



Media Framing of Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking in the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation

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Abstract

This study examines how the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) covers illegal migration and human trafficking. The study employed qualitative content analysis of news reports spanning January 1 to December 30, 2023. Following a qualitative methodology and exploratory design, the study utilized comprehensive sampling to select 58 news stories for analysis. Theoretical frameworks such as agenda-setting and framing theories were applied to interpret and elucidate the findings. The research findings revealed that the dominant frames used were the responsibility frame, humanitarian frame, security frame, economic frame, conflict frame, and sociocultural frame. EBC portrayed illegal migration and human trafficking positively while using a negative tone for emigrants. The EBC consistently uses "illegal" instead of "undocumented" and aligns its reporting with the Ethiopian government's perspectives, raising concerns about adherence to journalism ethics.

Keywords: media framing; illegal migration; human trafficking; broadcast media

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Human trafficking and illegal migration (HTIM) are significant global phenomena that continue to challenge societies worldwide. HTIM is a critical problem and an urgent issue that Ethiopia is facing. It is causing huge human, social, and economic problems to the migrants, Ethiopia, and migrants hosting countries. As the problem of HTIM increases, the role of media, particularly state-owned media such as the EBC, becomes critical in shaping public understanding as well as responses.

Media framing is not only about what is reported, but it is also about how it is reported. The language, the tone, and the focus of the media coverage all influence the way audiences perceive migrants, human traffickers, the victims, and the possible solutions to the problems. This study aims to examine how EBC frames stories related to HTIM by exploring the narrative media constructs, the priorities it sets, and the impact of those choices on national discourse and media, and migration policies.

1.2 Objective and significance of the study

The objective of this study is to examine how the EBC addressed illegal migration and human trafficking in 2023. Focusing on news stories and audiovisual content, the study aims to uncover how the media shapes public perceptions and contributes to the broader discourse on these global issues. The research poses three key questions:

1. What are the dominant frames used by EBC in broadcasting illegal migration and human trafficking?
2. How did EBC portray these issues in their news coverage?
3. How did EBC exercise journalistic ethics when framing illegal migration and human trafficking?

The scope of the study is limited to the news covered from January 1 to December 30, 2023.

The finding will be significant to address the problems of migrants and tackle human trafficking challenges in Ethiopia and beyond. It will also be important for EBC to shape and reflect on its media coverage approaches on illegal migration and human trafficking.

1.3 Literature review

Despite their global nature, there is a clear definition of human trafficking and illegal migration. According to the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) \(2024\)](#), migration refers to the movement of people from their usual residence, either across international borders or within a state, underscoring the complexity of human mobility and the diverse factors driving migration [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) \(2024\)](#).

Illegal migration and human trafficking have become increasingly prominent topics in global media, and are framed and portrayed differently across nations. [Fotopoulos et al. \(2022\)](#) highlight the considerable influence of the media on public perceptions of illegal migration. The portrayal of illegal migration varies from country to country, with differing degrees of coverage and media framing approaches. Understanding the intersection of these issues that are global in scale but shaped by local, regional, and international factors is essential for crafting comprehensive strategies to address the challenges of illegal migration and human trafficking.

While the scope of these issues is global, they are often driven by specific socioeconomic conditions and regional dynamics. According to [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) \(2017\)](#), illegal migration occurs outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing entry and exit between states. Migration conditions in regions such as Eastern Africa present unique challenges. The [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) \(2017\)](#) identifies three primary migration routes from Eastern Africa, including Sudan to Europe, Yemen & Saudi Arabia, and South Africa. These routes reflect the complex and varied migratory patterns that shape the migration experience in this region.

The media plays a crucial role in educating the public and shaping the discourse surrounding illegal migration and human trafficking. In Ethiopia, the increasing number of broadcast TV stations has allowed both governmental and non-governmental organizations to raise awareness about the severe consequences of these issues. Media coverage of migration often centers on humanitarian and economic factors, while reporting on issues such as smuggling and trafficking is typically framed within a security context ([Fotopoulos et al., 2022](#)).

Media framing, as defined by ([Entman, 2010](#)), refers to the way certain aspects of reality are selected and emphasized to promote a particular interpretation of an issue. [Jung and Jung \(2021\)](#) argue that media coverage of illegal migration and human trafficking frequently emphasizes the criminality and dangers associated with these phenomena, often portraying migrants and trafficked individuals as victims or perpetrators. While such coverage can contribute to stigmatization, it can raise awareness and mobilize support for policy change by highlighting human rights violations and exploitation.

