



Analysis of conflict reporting in Ethiopia broadcast Media, Focus on OMN & ASRAST TV

Tesfaye Tariku¹

¹Department Of Journalism and communication, College of Humanities,, Werabe University, Ethiopia

*Corresponding email:
tesfayetariku192199@gmail.com

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Abstract

Ethiopia is grappling with internal conflicts, causing widespread killings and property destruction. The main causes include political instability, unbalanced historical narration, resource depletion, and boundary demarcation among neighboring regional states. This study aims to assess how these conflicts were reported in selected broadcast media, Oromia Media Network (OMN) and Amhara satellite radio and television (ASRASTTV), from November to December 2019. The study focuses on four research questions: the extent of focus on reporting the conflict among ethnic groups, how they frame conflict stories, the dominant sources of conflict reporting, and the challenges of conflict reporting. The results reveal that conflict reporting in these media is minimal, not using the right source of the incident, and the media grouping conflicting issues into “us-them” categories. The study also identifies that the media propagates the conflict as non-stoppable and does not clearly show cause, course, and consequences. The findings suggest that Ethiopian media practitioners need to receive repeated training on handling conflict issues.

Key Word: Conflict, internal conflict, external conflicts broadcast media

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an inseparable part of human life, dating back to the beginning of human history and likely never ending. It is defined by the interests of the parties involved, such as differences, proximity, and movement. According to [Adisu \(2019\)](#) “Conflict can also occur when two or more groups have incompatible desires, attitudes, or needs and want to get their interests through actions that hurt the other group”. Interests can be found in various ways, such as over access to and distribution of resources, control of power and participation in political decision-making, identity, cultural, social, and political communities, status, or values, particularly those embodied in systems of government, religion, or ideology ([Mulatu, 2013](#)).

Jeong, (2008), states media plays a significant role in society, as it can foster peace by building confidence, facilitating negotiations, or breaking diplomatic deadlocks. However, hate speech can escalate conflicts, as seen in Rwanda and Yugoslavia. In Ethiopia, major causes of conflict include controversies over ethnic identity, disputes over border and administrative arrangements, population dynamics due to spontaneous and planned large-scale migration, religious conflicts, mineral extraction, and structural causes such as discriminatory caste-like culture (Ebenezer, 2018). Distributional issues are also additional causes of violent conflicts in the country.

Kebede (2016) states that “the current government of Ethiopia introduced ethnic federalism to address ethnic and other long-standing political and societal problems”, but it is believed that there have been several ethnic tensions and conflicts in different parts of the country, including public universities. The resurgence of ethnic violence in Ethiopian universities seems to reflect the critical political situation and ethnic tension that Ethiopia is currently experiencing Tesfa, (2017).

Ethnic-biased media, such as Oromia Media Network (OMN) and Amhara satellite radio and television, have played a great role in university student conflict reports. OMN was founded on March 1, 2014, with assistance from voluntary donations, targeted advertising, and external grants. It aims to produce original and citizen-driven reporting on Oromia, the largest and most populous state in Ethiopia (Adisu. 2019.) Amhara satellite radio and television were funded on January 1, 2019, with the assistance of volunteer donations.

As Aemere, (2015) states “Ethiopian media works in complex situations, and broad-cast conflict stories should not be seen as simple as the reporting of other issues”. Conflict reporting requires greater analytical knowledge, depth of information, and skills to avoid contributing to further violence and exacerbating tensions. The media frames the conflict, which can matter.

Recent studies on conflict reporting in Ethiopian broadcast media are limited, from those studies specifically focused on newspapers and media based in Addis Ababa. These studies have found that newspapers give less attention to internal conflicts and are considered silent media. Additionally, some ethnic conflict issues are ignored or given less attention. There is a clear gap in academic research and literature that comprehensively analyzes conflict reporting trends in Ethiopia’s broadcast media. Therefore, assessing the analysis of conflict reporting in Ethiopian broadcast media aims to fill these gaps and contribute significantly to the current discussion in the media. Studying the way conflict reporting takes place in selected broadcast media may have a fundamental and significant contribution to the current discussion on media.

