a narrower range and perspectives in their content.

"How come media organizations that are only occupied by one or two ethnic groups could report on other ethnic issues. When you get into the mentioned Ethiopian private, regional, and federal state television channels, it is like apartheid. They are instantly categorized by the language they speak, the culture they reflect, and their name. So, I prefer not to attend the television channels available in the country". (Informant 12)

The informants mentioned that news bulletins on the television channels are inaccurate and do not reflect the diverse society that they serve and report about. In gathering this content, the ethnically not non-diversified journalists of the Ethiopian television channels are contributing to an intensified war and conflict among every ethnic groups found in the country.

"Despite massive growth in the Ethiopian media industry, a lack of quality and journalistic diversity in the regional television channels with regard to content and experts from different ethnicities created a big gap between the real lives of people in the country and the most important issues they face." (Informant 15)

Informant 15 added that it is unthinkable to expect the Ethiopian television channels to a news and programmes that are well-researched stories which represent different voices.

"For instance, when you see the Amhara, OBN, and other regional television channels, it is very rare to find journalists who belong to different ethnicities rather than their regional ethnicities." (Informant 16)

Additionally, informants 8 & 18 explained that while at times these television channels host and broadcast news content reaching different demographics, they predominantly frame their narratives and programmes in ways that serve their respective ethnicities instead of being balanced in their content.

"But, when you see our country's journalists and media organisations during a conflict, they always try to show their support to their society and ethnic groups where they

came from in their news reporting instead of reporting what exactly happened.”
(Informant 8)

Some informants explained that the journalists might be from different ethnic and religious backgrounds; all journalists should be more than capable of objectively reporting stories that explore perspectives different from their own.

“Most of the Ethiopian regional television channels have contributed to the ethnic polarization in the country rather than act as a unifying reason and means.”
(Informant 17)

Most of the informants couldn't agree more regarding the old manner of the Ethiopian media management, where they always want to set the agenda for the public instead of keeping the interest of the public or bringing the public's agenda into the media.

“I think it is the politicians who are forcing and telling the journalists what to report and not to. The biased reporting and the influence of politicians on the television channels and journalists have further eroded trust in political and government institutions. Even though the media in Ethiopia looks better than the previous governments but it isn't rather it is getting worse than ever. The media and journalism sector development in Ethiopia is still hampered by various political and economic issues, especially the political aspect takes the lead in overcontrolling and systematically censoring news and programmes. We are observing that the governing bodies for the sake of politics are practicing censorship practically by stopping accurate news being read and presented because it is against their political interest.”
(Informant 7)

The Substantive Theory

According to the research data, the television channels in Ethiopia are found to be unable to satisfy their viewers. In most of the informants' explanations, it is common to find that both government and private television channels are associated with the regional and federal ruling party politicians, and the contents are more focused on the ruling government agenda. As a result, they rarely watch their audience's interests. In any way, credibility and presence of hostile media phenomenon are associated with the political environment in which journalists are working in corrupt governments that do not encourage the principles of fairness, balance, and impartiality, putting their political interests aside.

The Ethiopian regional, private, and federal television channels have lost credibility through their out-and-out bias, false reporting, or just generally pushing their own agendas rather than just reporting news events without favouring one side or the other. The case of the continuing and intensification of armed conflict in Ethiopia since 2020 shows the impact of regional television channels' biased news reporting. Against this backdrop, the regional television channels are highly susceptible to the influence of their own dominant regional groups, and outlets inevitably reflect their own ethnic cleavages of the regional state in which they are operating. Recent experiences have shown that the overpoliticization of ethnicity through biased television and other media outlets has led to discord, sectarianism, and civil war. These disorders have taken a heavy toll on the lives of millions in Ethiopia. As local news sources decline, a growing proportion of Ethiopians are getting their news and other information from social media or antagonistic mainstream media.



Figure 1: *The Pictorial Concepts of the Ethiopian Private, Regional, and Federal Television Channels*

Conflict, Unfair, Biased, Polarized, Not Diversified
<p>The five above mentioned are categories formulated from the open categories based on the research data. The first category is 'Conflict and Unfairness, which emerged from the subcategories through analyses of the data included Polarization, Unfairness, Conflict, Polarization, Biased, Freedom. The second category is 'Biased and Unfairness' which emerged from the subcategories includes Domination, Unfairness, Biasness, Freedom. The third category emerged from the subcategories of Not Credible, Polarization, Biased, War and Conflict is 'Polarized and Biased'. The fourth category is 'Polarized and means of conflict' which emerged from the subcategories of Polarization, Biasness, Domination, Untrust, Wellbeing of Society, Propaganda and Hate Speech. The last category is 'not diversified' which emerged from the subcategories included biasness, domination of the government, absence of diversity, trustworthiness and accuracy. The categories were reasons that contribute for the loss of credibility in the Ethiopian private, regional and federal states television channels. The research data and categories imply that the cadre-oriented media has contributed for the emergence of the reasons for the deteriorating of the Ethiopian private, regional and federal states television channels.</p>

The Cadre-Oriented Media (CORM)

According to this study, cadres are a group and collection of trained and qualified people who are well informed in forming, training, or leading certain institutional organisations, as a political faction or religious and as skilled workers. The categories like polarization, conflict, bias, unfairness, and not having diversified journalists were the end result of the cadre-oriented media in Ethiopia, according to the data collected from the participants. However, most of the informants explained that the categories mentioned are also caused by of lack of work discipline and skill of journalists. But most importantly, participants believe and argued that the cadre-oriented media is the major cause for the above categories and issues to emerge in the country. Cadre-oriented media, as perceived by the participants, is the reason for the decline in the credibility of Ethiopian private, regional, and federal television channels. According to the

participants' view, the weight or repetition of the terms of biasness and unfairness, in addition to not having ethnically diversified journalists in the regional states' television channels found to be caused by the local cadres' domination of the media for their personal and group interest. From the study findings, bias and unfairness were found to be a key impacting force, and it can be seen as forming the main balance beam on the weighing scales. The absence of cadre or politicians' domination of the media might contribute to the presence of unbiasedness and fairness in the television channels. The impact or degree of the role and domination that the politicians put on the media determines the level of polarization, bias, unfairness, and lack of ethnic diversity. Categories that emerged are the implications for the domination and full control of the media by political cadres who belong to different personal interests.

