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## Print Media and the Political Reform in Ethiopia

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### Abstract

This research examines the agenda and frames used by the Reporter newspaper editorial coverage of issues and actors before and after the reform in Ethiopia. The study applies a quantitative content analysis method and examined 99 (Period 1 = 57 and Period 2 = 42) editorials in all periods. The source of data and the period of data collection were purposely selected. The results indicated that societal issues, government, and party issues were frequent in both periods. The professional journalist was the only Author in both periods. More government criticism and more reforms were mentioned before the reform. Compared with editorials published before and after the reform, noticeable changes were observed in government critique, attribution of responsibility frames, human interest frames and economic issue frames. However, content selection, sources of information, mentioned reforms, conflict relationship frames, and ideological frames didn't have relationship with the date of publication. Finally, the Reporter editorials coverage did change significantly in many respects, although it is difficult to determine the causes of the changes—economic factors, reduced political control, social changes or globalization forces.

**Keywords:** Agenda, Frame, Editorial, Reporter Newspaper

### CHAPTER ONE

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

##### 1.1. Background

In Ethiopia, Article 29 of the constitution, which was adopted verbatim from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), has been faithfully implemented. The article states everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference and to freedom of expression without any interference. It goes onto say that this right shall include freedom to receive, seek and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in print or in writing, in the form of art, or through any media of his/her choice. It also stipulates that freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is guaranteed and sets out the specific elements it constitutes. In addition, it offers that any citizen who violates any legal limitations on the exercise of these rights may be held responsible under the law.

Moreover, Ethiopia is a signatory to other international instruments asserting the fundamental importance of freedom of expression including, the UDHR, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, the Windhoek Declaration, the African Charter on Broadcasting and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) program. These instruments would also have gone a long way to amplifying the constitution's protection of press freedom if they had seen the light of day. There still lie testing challenges ahead.

Though the press has a 120-year history in Ethiopia, the private press commenced full-fledged operations just 21 years ago. As a nascent profession, it is beset with a raft of internal and external problems. A significant chunk of the private press is devoid of a code of conduct and editorial policy; it also suffers from chronic organizational weaknesses and the propensity to spurn neutrality and display political activism. The pathetic state of the various journalists' associations and the blatant factionalism characterizing the private press also serve to demonstrate this point. The problem is compounded by the government's reluctance to provide incentives for and overt animosity towards the private press. This was evidenced by Ethiopia's designation as the fifth-worst jailer of journalists in the world and its enactment of a draconian mass media law. The testing challenges that attended the founding of the press council have left a scar on the right to organize the press. Although the media council

was officially established after many trials and tribulations in September 2016 with 19 media institutions and journalists' associations, its failure to be registered to date on account of the non-existence of a licensing entity has cast a cloud over its future. No solution has been found to the problem despite bringing the matter to the attention of several government agencies.

After the military regime in 1991, the press and its freedom have shown remarkable change. During transition, the government has taken significant measures that ensure the freedom and development of the press. The most important one is the declaration of the freedom of press, which includes the right of expression without restriction and censorship. In addition, a press law is also for the first time codified. These changes in the legal and institutional sphere resulted in the spread of private press in the country. As such, the new EPRDF led government has come up with various institution provision and embodiments. It sought to ensure the freedom of the press as well as its growth a popular as a viable institution of democracy and the building of democratic society and culture.

Accordingly, it guarantees that any individual can form a private press institution and perform all the legitimate and responsible activities of press. The freedom of the press is also incorporated in the FDRE Constitution and further detailed by the press law. The time between 1991 and 1992 could be said to be one of the freest times in the history of the Ethiopian private press as there was no need to formally register in order to own and run a newspaper or a magazine (PMC, 2006). This trend, however, was short-lived as proclamation 34/92 came into effect with requirements for pre-publication registration and licensing formalities for the private press. This period witnessed several papers and magazines produced by some who were simply zealous to do journalism and some who had a cause and a few others who wanted to earn a living out of newspaper publishing.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Ethiopia is one of the biggest countries in Eastern Africa (its population estimated to be over 100 million) has a short-lived history of a private press. Both the imperial regime of Haile Selassie and the military regime, the Dergue, controlled the operations of the private press. The downfall of the military regime in 1991 created an opportunity for the private press to come into existence. The private newspapers are believed to have voiced alternative views for the past two decades because of the two national dailies: Addis Zemen (Amharic) and the Ethiopian Herald (English), as well as the electronic media (Ethiopian Television and Radio), have been controlled by the Government. The military regime, the Dergue, with its "Ethiopia First" discourse, left no room for freedom of the press in practice. Hence, the private press faced many internal and external challenges. The external challenges included pressure from the government, lack of getting access to information from government officials, a low reading culture, cost of publication and distribution. Furthermore, the lack of technical and professional expertise, financial instability, and ethical problems are related to the private print media themselves (Shimelis, 2006).

Though they are considered as an elite media (primarily used by the educated section of society especially catering for the urban population and mainly the Capital Addis Ababa), the private-print media with all their handicaps (educational, professional, cultural, legal, political etc.) are believed to play a positive role by informing society. The print media have focused on diverse topics ranging from social, economic, cultural, and political up to entertainment and sports (Article 19, 2003).