The researcher selected OMN and ASRAT TV for this study because both media have the same manner of reporting news stories, which has caused confusion among politicians and public universities. The researcher believes that Ethiopian broadcast media, especially ethnic-based media, are escalating conflicts in their reports.

This research aims to improve the reporting of conflicts in Ethiopia, a country with over 100 million people with diverse religions, languages, and cultures. It will provide insights for journalists and academic staff on media ethics and social responsibilities in conflict reporting. The study will serve as feedback on press performance, fill gaps in broadcast coverage, and serve as a reference for researchers studying conflict coverage in Ethiopian media.

The objective of this study is to assessing Conflict reporting in Ethiopia broadcast media, in case of two ethnocentric media of OMN& ASRAT TV

1.1. Research Questions

- What are the extents of conflict reporting in ASRAT and OMN?
- What are the dominant sources of the two media in reporting conflict issues?
- What are the challenges of conflict reporting in ASRAT and OMN?
- How did the two media frame stories in reporting conflict?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study utilized a mixed approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze conflict reporting in Ethiopian broadcast media. Quantitative analysis involved coding conflict reports and analyzing their sources, time duration, intent, and challenges. Qualitative analysis focused on subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behavior, generating results in non-quantitative or non-quantitative forms (Kothari, 2004).

The researcher used a qualitative method to analyze data gathered through interviews with media practitioners from Oman News Network (OMN) and ASRAT TV. These practitioners were chosen due to their seniority and experience in the organization, providing in-depth information about conflict reporting news and their daily work experiences.

Primary data collection methods included interviews with journalists in Afan Oromo and Amharic languages, which allowed for intensive investigation and exploration of respondents' needs, desires, and feelings. Secondary data, published or unpublished, was assessed and evaluated by assessing thrifty broadcasted news from ASRAT TV and OMN conflict reporting videos from November–December 2012, E.C. The study was conducted in Aids Ababa, where OMN and ASRAT TV are located, as both are ethics-based and private-owned media.

A total of 26 news videos were selected from both media to obtain reliable information. Thirty news stores were purposefully selected from both stations, and two senior journalists were selected from each station. This mixed-approach approach helped the researcher analyze conflict reporting in Ethiopia and provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by media practitioners in conflict reporting

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Types of news in ASRAT and OMN TV

Table 1: types of news; Source: observation [January, 2021](#)

ASRAT TV	Types	Videos	Present
	Breaking news	4	30.77%
	Soft news	9	69.23%

OMN TV	Breaking news	3	23.03%
	Soft news	10	76.9%

In explaining the type of news from the two media in relation to conflict reporting on ASRAT and OMN TV during the two-month period, the researcher employed a quantitative content analysis approach to collect and analyze the data.

In this respect, the quantitative result shows that in the sampled period 26 news selected stories were broadcasted 13 news from OMN and 13 news from ASRATV and all broadcasted news were checked.

ASRAT TV broadcast 4 conflict news transmitted on breaking or hard news that contain 30.77% and 69.23% of news in sampled period are soft news. OMN 23.03% conflict news types are hard news and 10(76.97%) soft news

Both media are highly concentrated on the soft news that indicates continuously broadcasting the event, which is descriptive, often to the point of capturing video for the audience. In-depth stories with background information and stories that tend to be longer and whose scope extends beyond that of a straight news story.