In Ethiopia, illegal migration has long been a challenge, with many migrants heading to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Ethiopian migrants often face severe difficulties in these destination countries, with many detained and repatriated under harsh conditions (Getachew, 2019). As a result, the media must adopt a more nuanced approach to reporting on migration, moving beyond sensationalism and offering deeper insights into the complexities of these issues. According to Fotopoulos et al. (2022), media coverage plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing policymakers in both origin and destination countries. Similarly, (Caviedes, 2018) emphasizes that the media's ideological stance can greatly impact how audiences perceive migration and human trafficking.

In Ethiopia, poverty and governance challenges are key drivers of migration, with Saudi Arabia being a primary destination for East African migrants (Schewel, 2022). Despite the growing scale of illegal migration, Ethiopian media coverage remains limited. International media outlets have reported on the heavy toll of unlawful migration, such as the tragic deaths of migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, but the coverage focuses on the difficulties faced by migrants in transit or at their destinations, without offering concrete solutions (Getachew, 2019).

1.4 Theoretical framework and methodology

1.4.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is essential for understanding media analysis because it allows researchers to situate their findings within broader academic discussions. Bertrand and Hughes (2017) emphasize that media research must consider theoretical underpinnings to achieve a full understanding of the methodologies and approaches employed. Onwubere (2021) adds that a theoretical framework acts as a mirror that reflects the theory-based discovery process. This study applies media framing theories, linking them to agenda-setting and framing theories, which provide a foundation for analyzing how HTIM are framed in the media and the implications of such framing for public discourse and policy.

1.4.2 Methodology

This study employed an exploratory design, which was chosen for its flexibility, allowing themes to emerge from the data rather than relying on predefined categories. This design is particularly suitable for qualitative research that utilizes online data sources and content analysis (Mukherjee, 2019), making it an ideal fit for examining illegal migration and human trafficking.

A qualitative research method was used to conduct content analysis, focusing on understanding the perspectives of the EBC on these issues. Given the limited prior research on this topic, an inductive content analysis approach enables concepts to emerge directly from the collected data. This is particularly valuable when research on the issue is either scarce or fragmented, as it helps derive meaningful insights from the data itself (Flick, 2022). Inductive content analysis is essential for understanding the nuances of how individuals or institutions frame and interpret experiences, especially in the context of migration and human trafficking.

1.4.3 Sampling

A comprehensive sampling strategy was applied to ensure that the selected news stories were relevant to the topics of illegal migration and human trafficking. The researchers analyzed 58 news stories from the EBC over a year, that is, from January to December 2023. Content analysis was used to identify recurring patterns, themes, and messages across the stories. Data were collected using an electronic database search engine, with keywords related to illegal migration and human trafficking, to ensure validity and reliability in the sampling process.

1.4.4 Data analysis method

Both textual and visual analyses are employed in the study. Textual analysis involves various research methods to examine the narrative and language used in the stories, while visual analysis focuses on the imagery presented in the news reports (Davies, 2020). The inductive approach facilitated the emergence of key themes from the data, allowing for a deeper interpretation of the narratives in each news story and related content. This approach was relevant to understand the motivations, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding migration and human trafficking issues, as reflected in the media coverage, and to explore how EBC frames these complex social challenges. In the reporting of the results, the researchers used both verbatim, where the actual stories are directly quoted, and themes, in which the main content of the stories from the news is summarized.

2 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

2.1 The dominant frame in EBC on HTIM News

Regarding the types of frames used for illegal migration, it is found that EBC has utilized six prominent frames: the responsibility frame, the humanitarian frame, the security frame, the economic frame, the conflict frame, and the sociocultural frame.

2.1.1 Responsibility frame

The responsibility frame emphasizes assigning responsibility and blame to the suitable organizations or individuals for issues, causes, and solutions. In the context of illegal migration, this frame often involves blaming a nation, government, NGO, or other groups for migration-related problems, their causes, and possible solutions. For example, on December 19, 2023, EBC at 8 p.m., reported:

The Ethiopian Ambassador to Bahrain, Shiferawu Genete, discussed with the country's Secretary-General, Siraj Mohammed, the protection of Ethiopian workers' rights in Bahrain. The conversation also addressed the possibility of issuing legal work permits for Ethiopian migrants who are currently working illegally.

This news story highlights the proactive role of Ethiopian diplomats in Bahrain, emphasizing their focus on safeguarding the rights of Ethiopian workers, particularly those in illegal employment. By showcasing the ambassador's discussions with Bahraini officials, the broadcast underscores Ethiopia's diplomatic efforts to protect its citizens abroad. Another example comes from the August 25, 2023, news report of EBC:

The Ethiopian Embassy in Djibouti had announced plans to facilitate the return of nearly 3,000 Ethiopian migrants by 2022. This return program is being coordinated in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), ensuring that the migrants return with their dignity preserved.