The Ethiopian private press is blamed for partiality in reporting the government in negative terms (Shimelis, 2000; Hailemarkos, 2006). Research conducted on two private and two government-owned ones to evaluate their coverage of political parties during the 2005 election. The result revealed that the two private newspapers (Ethiop-now defunct, and Addis Admas) allotted much of their space for accusation by the opposition against the ruling party-100% and 76% consecutively. The same result was replicated by the government English daily and The Ethiopian Herald that put 100% of the blame on the opposition (Hailemarkos, 2006).

A more recent study on the private print media in Ethiopia arrived at a pessimistic conclusion, questioning their role and casting doubt on their capacity in helping the transition to democracy, describing them as politically motivated (Skjerdal, & Hallelujah, 2009). Viewing them as partisans of the opposition, the Ethiopian government responded to the deeds of the private press in different terms ranging from denying access to government-held information to the imprisonment of journalists and owners (Skjerdal, & Hailelujah, 2009, p. 52).

As the new reform has come into existence in Ethiopia since 2018, the media and journalists have got relief from intimidations. It is shown that the comparison between private and government print media reporting was conducted by many scholars. The result showed that the media became polarized. Researches showed that many newspapers were banned after 2005 election, but reporter wasn't. Researches were conducted in the Reporter newspaper: its circulation in comparison with private and government newspapers, its development reporting compared with government newspapers, political framing compared with private and government newspapers. Besides these, at the start of its publication, the Reporter was critical to the government, but it changed to soft area of criticism. Having these in mind, the researcher wanted to compare the contents of 'Reporter newspaper (Amharic biweekly)' based on different time frames, whether it was consistent or not before and after the new reform in Ethiopia.

### **1.3. Objectives**

The major objective of this study is to examine the contents of the Reporter Newspaper editorials before and after the new reform in Ethiopia.

### **1.4. Research questions**

1. Which contents of the Reporter newspaper editorial were frequently chosen before and after the new reform in Ethiopia?
2. Is there any similarity or difference between sourcing editorials before and after the latest reform in Ethiopia?
3. What kind of frames were dominantly used in the Reporter newspaper editorials before and after the reform?
4. Do the Reporter newspaper editorial contents have a relationship with date of publication?

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The investigation of these research questions is mainly based on the theories of agenda-setting and framing. As notable media effect theories, agenda-setting and framing paradigms provide for the theoretical frameworks through which the degree of salience and descriptions can be studied (Fourie, 2001).

### **2.1 Conceptual Overview of Agenda-setting theory**

The media has the ability to influence the visibility of events in the public mind as the press to selectively choose what people see or hear in the media. The study used the agenda-setting theory. Agenda setting refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media places on certain issues and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). They describe the media's role as the agenda setters and the media's ability to influence public opinion by setting the agenda of what people think about. In this research, the agenda-setting theory was used to compare the contents of The Reporter newspaper in Ethiopia before and after April 2018.

urther, the media have paramount importance in news items priorities. The media give some news events more prominence than others. It is believed that people form attitudes based on the thoughts that are most prominent when they make decisions (Hastie & Park, 1986) that ultimately shape the considerations they take into account when making judgments about political leaders. Scheufele (2000) observed that agenda setting looks on story selection as a determinant of public perceptions of issue importance through priming and evaluations of political leaders. Along with the manner in which the news is presented, the frequency of publication plays an important role. Readers tend to consider items that are reported on frequently as being very important. From the readers' view, agenda-setting is more important when issues are relatively new since the need for orientation would then be greatest (Oosthuizen 1996).

Related to the agenda-setting theory, the press has a long term effect on readers: the media set the climate within which individual issues are perceived and evaluated (Oosthuizen, 1996). The problem of evaluating the effects of the media on society led some scholars to emphasize the media's power to decide what people should think about. Agenda set by the media related to parliamentary coverage is often determined by the gatekeepers, editors, and managers.

Mass communication plays an important role in the society since it informs the public about current and past events. Then, the media use gatekeeping and agenda-setting to control people access to news, information, and entertainment (Wilson 2002).

## 2.2 Framing theory

A communicative text requires narrative structures to organize its discourse. In the case of the media, news stories appear to be systematized based on narrative agreements that offer an explanation about who is doing what, and with what purpose. News is as a window whose frame limits the perception of reality, by limiting the perception of different realities and focusing on a specific piece of it. Hence, some aspects of the reality perceived through the news will be more noticeable than others (Tuchman, 1978). Therefore, the news is textual and visual structures built around a central axis of thought.

From this approach, framing can be defined as a process of selecting reality, and giving greater emphasis; consequently, the problem is defined. Its causes are diagnosed, moral judgments are suggested, and appropriate solutions and actions are proposed (Entman, 1993).