3.1.2. Source of Conflict News

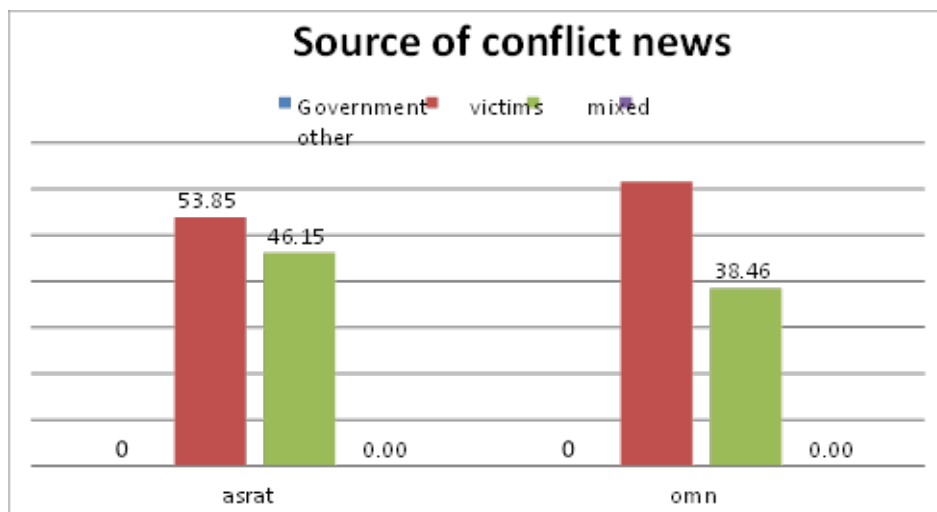
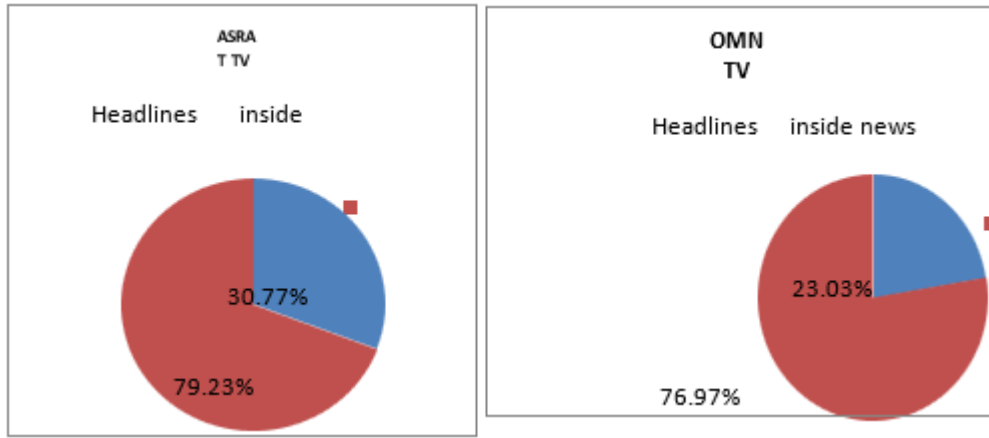


Figure 1: source of news ; Source: observation [January, 2021](#)

Figure 2 discusses the body mentioned as a source of the story in the stories produced by ASRAT TV and OMN TV. ASRATTV produces 7 (53.85%) stories by sourcing victims, 6 (46.15%) news stories sourced mixed, and 0 (0%) stories sourced government officials. OMN produced 8 (61.54%) news stories that were sourced from victims, and 5 (38.46%) news stories were sourced from mixed 0 (0%) story sourced government, both media have their sources mostly using victims, which indicates the media has fulfilled their interest in depending on victims. That supports the media's influence on the government and grape society on the surrounding of victims.



3.1.3. Placement of Conflict News

Figure 2: placement of news; Source: observation January, 2021

The finding concerning the placement of stories by the two media ASRAT TV broadcast 4 conflict news broad casts in headline news, which accounted for 30.77% of the total news broadcast. 9 (79.23%) of the total news broadcast inside of ASRAT TV, OMN transmits 3 news broadcasts that account for 23.03% of the total news broadcast by OMN and 76.97% of the total news presented inside of the package news. In the two media, out of the total stories, 7 (21.9%) were broadcast in the headlines of the two media, while 19 (78.1%) were broadcast inside the packages of both media. In order to place both media on the cause of student conflict in university, more than 75% put on their inside package, which means there is no major emphasis on giving it.