The coverage emphasized Ethiopia's responsibility to support its citizens stranded abroad, highlighting the cooperation with the IOM as a key element in this effort. The embassy's initiative aligns with Ethiopia's commitment to assisting its nationals in distress and providing avenues for safe and dignified repatriation. Similarly, on October 30, 2023, at 6 a.m., EBC reported:

Ethiopia and Djibouti signed an agreement to create a joint criminal investigation team aimed at combating human trafficking and preventing illegal border crossings. In the signing ceremony, Ethiopia's State Minister of Justice, Alem Anteagdewu, emphasized that Ethiopia is

taking comprehensive measures to address crimes related to human trafficking and illegal migration.

The news frame portrays the Ethiopian government's active role in preventing such crimes and highlights the need for strengthened law enforcement to ensure traffickers are prosecuted. These examples illustrate the use of the responsibility frame, emphasizing Ethiopia's role in addressing migration challenges, protecting its citizens abroad, and taking action against illegal migration and human trafficking.

2.1.2 Humanitarian frame

This framing can lead to calls for more compassionate immigration policies and greater support for migrants (Entman, 1993). Advocates argue that individuals who are forced to migrate or trafficked are victims of human rights violations and, therefore, should be treated with compassion and respect. Concerning this frame, on October 17, 2023, at 7 p.m., EBC reported:

Ethiopia has become the first African country to provide a welcoming environment for immigrants and refugees from various nations. Currently, Ethiopia hosts over 100,000 refugees, including many who have fled recent conflicts in Sudan. These refugees reside in temporary camps, particularly in the Benishangul-Gumuz region. According to Gudu Nasir Atayu Dia, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, these refugees have formed positive relationships with the local communities, showcasing the harmonious coexistence between the two groups.

The coverage highlights Ethiopia's commitment to protecting migrants, with the country's constitution guaranteeing the rights of refugees and implementing policies to support them, including access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. The news emphasizes the urgent humanitarian needs of displaced women and children living in the camps. The footage portrays the severity of their situation, urging compassion and the need for immediate assistance. It underscores Ethiopia's dedication to protecting refugees and asylum seekers, showcasing the country's leadership in refugee care. A similar call for support was made on March 5, 2023, when EBC reported:

More than 98,000 refugees had entered Ethiopia due to the ongoing conflict in the Gessam area of Somaliland. Among these refugees are pregnant women, lactating mothers, elderly individuals requiring medical attention, and people with disabilities. Tesfahun Gobzai, the Director-General of Refugees and Returnees Services, emphasized that Ethiopians have been providing the little support they can, but international aid has been slow to arrive. This lack of external support is a significant concern for both the refugees and the Ethiopian government, which is struggling to provide for their basic needs.

The coverage portrays the Ethiopian government's efforts to care for the refugees but also highlights the critical gap in international assistance. The refugees, living in makeshift camps, are in dire need of food, water, medical care, and other essential resources, further stressing the need for increased international cooperation.

2.1.3 Security frame

The media often utilizes a security framework to amplify its argument on illegal migration, frequently focusing on topics like national security, border control, and crime prevention. This approach highlights the perceived threats linked to illegal migration, emphasizing notions of state authority and sovereignty. For instance, EBC's broadcast on September 14, 2023, at 8 p.m., presented an example of this security-centric framing.

Italy's declaration of a state of emergency in the Lampedusa Island region: The state of emergency was prompted by a surge in illegal migration, with nearly 7,000 refugees entering the country within the last two days. This dramatic increase in arrivals raised concerns over national security and overwhelmed local resources. The Italian government implemented a state of emergency to provide additional resources to Lampedusa, a region struggling to manage the influx. The state of emergency also enabled the government to expedite the processing of migrants and their subsequent resettlement in other parts of Italy.

The news report featured audio-visual footage showing dozens of migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe, while border security forces worked to block their entry. The footage underscored the heightened security concerns and the pressure placed on European nations to control their borders. A further broadcast by EBC on April 12, 2023, at 7 p.m., reported:

The United Nations reported a significant rise in the number of migrants arriving in Europe by sea, especially from North African countries like Tunisia. The Italian port of Lampedusa alone handles over 3,000 boats carrying refugees within three days. However, the Mediterranean Sea has become a deadly route, with approximately 1,000 migrants reported to have died at sea in recent years.

EBC highlighted the increasing strain on European countries due to the growing number of migrants. Many nations, including Italy, have responded by implementing stricter border controls in an attempt to manage the flow of migrants. The report described the situation in the Mediterranean as a humanitarian crisis, but it also reflected the divided opinions within Europe regarding the handling of the migrant influx. Some critics argued that the Italian government was not doing enough to assist migrants, while others believed that its policies were too lenient and encouraged further immigration.