Frames draw attention to some aspects of reality at the expense of others. Framing is present in the mind of the journalist who writes the news report, but also in the news report that he/she builds. The American political scientist Robert Entman, is one of the most fruitful researchers in framing theory, warned in 1993 of the absence of a unified theory of framing capable of explaining how frames are constructed, how are they manifested in texts and how they influence the minds of the public. This conceptualization has brought it a very different methodological approach, both with regards to the identification of frames and the measuring of their effects on individuals and audiences.

Fourteen years later, Weaver (2007) highlighted the term frame still lacked a clear conceptualization and had become a *passé-partout* that encompassed the interpretive schemas of an event, the agenda of attributes of particular subjects and the process whereby messages influence the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of individuals and the public (Van Gorp, 2007). Researchers exploring into the study of frames have to challenge a great disparity in the definitions of this concept, which sometimes results contradictory (McCombs, 2006).

However, not everyone has seen a weakness in the heterogeneity of approaches to framing. D'Angelo (2002) considers that the diversity of approaches to framing, through multiple disciplines and theoretical models, is possibly the only way to properly understand a phenomenon as complex as the effects of the media. In the same vein, Reese (2007) considers that the value of the theory of framing does not lie in its potential as a unified research paradigm as in the opportunity; it provides to bring closer qualitative and quantitative, empirical and interpretive, psychological and sociological, and academic and professional research.

Frames are part of the symbolic universe and allow us to meaningfully structure the social world (Reese 2001: 11). In this context, the media would be part of the system of creation and transmission of frames, but would not necessarily occupy a central or prominent position in this system. This is because, far from being exclusively located in the sender of the message, the frame is located both in the sender and the receiver, the (informative) text, and culture. This is why the scientific literature often distinguishes between media frames and audience frames (e.g., Scheufele, 1999). Journalists, who have to tell an understandable and attractive story are conditioned by news-making routines. The framing process continues when some aspects of the news event are selected and privileged over others, defining and assessing the problem, pointing out the causes and proposing solutions to the problem and building a frame (media frames), in an operation that has been called frame building due to its analogy with the better-known process of agenda building. These frames that are built by the media can be defined as "a central organizing idea or storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them" (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987: 143).

Consequently, through a decoding process that is conditioned by elements present in the social environment, individuals and the communicative situation, receivers store, their interpretation of the event in the form of a schema that may be used in the future to decode new information. But are these different manifestations of the same phenomenon or different but related phenomena? The answer is complex, and there is no consent among framing theorists. However, it can be said that there are strong linkages between the frames of the sender, of

the receiver, of the text and of culture: frames are "shared schemes underlying the attitudes of journalists; in the receptors; in the texts; and in the culture" (Sádaba-Garraza, 2001: 166).

### **2.3. Framing and agenda-setting**

Since the late 1990s, some authors, led by Maxwell McCombs, have argued that framing is equivalent to the second level of the agenda-setting theory, and have proposed the integration of both models.) Framing is a natural extension of the agenda-setting model McCombs, Llamas, López-Escobar, and Rey (1997). According to this interpretation, frames would not be more than a special type of attributes, macro-attributes that, due to their complexity, allow us to define the problem, to interpret its causes, and to propose a treatment (McCombs, 2006).

The view of framing as an expansion of the agenda-setting has received many criticisms. For Kim, Scheufele, and Shanahan (2002), the attempts to combine framing, priming, and agenda-setting into a single model may further complicate the distinction between loosely defined concepts. Kim et al. believe it is the terminological and semantic differences that build a particular frame, and not the prominence of other attributes. In other words, a single object can be described in different ways and lead to different interpretations in public, and framing goes beyond presenting an object by highlighting some of its attributes.

The effects of the agenda setting would be determined by repetition and accessibility. The more a topic is repeated in the media, the greater the salience it will have in receivers' mind, and the greater the access to it (Scheufele, 2000). The effects of framing, on the other hand, would not be so determined by accessibility, but by applicability, that is the ability to generate interpretive schemas that can be applied to many different situations.

For the agenda-setting theory, the central issue is not the way a particular event is reported, but the amount of attention given to the event or its attributes by the media and the time individuals have been exposed to the coverage of the event. For framing theory, on the other hand, the key aspect is the way the news topic or event is described, as well as the interpretive schema that has been activated to process it.

### **2.4 Frame building**

Communication professionals and journalists have to tell a story within certain time, and space constraints are by structuring the information, creating an interpretive framework that allows the comprehension of the message. Journalists use frames to give meaning to and simplify reality, and to maintain the interest of the public (Valkenburg, Semetko and De Vreese, 1999).

### **2.5 Types of frames**

Frames can be divided into different categories' based on various parameters. However, for this research, deductive and inductive classifications are used.

#### **2.5.1 The deductive method**

The complexity of the studies based on an inductive approach has led most studies to use a deductive method (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). The content analysis carried out through this approach is easier to perform, can be applied to a large sample, and is easily replicable. The main drawback of this approach is the loss of relevant information as the frames that have not been defined a priori cannot be detected or measured (Igartua and Humanes, 2004).