3.1.4. Ways of Conflict News Reporting

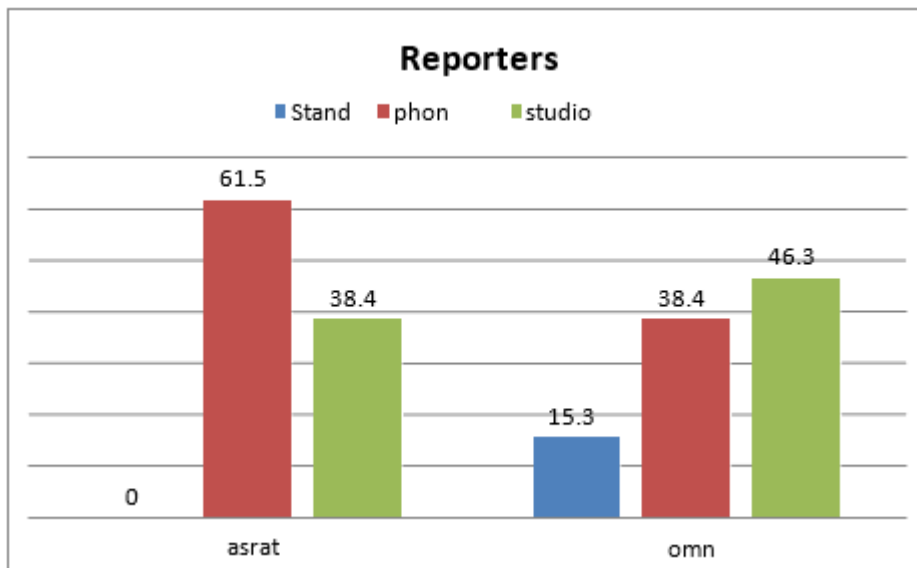


Figure 3: ways of reporting; Source: observation January, 2021

Figure 4 discusses the ways of reporting news stories produced by ASRAT TV and OMN. As data's briefly stated, ASRAT covers its 8 (61.54%) news stories attribution or news source generation by phone and 5 (38.46%) news stories were produced in studio, which means

journalists capture the event and narrate the script in studio in a normal way. ASRAT can't broadcast any conflict events on the spot or in a standup way. While OMN 6 (46.38%) news stories were produced in studio, 5 (38.46%) news stories attribution or news source broadcasted on the phone, and 15.38% news the reporters get on standup. ASRAT TV uses more than half stores attribution or news sources to get the sound but not see the event, the motion.

3.1.5. By line (Reporter) of Conflict News

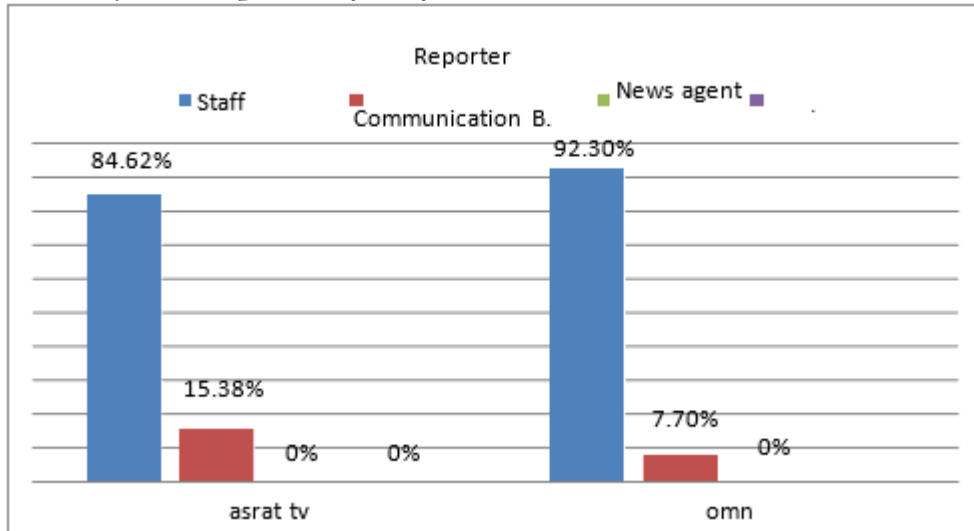


Figure 4: byline/reporter; Source: observation [January, 2021](#)

Figure 4 discusses the bylines or producers of the stories broadcast by ASRAT TV and OMN TV. As data's briefly stated, ASRAT covers 11 (84.62%) news stories by staff reporters, and 2 (15.38%) news stories were produced by communication offices that are working with the television organization in the region. ASRAT didn't receive any production from local media as well as from news agencies (local as well as international), while at OMN 12 (92.3%) stories were produced by staff reporters and 1 (7.7%) news stories were received from communication offices. Like ASRAT TV, OMN did not get any news stories from the news agency.