Discussion

In Ethiopia, the regional television channels are blamed for being the main cause of the war and conflict in the country, especially those of OBN and AMC television channels. The media has a great impact in contributing to conflict by inciting violence, failing to highlight emerging conflicts, delaying to report conflicts, journalists taking part in killings, highlighting hate speech during conflicts, downplaying genocide during conflicts, acting irresponsibly, and deliberately creating misrepresentations in reporting (Spurk, 2002; Howard, 2003). In this regard the Ethiopian regional television channels have contributed a lot in the ethnic polarization among various ethnic groups and regional states. According to the informants, the two regional state television channels (OBN & AMC) were focusing only on the points and issues where the two regional states' people diverge, and because of the channels' hateful news reports, many were killed and displaced to various places in the country. So, in this regard, the media played well in many ethnic conflicts and wars that have ever taken place in history and through its reportage (Kurtis, 2018). Because of the media portrayals of ethnicism in a conflicting position through the television channels, the ethnic conflict in the country tends to look like a natural phenomenon.

The absorbing discourse in Africa regarding the journalists' leanings to turn themselves to the ethnic amplifications and reporting conflicts is because of the society's high ethnic diversity (Masselos, 1994). The media currently plays a great role in the community's representation of politics by modifying the agenda on the political discourse and through contributing their interest preferences in political disagreements (Bennett & Entman, 2001). Even though the extensive societal conflicts in Africa have often been caused because of deep poverty, illiteracy, and lack of good governance undermined by unfavourable terms of trade, indebtedness, and administrative failures (Zartman, 1995). Additionally, such societies and common people have no voice during conflicts and other problems in the local media they have rather, the government politicians, elitist, and securitized versions get a domination and have full control of the mainstream media discourse, mostly at the expense of more peaceful and civilized perspectives (Hussain, 2014; Ross, 2006).

Indeed, bias in the media organisations is often encouraged by politicians and political institutions such as governments and political parties that have an intrinsic personal interest in promoting their perspectives to get support and members for the regime (Tworzecki & Semetko, 2012). According to informants, the presence of unfairness in the Ethiopian private, regional and federal television channels was the consequences that came out because of the domination of political cadres. So, these have reflected how a dominant media works only for being the mouthpiece of the authorities' opinions and benefits (Chomsky, 2012). The informants blamed the television channels for being filled with extreme bias in the form of propaganda and misinformation. These

and other issues imply that the cumulative impact of biased coverage is fuelled and continuing with the hatred over a long period of time (Buric, 2000; Sadkovich, 1998).

In countries where the ties between government and media are close in the form of state subsidy to the media, or simply through the relationships between political elites and media owners, the media always work for the interest and bidding of elites and government (Schiffrin, 2017). Moreover, exposure to biased information in Ethiopia is exposing the country to negative societal outcomes, including group polarization, intolerance of disagreement, and political exclusion. The first, and most historically dominant form of media capture is capture by the state media outlets. In 2003, 71 percent of African countries had a fully state-monopoly control of television networks (Djankov et al., 2003). Consistent with cross-country evidence (Djankov et al., 2003), bias is usually common and greater in state-owned media. It is researched and evident that the media in Africa are full of biases and have strong relationships with the political parties, ideologies, and have an ethnic base in their establishment, in addition to regional and cultural affiliation (Nyamnjoh, 2010). According to different scholars, the ethnically affiliated media organisation developed and expanded after the 2018 reform, which was found to be the reason and major cause of conflict and war among different societies of Ethiopia (Melkamu, 2020).

Conclusion

The study strongly depended on the informant's view to come up with the substantive theory. According to the study, the existence of a cadre-oriented media approach was the major reason for the emergence of polarization, conflict, bias, unfairness, and a lack of ethnically diversified journalists in the Ethiopian private, regional, and federal state television channels. In Ethiopia, in addition to the purposively selected television channels, other media outlets are experiencing a significant decline in their credibility. So, it would be great if more research could be conducted to find out the additional audiences' reasons for the loss in credibility of other Ethiopian private and regional media organisations. From the regional states: the Amhara TV, OBN TV, and Addis TV; and from the federal state and private: ETV, Fana, and Wlata were respectively selected for this study. The informants mentioned the government and other politicians' domination of the media as the major reason for the emergence of issues like polarization, conflict, bias, unfairness, and a lack of diversified journalists in the different Ethiopian private, regional, and federal state television channels.

The implications and explanations of this study might be very important for the current leading government, media organisations, journalists, policy designers, and researchers. Even though the country is experiencing a complicated internal conflict and war among different ethnicities and regional states, acknowledging such obstacles would minimize and stop other dangers that may come to the country. Also, the implications and explanations of this study might be a good lesson for the responsible government officials in looking at the status of the media sector and the public's view to take some fruitful actions in the development of the media and democracy in the country. It would be very dangerous for the fate of this country if the government couldn't try to develop a media organisation free from its own influence and other politicians. The implications and explanations of this study might also be used as an input and guide for further study of the area.

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