This study proposed five frames. 'Attribution of responsibility' shows the problem or issue focusing on who caused a situation or who must solve it. The 'conflict' frame presents the issue from the perspective of polarization and confrontation of individuals or social groups, sometimes using a language of war or games and competitions (Patterson, 1993; Valkenburg, Semetko, and De Vreese, 1999; D'Haenens and De Lange, 2001). The 'human interest' frame is used to bring the issue or problem closer to any type of receiver as the human emotion captivates everyone.

The issue is personalized, showing the human side, and can reach dramatization (D'Haenens and De Lange, 2001). The 'economic consequences' frame emphasizes the economic impact that a particular issue may have

on citizens in general or on any particular group, making the public aware of a problem which, otherwise, might seem irrelevant (D'Haenens and Lange, 2001). The 'morality' frame gives prominence to the religious or moral implications of an issue or indicates a group or an individual how should behave. This framing is often camouflaged through the use of quotes, attributing the moral or religious recommendations or evaluations (D'Haenens and De Lange, 2001) to another actor.

### 2.5.2 The inductive approach

The inductive approach allows the detection of frames through the immersion in the selected sample. Van Gorp (2007) has offered recommendations to carry out an inductive approach to frames, starting from the idea that in the text, we cannot find explicit frames, but clues that lead to it. These clues, called framing devices or reasoning devices, are terms, metaphors, examples, descriptions, arguments, images and arguments, and they can be explicit or implicit. Van Gorp advises us to begin with an analysis of certain strategically chosen news and to find elements that can operate as framing or reasoning strategies.

## 2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Research design

The study was based on a quantitative content analysis design. One of the most frequent uses of the content analysis is to study the changing trends in the theoretical content and methodological approaches by content analyzing the journal articles of the discipline (Loy, 1979). It shows the variety of messages used to draw inferences about the source, content of the message, etc. Therefore, using content analysis as a quantitative method used to analysis the following variables in the Reporter Newspaper editorials before and after the new reform in Ethiopia.

Variables are attributes that the researcher measured as the cases vary in their scores on the attributes. In this research, a number of variables are included in the study: the main topic of the article, quotations, author identity, government (National) critique, government (National) praise, and mentions of reform. The variables were chosen following an inductive approach. The categories were built by the researcher according to prior review of six editorials of the 'Reporter.' Besides, that five types of frames were analyzed quantitatively. These were Attributions of responsibility, Conflict, Human interest, Ideology/morality, and Economic consequences.

### 3.2 Samples, and Sampling Technique

The researcher employed purposive sampling to take samples of newspapers, dates, and editorial contents. Therefore, the Reporter newspaper (Amharic biweekly) two years period and editorials of the newspaper were purposefully selected. Whereas from the biweekly newspaper published on Sunday and Wednesday, Sunday publication was selected by simple random sampling technique.

Related to sample size, Kothari (2004) defines sample size as the number of subjects or items selected from a researcher's target population in order that it represents the target population. The sample size is a set of units drawn from a population, so an estimation of the characteristics the population can be made.

**Table 3.1: Samples of Newspapers for Content Analysis**

Newspaper	Period 1 of publication	Sample size	Period 2 of publication	Sample size	Total
The Reporter (Amharic biweekly)	March 2017 to 2018	57	April 2018 to January 2019	42	99

### 3.3 Data gathering instruments

A number of methods exist for the collection of primary data. They include the use of questionnaires, interviews, observations, focus groups, and document analysis (Kothari, 2004). This research used document analysis or what is otherwise known as content analysis to collect the data required.

### 3.4 Inter-coder reliability

The coders are two, one graduate student majoring in journalism and communication, and the other is the researcher. One of the coders received training before the coding process started. The study used Krippendorff's Alpha test of inter-coder reliability, which is regarded as a stringent measure of coder agreement (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). Both coders coded 10% of the samples (10 out of 99 editorials) to test reliability. With all variables coded, the average inter-coder reliability was greater than 0.78. For one variable, inter-coder reliability was below 0.7: the anonymous quotations variable ( $\alpha=0.54$ ). However, this variable is not critical to this study; therefore, their lower level of reliability does not influence the final results.

### 3.5 Data analysis procedures

The coded collected data screened and filled into the SPSS Version 20 software. After filling the variables and data into the software, descriptive Statistics such as frequency, percentage, and Chi-square test were computed. Frequencies and percentages were used to show the comparison between two periods within the investigated variables. The Chi-square test was used to see whether the two independent variables have a relationship with date of publication or not. Finally, the outputs were displayed into tables, which were analyzed by using words under each table.

## 4. Data analysis

A total of 99 editorials were analyzed in this study ( $N=99$ ) with 57 from April 2017 to March 2018 (Period 1) and 42 from April 2018 to January 2019 (period 2) about 1 editorial per week that is every Sunday's editorial. The average lengths of paragraphs are 5.25, and the author identity was a professional journalist in each period.