2.1.4 Economic frame

The emphasis of messaging in an economic context is on the possible benefits and drawbacks of illegal immigration as it relates to the economy. In broadcast news on EBC, the theme of the story focused on improving the economy of migrants, job opportunities for migrants, housing supplies, medical benefits, and other financial advantages, as well as obstacles faced by illegal migrants, which are classified under the economic framework. For instance, on December 15, 2023, at midnight, EBC broadcast:

Ethiopians, who migrate illegally, when they return to Ethiopia from various international countries, find it difficult to establish a new life. As a result, they choose migration after they have escaped from harassment. For example, Marta Yohannes, who went to Italy illegally to live a better life, was only 14 years old. However, when she returned home, she had neither a welcoming nor a supportive family.

The article highlights the difficulties of Ethiopians who illegally migrate to other countries, and the problems they face upon returning to their home country. Marta Yohannes, a 14-year-old Ethiopian girl who left for Italy, found her family unsupportive upon her return. This is a frequent reality for Ethiopians returning from migration, driven by the pursuit of improved prospects abroad amid widespread unemployment and poverty in their homeland. The article uses audio-visual footage to highlight the socioeconomic factors driving migration and the economic implications of such journeys. The challenges faced by Ethiopians during their return can negatively impact their mental and physical health, leading to stress, anxiety, depression, malnutrition, fatigue, and substance abuse. It was, for instance, reported by EBC on December 16, 2023, at 7 p.m. regarding such abuses:

Ethiopian citizens migrate to various countries worldwide in pursuit of improved living conditions. However, many face harm due to a lack of essential training before their departure. Efforts are now underway to provide the required training and to address and report such mistreatment.

The issue of Ethiopian citizens traveling abroad for better opportunities but facing harm due to inadequate training is a significant concern. Many may migrate without understanding the associated risks or the need for proper preparation to work safely in certain sectors. Raising awareness about these dangers and ensuring that individuals receive the necessary training is crucial to safeguarding their well-being.

2.1.5 Conflict frame

Conflict frames depict illegal migration and human trafficking through the lens of conflict, insecurity, and disagreements among individuals, parties, institutions, or groups. The EBC highlights these issues by focusing on conflicts or the struggles of refugees, emphasizing their severe and harmful effects on individuals and communities. In its June 23, 2023, 7 p.m. broadcast, EBC News analysed the root causes of these challenges to propose effective solutions:

As the conflict in Sudan escalates, migration to neighbouring countries persists. The violation of a three-day cease-fire agreement has led to a surge in refugee numbers. Data from the United Nations Refugee Agency indicates that over 2.5 million individuals have been displaced from their homes, seeking refuge in neighbouring nations.

The news often magnifies the conflict's impact, rather than its solution and core cause. This has caused discontent among people. Similarly, the news aired on June 14, 2023, at 2 p.m. highlights the impacts of conflict, which forced a dozen individuals to leave their homes unwillingly.

The United Nations Refugee Agency announced that more than 110 million people were displaced from countries experiencing instability. According to the refugee agency, the crises in Ukraine, Sudan, and Afghanistan have contributed significantly to the increase in the number of displaced people. The head of the United Nations refugee agency, Filippo Grandi, said in a press conference in Geneva that climate change is one of the reasons for displacement. The number of displaced persons, which was 40 million before the start of the Syrian War in 2011, has now risen to 110 million. In 2022, more than 339,000 displaced people returned to their country, and more than 114,000 were resettled in third countries.

The report emphasizes the growing number of displaced individuals due to crises in Ukraine, Sudan, and Afghanistan. Through audio-visual footage, it portrays women, children, and elderly people in camps, notably without the presence of soldiers. The international community struggles to provide essential services such as food, water, and shelter to those affected.

2.1.6 Sociocultural frame

The sociocultural frame highlights the opportunities and challenges encountered by illegal immigrants within the sociocultural realm. This perspective may emphasize concerns about preserving cultural identity or sustaining social harmony. It may also address the ease with which immigrants adapt to the community, acquire the language, and embrace local traditions. Based on these criteria, this study categorizes broadcast media stories under the sociocultural framework. In this context, the news aired on October 8, 2023, at midnight reports:

Ethiopia stands as Africa's leading nation in hosting refugees from various countries, providing them with a supportive living environment. Over 100,000 refugees, including those displaced by the recent Sudanese conflict, are sheltered in camps across the Benishangul Gumuz region. Sudanese refugees in the Sore camp report harmonious relations with the local community, built on shared cultural values. They describe their bond as equal, participating in mutual celebrations like weddings and supporting one another during life events such as marriage and death.

The news underscores the harmonious relationship between Sudanese refugees in the Sore refugee camp and the local Ethiopian community. Testimonies from the refugees highlight progress in integration and the establishment of peaceful coexistence. Audio-visual footage, depicting women, children, and elderly individuals, illustrates collaboration and cultural exchange. Adopting a sociocultural lens, the story emphasizes the value of cultural interaction and unity between migrant and host communities. Ethiopia's experience showcases its capacity to create a safe and inclusive environment fostering successful integration for refugees.