**Table 4.1 The main topic of the editorial**

	Periods		Pearson Chi-Square	df	Sig. (2-sided)
	Period 1	Period 2			
Policy explanation & instruction	3(25%)	9(75%)	7.908	7	.245
Scandal and corruption	5(83.3%)	1(16.7)			
Government and party issue	16(59.3%)	11(40.7)			
Cultural issue	6(75.0%)	2(25.0%)			
Social issue	18(58.1%)	13(41.9%)			
Economic issue	3(60.0%)	2(40.0%)			
Other issue	6(60.0)	4(40.0%)			

To examine the statistical significance of changes in the main topic, percentages and frequencies were used. The results across the two time periods show that government and party issues appear more frequently in Period 2(3(25%), 9(75%)) than in Period 1. In contrast, editorials covered more societal issues in period 1(18(58.1%)) than period 2 (13(41.9%)). Editorials cover less scandal and corruption in period 1 (1(16.7%)) than in period 2 (5(83.3%)). Government and party issues were frequently covered in period 1(16(59.3%)) than period 2(11(40.7%)). Editorials covered cultural issues more in period 1(6(75%)) than period 2(2(25%)). Economic issues appeared less frequently in period 2 (2(40%)) than period 1(3(60%)). Pearson chi-square =7.908,  $p=.245$  and  $p >.05$ , two-tailed. This indicates there is no shift in editorials' main topics across two periods in the Reporter newspaper editorials before and after the reform.

**Table 4.2 Author identity**

	Periods		Pearson Chi-Square	df	Sig. (2-sided)
	Period 1	Period 2			
Professional journalist	57(100%)	42(100%)	2.99	8	.83

In all the sample editorials of the selected periods (1 &2), professional journalists were the only author of the editorials. Hence, there was no relationship between author identity and date of publication in the Reporter editorials as (Chi-square=2.99,  $p=.83$  and  $p>.05$ )

**Table 4.3 Source (content quotation)**

	Periods		Pearson Chi-Square	df	Sig. (2-sided)
	Period 1	Period 2			
Professional journalist	27(71.1%)	11(28.9%)	7.15	5	.20
Ordinary individual	6(66.7%)	3(33.3%)			
Government official	11(45.8%)	13(54.2%)			
Anonymous	11(44%)	14(56%)			
Foreign news	1(100%)	0(0%)			
Other	1(50%)	1(50%)			

As the data portrayed in the table shows, the difference in the number of quotations is especially evident in five categories. Professional journalist quotations were frequent before the reform (27(71.1%)) than after the reform (11(28.9%)). Ordinary individual quotations were less frequent after the reform (3(33.3%)) than before the reform (11(45.8%)). Government official quotations were more frequent after the reform (13(54.2%)) than before the reform (11(45.8%)). Anonymous sources were less frequent before the reform (11(44%)) than after the reform (14(56%)), whereas Foreign news and other sources were not frequently sourced in the two periods. Therefore, chi-square =7.15,  $p=.20 >.05$ , two-tailed revealed that there are no changes in sourcing before and after the reform in the Reporter newspaper editorials.

**Table 4.4 Government praise/critique**

	Periods		Pearson Chi-Square	df	Sig. (2-sided)
	Period 1	Period 2			
Government praise	3(5.2%)	11(26.2%)	.06	1	.80
Government critique	29(50.9%)	14(33.3%)			
Neutral	5(43.9%)	17(40.5%)			

The result in Table 4.4 depicted that government praise more frequent after the reform (11(26.2%)) than before the reform (3(5.2%)). Moreover, government critique was less frequent after the reform (14(33.3%)) than before the reform (29(50.9%)). However,  $P = .86 >.05$ , two-tailed as there is no significant relationship between government critique and praise with the date of editorial publication.

**Table 4.5 Dimensions of government critique**

	Periods		Pearson Chi-Square	df	Sig. (2-sided)
	Period 1	Period 2			
Misconduct	5(62.5%)	3(37.5%)	58.73	7	.00
Corruption	5(100%)	0(0%)			
bureaucracy	5(100%)	0(0%)			
Extravagance &waste	1(100%)	0(0%)			
Authoritarian	7(87.5%)	1(12.5%)			
Ideological beliefs	14(82.4%)	3(17.6%)			
other	20(76.9%)	6(23.1%)			

The result in Table 4.5 indicated that editorials covered government critique more before the reform than after the reform. It revealed that misconduct reported more frequent before the reform (5(62.5%)) than after the reform (3(37.5%)). It also showed that corruption, bureaucracy, and extravagance were (5(100%)), (5(100%)), and (1 (100%)) consecutively reported before the reform. The editorials reported an authoritarian government less frequent after the reform (1(12.5%)) than before the reform (7(87.5%)). Ideological critics were more frequent before the reform (14(82.4%)) than after the reform (3(17.6%)). Other critics were also less frequent after the reform (6(23.1%)) than before the reform (20(76.9%)). To sum up, government critique had a relationship with date of editorials reporting as  $P = .00 < .05$ , two-tailed.

**Table 4.6 Dimensions of reform**

	Periods		Pearson Chi-Square	df	Sig. (2-sided)
	Period 1	Period 2			
Executive reform	10(66.7%)	5(33.3%)	4.33	6	.63
Institutional reform	5(50%)	5(50%)			
Judicial reform	14(73.7%)	5(26.3%)			
Economic reform	5(55.6%)	4(44.4%)			
Social reform	7(58.3%)	5(41.7%)			
Media reform	2(50%)	2(50%)			
Other reform	14(46.7%)	16(53.3%)			

The frequencies showed that executive reforms were mentioned more frequently in Period 1 (10(66.7%)) than in Period 2 (5(33.3%)). Judicial reform was more frequent in period 1(14(73.7%)) than period 2 (5(26.3%)). Economic reform was less frequent in period 2 (4(44.4%)) than period 1 (5(55.6%)). Social reform was mentioned more frequently in Period 1 (7(58.3%)) than in Period 2 (5(41.7%)). Other reform was mentioned more frequently in Period 2 (16(53.3%)) than in Period 1 (14(46.7%)). Four out of the seven types of reform were mentioned more frequently in Period 1 than Period 2. However, there was no difference between institutional reform and media reform in the two periods. (Chi-square = 4.33,  $p = .86 > .05$ ); as a result, there was no relationship between reform and periods of the reform. The study also compared the frequency of use, before and after the reform, of five frames: attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, ideology/morality, and economic consequences in the Reporter newspaper editorials.

**Table 4.7 Attribution of responsibility**

		Periods		Pearson Chi-Square	df	Sig. (2-sided)
		Period 1	Period 2			
Government is responsible	Yes	39(67.2%)	19(32.8%)	6.165	1	.046
	No	18(45%)	22(55%)			
Article suggest solution/s	Yes	48(62.3%)	29(37.7%)	3.21	1	.07
	No	9(40.9%)	13(59.1%)			
Individual/group is responsible	Yes	36(66.7%)	18(33.3%)	4.02	1	.04
	No	21(46.7%)	24(53.3%)			
Issue requires urgent attention	Yes	40(66.7%)	20(33.3%)	5.15	1	.02
	No	17(43.6%)	22(56.4%)			

Findings in these categories showed that government responsibility provided in articles was more common before the reform (39(67.2%)) than after the reform (19(32.8%)), Chi-square = 6.16,  $p = .04$  that is,  $p < .05$ , two-tailed. Therefore, government responsibility is dependent on the dates before and after the reform. Articles suggested solutions more before the reform (48(62.3%)) than after the reform (29(37.7%)), Chi-square = 3.21,  $p = .07 > .05$ , two-tailed. Hence, there was no relationship between suggesting solution to the problem mentioned in the article across two periods. Individual or group responsibility for raised issue in the article were more frequent before the reform (36(66.7%)) than after the reform (18(33.37%)), Chi-square = 4.02,  $p = .04 < .05$ , two-tailed. So, there is relationship between individual or group responsibility to the mentioned article to the dates before and after the reform.

**Table 4.8 Conflict coverage**

		Periods		Pearson Chi-Square	df	Sig. (2-sided)
		Period 1	Period 2			
Reflects differences between issue	Yes	28(70%)	12(30%)	4.24	1	.03
	No	29(49.2%)	30(50.8%)			
conflict reproach another	Yes	27(73%)	10(27%)	5.73	1	.01
	No	30(48.4%)	32(51.6%)			
Two/more-sided coverage of conflict	Yes	29(67.4%)	14(32.6%)	3.02	1	.10
	No	28(50%)	28(50%)			
Winner/Loser of conflict	Yes	24(70.6%)	10(29.4%)	3.59	1	.86
	No	33(50.8%)	32(49.2%)			

It inquired whether the story reflected any differences between the issue/individual/group/country. The result showed that more differences reflected before the reform (28(70%)) than after the reform (12(30%)),  $P = .03 < .05$ . So, there was relationship between date and story reflection among or between groups. The editorials showed conflict reproach another more frequent before the reform (28(70%)) than after the reform (12(30%)),  $P = .01 < .05$ , two-tailed; as a result, there was a relationship between date of reporting and conflict reproaching. The editorials tended to have two or more sided coverage of a conflict before the reform (29(67.4%)) than after the reform (14(32.6%)),  $P = .10 > .05$ , two-tailed. Therefore, coverage of conflict did not relationship with date

of editorial publication. The winner/loser in a conflict is less likely to be specified after the reform (10(29.4%)) than before the reform (24(70.6%)), whereas Chi-square = 3.59,  $p = .86 > .05$ , two-tailed. Consequently, winner/loser of conflict did not have relationship with before and after the reform periods.

**Table 4.9 Human interest**

		Periods		Pearson Chi-Square	df	Sig. (2-sided)
		Period 1	Period 2			
Human example	Yes	44(61.1%)	28(38.9%)	1.35	1	.24
	No	13(48.1%)	14(51.9%)			
individuals are affected	Yes	46(63.9%)	26(36.1%)	4.30	1	.03
	No	11(40.7%)	16(59.3%)			
go into personal lives	Yes	50(69.4%)	22(30.6%)	15.22	1	.00
	No	7(25.9%)	20(74.1%)			

As indicated in Table 4.9, editorials contained more human example in Period 1(44(61.1%)) than Period 2(28(38.9%)),  $P = .24 > .05$ , two-tailed. Human example and date of editorial publication did not have a relationship. The editorials covered affected individuals more in Period 1 (46(63.9%)) than Period 2 (26(36.1%)),  $P = .03 < .05$ , two-tailed, hence, there was relationship between date of editorial publication and affected individuals reporting. And also it asked if the story deep into personal lives. The result revealed that story dealt more personal lives in Period 1(50(69.4%)) than Period 2(22(30.6%)),  $P = .00 < .05$ , two-tailed; therefore, reporting personal lives had relationship with date of editorial reporting.