News aired by EBC on June 24, 2023, at 1 p.m. also demonstrates the call for solidarity to support refugees: Margaret Itman, the United Nations Refugee Agency's representative in Ethiopia, urged the international community and longstanding institutions in the country to unite in ensuring that development efforts benefit both refugees and residents in refugee-hosting areas. As part of Refugee Day celebrations in the AFR region, she plans to join an auction supporting income-generating initiatives for self-sufficient refugees. Meanwhile, Osman Ali, a resident of the Asayta refugee shelter, along with local community member Isaac Umar, shared that they established an association and gained from fishing in the Awash River, utilizing training that benefited both refugees and residents.

The study emphasizes the importance of international support and the positive impact of allowing refugees to participate in development. The audio-visual footage showcases fishery workers harvesting fish and the collaboration between the resident society and migrants.

2.2 EBC Portrayal of the News about HTIM issues

EBC portrays illegal migration and human trafficking with contrasting tones: it adopts a more positive approach toward immigrants while displaying a negative stance toward emigrants. The term "illegal migrant" is commonly assigned to those leaving Ethiopia or moving to Western countries, whereas "refugee" is occasionally used for individuals entering Ethiopia or fleeing conflicts internationally. EBC partially focuses on solution-driven and informative content related to illegal migration and human trafficking. Furthermore, the term "illegal" is consistently preferred over "undocumented" in its descriptions of migrants.

2.2.1 Immigrants versus emigrants

The EBC emphasizes sharing migrant narratives and amplifying their voices to foster empathy and break stereotypes. Exploring the socioeconomic and political effects of migration, such as impacts on labor markets, education, and social cohesion, encourages more insightful discussions on migration within Ethiopia. EBC on July 10, 2023, at 1 P.m., reported:

Among the one million migrants Ethiopia has accommodated, over 383,000 reside in the Gambella region, receiving protection and essential services. Mr. Woldesew Nguse, Head of the Gambella Branch of the Refugee and Returnees Service, confirmed that refugees in the area are benefiting from comprehensive social and humanitarian services.

The story portrays Ethiopia as a welcoming country that offers protection and basic services to refugees, emphasizing the importance of providing social and humanitarian services to help them rebuild their lives and integrate into their new communities. The audio-visual footage primarily features destitute women, children, and poorly dressed migrants, emphasizing the need for compassion and assistance. Another news report on October 17, 2023, at 7 p.m., by EBC states: Ethiopia stands out as the first country in Africa to welcome immigrants from various nations and provide a welcoming environment for refugees. Among the more than 100,000 refugees currently hosted by the country, including those who have escaped recent conflicts in Sudan, many reside in temporary camps located in the Benshanegul Gumz region. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Gudu Nasir Atayu Dia, has noted

that these refugees have established positive relationships with the local community, highlighting the harmonious coexistence between the two groups.

The news story about Ethiopia's efforts to assist refugees serves as a positive example of immigration, standing in stark contrast to the negative portrayals often seen in the media. The Ethiopian government's policy of welcoming refugees and providing them with essential resources has fostered a supportive environment, especially when compared to many other countries where refugees frequently encounter hostility and discrimination.

The audio-visual footage accompanying the report captures the realities faced by displaced women and children in camps, effectively illustrating the challenging living conditions they endure. However, the narrative goes beyond mere hardship; it emphasizes the importance of community support for refugees.

In this context, media framing plays a crucial role in shaping public perception. By highlighting Ethiopia's compassionate approach to refugee support, the media can promote positive agendas, raise awareness about the needs of displaced individuals, and inspire action on important humanitarian issues. This balanced portrayal not only informs the public but also encourages a more empathetic understanding of immigration and its complexities.

2.2.2 Solution-oriented versus information-delivery based

EBC has approached illegal migration and human trafficking in a solution-oriented manner by showcasing personal stories of those impacted by these issues. This approach helps to humanize the topic and make it more relatable to its audience. For example, during the news broadcast on December 15, 2020, at midnight, specific narratives were shared to emphasize the human aspects of the challenges surrounding migration and trafficking. This strategy aims to foster a deeper understanding and empathy among viewers.

Ethiopians who migrate illegally often face significant challenges upon their return to the country, struggling to rebuild their lives. Many end up choosing migration as a means of escape from harassment. For instance, Marta Yohannes, who attempted to migrate to Italy at the age of 14 in search of a better life, found herself returning to Ethiopia only to encounter an unwelcoming and unsupportive family environment.