**Table 4.10 Ideology/morality**

		Periods		Pearson Chi-Square	df	Sig. (2-sided)
		Period 1	Period 2			
Contain political ideology messages	Yes	12(54.5%)	10(45.5%)	.10	1	.74
	No	45(58.4%)	32(41.6%)			
Refer to socialism morality	Yes	12(54.5%)	10(45.5%)	.10	1	.74
	No	45(58.4%)	32(41.6%)			
Traditional moral standards	Yes	26(57.8%)	19(42.2%)	.00	1	1.00
	No	31(57.4%)	23(42.6%)			
Offer social perspectives	Yes	30(56.6%)	23(43.4%)	.04	1	.83
	No	27(58.7%)	19(41.3%)			

Editorials mentioned more political ideology messages before the reform (12(54.5%)) than after the reform (10(45.5%)),  $P = .74 > .05$ , two-tailed. As a result, political ideology messages did not have the relationship between dates of editorial reporting. Referring socialism, morality story was covered more before the reform (12(54.4%)) than after the reform (10(45.5%)),  $P = .74 > .05$ , two-tailed although there was no relationship with date of reporting. Editorials mentioned traditional moral standards more frequently before the reform (26(57.8%)) than after the reform (19(42.2%))  $P = 1.00 > .05$ , two-tailed, so there was no relationship with date of reporting. It is noted that if the editorial offered specific social prescriptions about how to behave, the result

showed that specific social perspective was less frequent after the reform (23(43.4%)) than before the reform (30(56.6%)),  $P = .83 > .05$ , two-tailed while relationship within date of reporting was not noticed.

**Table 4.11 Economic consequences**

			Periods		Pearson Square	Chi- df	Sig. (2-sided)
			Period 1	Period 2			
Mention losses/gains	financial	Yes	17(81%)	4(19%)	5.96	1	.01
		No	40(51.3%)	38(48.7%)			
Mention expenses	degree of	Yes	16(84.2%)	3(15.8%)	6.82	1	.00
		No	41(51.2%)	39(48.8%)			
Pursue action or not		Yes	17(85%)	3(15%)	7.71	1	.00
		No	40(50.6%)	39(49.4%)			

The results in Table 4.11 indicated that financial loses or gains were less frequent after the reform (4(19%)) than before the reform (17(81%)),  $P = .01 < .05$ , two-tailed. It showed financial losses, and gains reporting had a relationship. Editorials mentioned degree of expenses more before the reform (16(84.2%)) than after the reform (3(15.8%)),  $P = .00 < .05$ , two-tailed, they had relationship. The editorials pursued a course of action more frequent before the reform (17(85%)) than after the reform (3(15%)),  $P = .00 < .05$ , two-tailed. It showed relationship with date of editorials reporting.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The study explored the changes in editorial content in The Reporter newspaper before and after April 2018, a watershed year in Ethiopia history. The results identify some significant changes after the reform. Some noteworthy shifts occurred in the main topics of the article. These changes may indicate partially more other kind of topics, with fewer government official topics before the reform than after the reform. Additionally, the type of government critiques and mentioned reforms significantly decreased after the reform compared with before the reform, while government praise changed after and before the two periods.

Several points are worth mentioning with regard to the main topic of editorials. The editorials in both Period 1 and Period 2 covered more societal and government issues though differences existed.

The focus of the writing of foreign issues is different before and after the reform, as the editorials on foreign issues are mostly critiques towards national governments; the only difference is that after the reform, they seem to focus more on domestic issues. This may be considered an improvement after reform put more emphasis on domestic Ethiopian issues. Also, perhaps surprisingly, the earlier editorials cover more scandal and corruption issues than those of the more recent period; although there are more government critique and more reform mentioned, the Reporter tends to give less coverage of the scandals and corruptions today. Another possible explanation is that, although the Reporter may mention anti-corruption policies and discipline many times, it rarely names the corrupt official or describes the case in detail. The editorials tend to talk more about how to adopt anti-corruption measures rather than reporting the actual corruption cases.