The news piece sheds light on the difficulties faced by Ethiopians who migrate illegally and face challenges reintegrating into their home country. It emphasizes the human aspect by narrating Marta Yohannes' experience, who sought illegal migration at a young age. Through audio-visual footage, the story explores the economic effects of migration and the absence of supportive environments for returning migrants. By addressing the root causes, it invites readers to think about solutions and establish support mechanisms to aid returnees in rebuilding their lives. Additionally, it urges consideration of the wider impacts of illegal migration and the importance of assisting those affected. News on challenges of returnees was also reported by EBC on March 4, 2023, at 7 p.m. as follows:

The Ministry of Women and Social Affairs emphasized the need to mobilize society in efforts to prevent and address the human trafficking that has brought suffering to many citizens. Reports indicate that over 100,000 citizens have returned to Ethiopia in the past year. However, many of those rescued from illegal human trafficking are returning in even greater distress. To combat this issue effectively, it is crucial to address and eliminate the root causes in affected areas and to regulate internal human trafficking, which serves as a primary driver of illegal migration.

The news report highlights the issue of human trafficking and the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs to address it. It emphasizes the severity of the problem, noting that more than 100,000 citizens have returned to Ethiopia in the past year due to trafficking. The report stresses the importance of eliminating trafficking hotspots and curbing internal trafficking to deter illegal migration. However, it provides limited insight into the specific strategies or measures being applied to

tackle human trafficking effectively.

2.2.3 Positive versus negative tone

The tone employed varies depending on the migration context, with distinct approaches for immigrant and emigrant news reports. A positive tone is more likely to be applied to emigrants or migrants, particularly when highlighting the challenges they face and overcome during their migration journey. For example, in a news broadcast aired on October 8, 2023, at midnight, specific instances were cited to illustrate these dynamics and address the complexities of migration experiences as follows:

Ethiopia is recognized as Africa's top country in welcoming refugees from various nations and providing them with supportive living conditions. Over 100,000 refugees, including those fleeing the recent conflict in Sudan, are accommodated in camps within the Benishangul Gumuz region. Sudanese refugees residing in the Sore refugee camp report positive relations with the local community, sharing cultural values and participating in life events such as weddings and funerals. This mutual interaction fosters equality and unity, contributing to a harmonious coexistence.

The narrative adopts an optimistic tone, utilizing words like "leading," "comfortable," "good relations," "sharing," "equal," "celebrate," and "good" to portray Ethiopia as a welcoming and secure haven for refugees. Testimonies from refugees, including expressions of gratitude for the support they have received, further reinforce this positive outlook, highlighting their contentment with their new lives in the country. An additional news story broadcast on February 8, 2023, at 1 p.m. exemplified this perspective.

It was announced that we should work together to improve the living conditions of Eritrean refugees living in the Alemwacho refugee shelter in the Dabat district of the Amhara region. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Flipogrande, visited the Eritrean refugees in the Alemai Refugee Camp in the Dabat District, Amhara Region. He thanked the Ethiopian government for the support it provided for refugees. The High Commissioner, who spoke to the representative of the refugees, said that the United Nations Commission on Refugees will do its part to provide basic services to them.

The news story is well-written and informative, providing crucial information about the refugee situation in Ethiopia and the efforts made to help them. The positive tone of the story demonstrates Ethiopia's commitment to helping those in need and the importance of cultural exchange. However, the EBC used a negative tone in reporting immigrant issues and about the interaction among Ethiopian citizens, international migrants, and Europeans on December 14, 2023 seven p.m. as follows:

Ethiopians travel abroad to various countries seeking improved living conditions. However, many face harm due to a lack of adequate training before their departure. Efforts are now being made to provide the required training to address and report the abuses experienced by these citizens.

The story could adopt a more positive tone by emphasizing the proactive steps taken by the Ethiopian government to provide training for citizens, equipping them to prevent injuries and challenges during migration. Additionally, it could highlight success stories of Ethiopian migrants who have secured stable jobs abroad, enabling them to support their families by sending money back home, thus contributing to both personal and national economic growth.

2.2.4 Migrants versus refugees

EBC predominantly uses migrants rather than refugees in its news reports. This is especially true for migration in Europe and the Middle East, as well as to the USA. For instance, on September 22, 2023, at 8 p.m., EBC reported: “*The state of Texas has declared a state of emergency following an increase in the number of migrants crossing the Mexican border into the United States*”. The news story highlights the complex issue of migration, particularly the distinction between migrants and refugees. The declaration of a state of emergency in Texas suggests a crisis due to the influx of migrants crossing the Mexican border. However, not all individuals crossing the border may be classified as migrants, and the focus on migrants may overlook the humanitarian aspect of the situation. The portrayal of the issue as a state of emergency may fuel political debates about immigration policies, border security, and international relations. EBC on April 12, 2023, at 7 p.m., reports:

Italy has announced that it is going to implement a state of emergency due to the increasing number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea. The United Nations has reported that the number of migrants arriving in Europe by sea from North America has increased significantly over the last 5 years. There are a large number of immigrants from sub-Saharan African countries, especially Tunisia. The organization's report, which mentioned that the Italian port of Lampedusa alone handles more than 3 thousand boats with refugees in three days, indicated that approximately one thousand of these migrants died at sea.

By framing the issue in terms of migrants versus refugees, the news story highlights the complexities and humanitarian aspects of the situation. This finding underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of migration and refugee flows, as well as the importance of addressing the root causes driving people to undertake such risky journeys.

2.3 Ethics in News reports about HTIM in the EBC

In the context of journalistic ethics, principles such as neutrality, balanced tone, objectivity, and truthfulness are essential for reliable news dissemination. However, the Ethiopian EBC has been found to fall short of these standards in its reporting on illegal migration and human trafficking. Specifically, its lack of neutrality raises concerns, as the content appears to align closely with the viewpoints and priorities of the Ethiopian government.

3 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

3.1 Discussion

The media's framing of topics such as illegal migration and human trafficking plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing policy decisions. By emphasizing particular aspects of these issues, media outlets can affect the discourse and outcomes of policymaking. According to Jung and Jung (2021), such portrayals can lead to stigmatization, discrimination, and further marginalization of those affected. Tukachinsky et al. (2023) argue that media coverage often highlights the criminal activities of migrants, fostering negative perceptions. Conversely, another common framing depicts illegal migration as a humanitarian crisis, focusing on the hardships faced by migrants fleeing poverty or violence. This narrative tends to evoke calls for more compassionate immigration policies and increased support for migrants. As Entman (1993) observed, emphasizing the suffering of migrants in media coverage can garner public support for immigration reform.

The first research question aimed to identify the dominant frames used by EBC News in its coverage of illegal migration and human trafficking. The investigation revealed that EBC presented these issues

through multiple lenses, employing six prominent frames during the sampling period: the responsibility frame, the humanitarian frame, the security frame, the economic frame, the conflict frame, and the sociocultural frame.

A key reason for the prominence of the responsibility and humanitarian frames—particularly the latter—is to raise awareness for aid, garner foreign currency, and cultivate a positive national image. Many stories framed under the humanitarian lens actively call for donations and support for migrants in Ethiopia. Conversely, the responsibility and economic frames often depict Ethiopia as fulfilling its duty to safeguard migrants and mitigate illegal migration. These frames highlight the dangers associated with migration, especially perilous ocean crossings, while also addressing the efforts of Western countries to restrict migrant movement across their borders.

The socio-cultural frame further emphasizes Ethiopia's national image and societal attitudes towards immigrants, portraying the government as committed to creating safe zones and employment opportunities for migrants. Supporting studies, such as those by [Getachew \(2019\)](#) and [Addishiwot \(2017\)](#), indicate that the responsibility frame serves to attribute accountability to the government and relevant authorities. Content analysis of EBC's coverage reveals a tendency for the media to prioritize the nation's image over the specific circumstances surrounding migration, aligning closely with governmental perspectives. This suggests that EBC's narrative is significantly shaped by state interests.

These varied frames are consistent with media framing theory, which posits that media outlets selectively choose, emphasize, and interpret aspects of reality to construct narratives that align with their goals ([Entman, 1993](#)). According to this theory, the frames utilized by media organizations can shape public opinion and influence policy decisions ([Dillman, 2014](#)). In this context, EBC News employs frames that underscore Ethiopia's efforts to assist migrants while simultaneously drawing attention to the challenges of migration—particularly towards the West—and publicizing international donations for related initiatives. To mobilize international support, EBC frequently utilizes humanitarian, responsibility, and economic frames.

Agenda-setting theory offers a useful perspective for examining EBC News' framing strategies. This theory, as explained by McCombs (2016), posits that media outlets influence public priorities by focusing on particular issues. EBC News has given considerable attention to migration and human trafficking, with a strong emphasis on humanitarian efforts, international responsibilities, and security concerns. However, this coverage often adopts a negative framing, using terms like "flooding," "threat," "death," "illegal," and "displacement," which has led to coalition efforts to address these challenges.

Moreover, EBC has positioned the Ethiopian government as a responsible actor in this narrative, emphasizing Ethiopia's legitimacy as a destination for refugees. Phrases like "*Ethiopia is home to refugees*," "Ethiopia has fulfilled its promise to benefit refugees," and "Creating a favorable environment for refugees" are commonly used to portray a positive image of Ethiopia's role in assisting migrants. Through these strategic framing techniques, EBC News not only informs its audience but also shapes perceptions of migration and Ethiopia's involvement in addressing these complex issues.