Deacon et al (1999) say that it is the usual practice of the media to find a greater number of sources cited in favor of a particular outlook or a line of interpretation and evaluation. Certain sources are undermined, discredited, or disclaimed, particularly those advanced by others whose positions are at variance with those, which are given priority. According to Deacon et al (1999), quoting certain sources in their ranks and others without makes significant differences in shaping the news content in terms of influencing how the political power is distributed among various parties. The difference in number of quotations is especially evident in five categories. Professional journalist quotations were more frequent before the reform than after the reform. Ordinary individual quotations were less frequent after the reform than before the reform. Government official

quotations were more frequent after the reform than before the reform. Anonymous sources were less frequent before the reform than after the reform whereas foreign news and other sources were not frequently sourced in the two periods. Although the number and frequency of sources were different, it is taken as the media become free. This study proposed five frames. 'Attribution of responsibility' shows the problem or issue focusing on who caused a situation or who must solve it. The 'conflict' frame presents the issue from the perspective of polarization and confrontation of individuals or social groups, sometimes using a language of war or games and competitions (Patterson, 1993; Valkenburg, Semetko, and De Vreese, 1999; D'Haenens and De Lange, 2001). The 'human interest' frame is used to bring the issue or problem closer to any type of receiver because the human emotion captivates everyone.

The 'economic consequences' frame emphasizes the economic impact that a particular issue may have on citizens in general or on any particular group, making the public aware of a problem which, otherwise, might seem irrelevant (D'Haenens and Lange, 2001). The 'morality' frame gives prominence to the religious or moral implications of an issue or indicates a group or an individual how should behave. This framing is often camouflaged through the use of quotes, attributing the moral or religious recommendations or evaluations.

According to Ramaprasad (2003:8), an ideology is an integrated set of frames of reference through which people see the world and according to which they adjust their actions. Certain ideologies, particularly those espoused by the powerful, tend to rise above others in each society and pose as the preferred values of that society. These values continue to be socially reproduced. As a result, some views or values are considered acceptable, whereas others are read out of legitimacy. First, among ideologies of interest, there is a dominant ideology, which encompasses the main values of a society. Closely coinciding with dominant ideology, in most cases, is the second set of values, the elite ideology. These are the values of those with power in society, such as the political elite. A third ideology derived from and closely related to the dominant and elite ideologies and influences journalists is what is called occupational ideology – an ideology believed to be a society's accepted media philosophy, such as libertarian or authoritarian.

According to Ramaprasad (2003), as members of the society and as professional newsmen, journalists can never be free from the influence of these preferred ideologies. Therefore, Editorials mentioned more political ideology messages before the reform than after the reform. As a result, political ideology messages did not have the relationship between dates of editorial reporting. Referring to socialism, morality story was covered more before the reform than after the reform, although there was no relationship with the date of reporting. Editorials mentioned traditional moral standards more frequently before the reform than after the reform, so there was no relationship with date of reporting.

It is noted that if the editorial offered specific social prescriptions about how to behave, the result showed that specific social perspective was less frequent after the reform than before the reform, while relationship within date of reporting was not noticed. The overall pressure of these on journalists has thus been said to result in the change in the manner in which journalism is practiced.

According to Campbell (2004), in order to produce an audience-friendly and sellable content, journalists have been made to be technically uniform, and as a result, produce visually sophisticated, easy-to-understand, fast-paced, and people-oriented programmes in a minimum amount of time. The result of such a trend, as to Rayner, Wall, and Kruger (2004:183), makes power elites, celebrities, surprises, bad news, good news, and greater magnitude (in either number of people involved or potential impact), increasingly dominant news values in the Western world. By the same token, all the Reporter newspaper editorials have visual cartoons; the author was only journalist and dominantly used human examples. Finally, compared with editorials published before the reform, those published after the reform are less likely to provide winners or losers in an argument. Instead of indulging in harsh reproaching, they seem more willing to reason with readers and provide a two-sided view to persuade readers to accept their ideas. More human examples are also included in editorials to arouse the sympathy of readers, and less rough ideological preaching is evident.

## 1. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

## 6.1 Conclusion

It can be concluded that the Reporter newspaper didn't have consistent coverage of editorial contents in many aspects. As it compared with editorials published before and after the reform, noticeable changes were observed in government critique, attribution of responsibility frames, human interest frames, and economic issue frames. However, content selection, sources of information, mentioned reforms, conflict relationship frames, and ideological frames didn't have relationship with date of publication. McQuail (2000) described "media freedom" as involving two stages. The first stage is being "certain independence" of the media, and the second stage consisting of "a norm that opposes concentration of ownership and monopoly of control" (p. 144-145). As this study focused only on one private newspaper, it is likely that it could test for the impact of media independence and ownership. It examined the changes in media topics, author identity, source, criticism and praise, and reform, which is taken together, could be seen as proxies of media freedom.

Finally, compared with editorials published before the reform, those published after the reform are less likely to provide winners or losers in an argument. Instead of indulging in harsh reproaching, they seem more willing to reason with readers and provide a two-sided view to persuade readers to accept their ideas. More human examples are also included in editorials to arouse the sympathy of readers, and less rough ideological preaching is evident.

## 6.2 . Recommendation

It is recommended that a journalist ought to be loyal to the profession. They shouldn't be the material of their employers. The Reporter newspaper should have clear ideology instead of waving towards or against the ruling party ideologies. Finally, I would like to recommend the Reporter newspaper editor to have diversified source of information to be reliable.

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