The analysis of EBC News' portrayal of illegal migration and human trafficking highlights its alignment with the Ethiopian government's perspective. The tone of reporting is generally positive when covering immigrants entering Ethiopia, while a more negative approach is adopted for emigrants. The term "illegal migrant" is predominantly used to describe Ethiopians migrating to Western nations, whereas those entering Ethiopia are more often referred to as "refugees," particularly those fleeing conflicts. Although EBC occasionally includes solution-focused and informative coverage, it consistently prefers the term "illegal" over "undocumented" when referring to migrants.

The analysis extended to the audio-visual content used in EBC's coverage. Stories about migration into Ethiopia often feature footage of displaced women and children in crowded refugee camps, emphasizing their dire living conditions and the urgent need for humanitarian aid. In contrast, reports on Ethiopian emigrants, particularly those attempting to reach Europe, utilize imagery of migrants traveling by boat across the Mediterranean, border security measures, and rescue operations for distressed migrants at sea. These visuals serve to highlight the perilous nature of migration and underscore the urgency of

addressing these issues.

Previous studies have suggested that media coverage of illegal migration and human trafficking often heavily relies on government perspectives. Research by Wallinger (2010) and Virkus (2014) indicates that media narratives frequently fail to capture the full scope and severity of human trafficking, with government officials serving as primary sources. Consistent with these findings, EBC News often attributes responsibility for managing migrant populations to government officials and ambassadors, thereby amplifying Ethiopia's role in protecting and managing both incoming refugees and outgoing emigrants.

The application of media framing theory helps elucidate how EBC News selectively highlights and interprets aspects of reality to construct narratives aligned with its interests (Entman, 1993). The coverage emphasizes Ethiopia's humanitarian efforts while simultaneously focusing on the risks faced by Ethiopian emigrants heading to Western countries. Agenda-setting theory further explains the influence of EBC News on public opinion by prioritizing issues such as the perceived threats posed by illegal migration, often employing negative terminology like "illegal," "flooding," and "abuse" to accentuate these dangers.

The third research question focused on how EBC incorporates journalism ethics in its coverage of illegal migration and human trafficking. Journalism ethics, which emphasize truthful reporting and credibility, serve as vital guidelines for professional journalism. However, EBC's reporting raises significant concerns regarding adherence to these principles. The news stories and audio-visual content frequently lack impartiality, appearing closely aligned with the Ethiopian government's viewpoints and priorities. This lack of neutrality suggests that the coverage may be driven more by political agendas than by an objective examination of migration issues.

While some previous research supports these findings, other studies have reached different conclusions. For instance, Getachew (2019) and Thomas (2016) discussed the influence of government control and limited media freedom on migration coverage but did not explicitly consider journalism ethics in their analyses. In contrast, this study provides a more comprehensive examination by focusing on both the ethical dimensions of media reporting and the portrayal of migration issues. This dual focus allows for a deeper understanding of how political interests shape media narratives surrounding illegal migration and human trafficking in Ethiopia.

3.2 Conclusion

The media holds considerable power in shaping opinions and narratives, with framing serving as one of its most influential tools. Due to the close connection between media and society, the portrayal of groups, communities, and nations can either enhance or reduce their visibility, ultimately shaping public perception. This study examined how illegal migration and human trafficking were represented in Ethiopian broadcast media, specifically focusing on the EBC between January 1 and December 30, 2023.

The findings revealed that EBC News frames these issues in ways that align with the Ethiopian government's priorities. Frames such as responsibility, humanitarian, economic, and sociocultural reflect the impact of political agendas and media editorial policies on the narratives presented. The study emphasized the need for critical analysis of media framing to better understand its role in influencing public opinion and policy decisions concerning migration-related topics.

3.3 Recommendation

Framing in media significantly influences public perception and understanding of issues such as illegal migration and human trafficking. Broadcast media such as EBC, in particular, should enhance their coverage of these matters by focusing on raising public awareness and incorporating a variety of sources.

Journalists bear the responsibility of reporting on illegal migration from diverse viewpoints, examining its broad impacts on different facets of human life.

To achieve this, investing in journalist training is crucial, enabling them to address illegal migration and human trafficking from multiple perspectives. Furthermore, ensuring media freedom is vital for delivering thorough and impartial coverage. Ethiopian governments should avoid exerting control over media organizations and journalists, while also providing financial support to facilitate unrestricted reporting on illegal migration.

IOM has played a key role in tackling global migration challenges, with a strong focus on preventive measures against illegal migration and human trafficking. The IOM has also introduced media guidelines to promote ethical reporting and framing of migration issues, offering journalists valuable tools to address these complex topics. The organization has to continue playing its positive role in tackling migration challenges and promoting ethical and framing issues.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest

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