In differentiating or identifying who is the producer of the stories, the bylines are used by the researcher. One byline is identified as News Agency. Even though there is only one news agency in the country (the Ethiopian news agency), one can understand what is meant by a news agency. Unfortunately, the two media did not mention any international news agencies in their list of producers in the sampled period of time.

3.1.6. Duration Conflict News

Table 2: duration; Source: observation [January, 2021](#)

	VEDIO	Number	Percentage
ASRAT TV	-2 minute	1	7.7%
	2-3 minute	2	15.38%
	+ 3 minute	10	76.9%

OMN TV	-2 minute	3	23.03%
	2-3 minute	4	30.77%
	+3 minute	6	46.38%

Table 2 is the description of the duration of the conflict stories on ASRAT TV and OMN TV. The table shows that ASRAT TV produces 10 (76.97%) stories with a duration that stays above three minutes, 2 (15.38%) news stories with duration of two to three minutes, and 1 (7.7%) stories with duration of less than two minutes. OMN TV produces 3 (23.03%) news stories with duration of less than two minutes, 4 (30.77%) news stories with duration of two to three minutes, and 6 (46.38%) news stories with duration of more than three minutes. In relation to duration, ASRAT TV uses more than 65% of the news broadcast above three minutes. In the same manner, OMN covers almost half of all news categories less than three minutes. These ways are not advisable; they mean much more than the standard. According to PEJ’s detailed studies of the medium, the median length of a story with video on local television is 41 seconds, and some critics have complained this is too short. The median length of a network TV news package was 2 minutes and 23 seconds.

3.1.7. Framing Conflict News

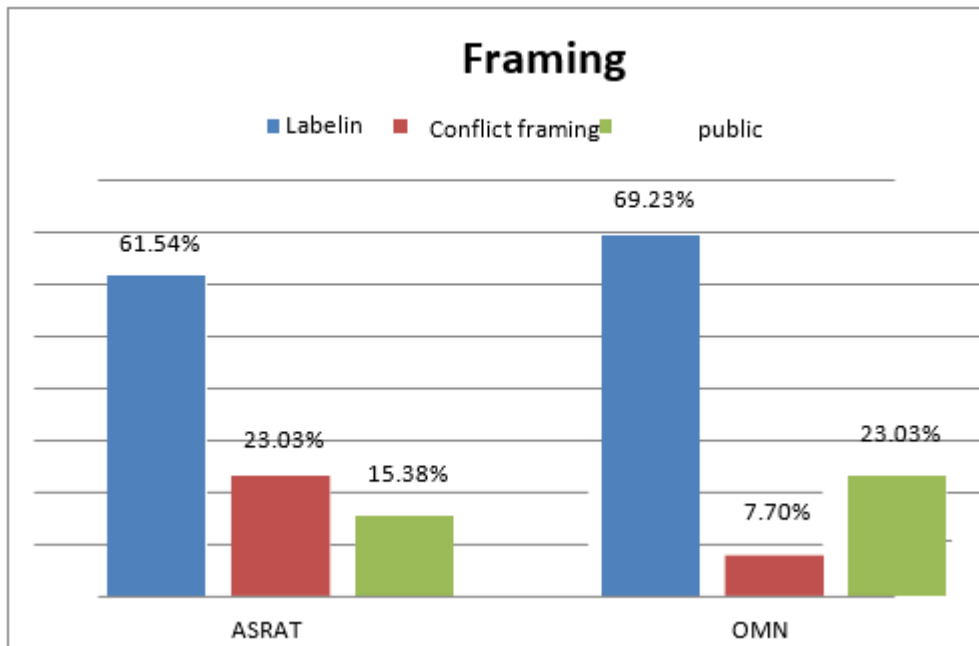


Figure 5: framing; Source: observation January, 202

The finding about the type of frame used by the two media is presented in figure 7. As the figure shows, out of the total of 13 (100%) news stories, ASRAT TV broadcast eight stories from a labeling or grouping perspective, which account for 61.54%, determined or influenced by the terms used to describe or classify them. The news by categorizing into two groups, us-them, and their attributions way of speaking totally categorized us and them. While 23.03% of news stores fall under conflict framing, which investigates the faces of conflicting people and groups’ angles in coverage of the story, Only two news stories in the public affairs frame account for 15.38% of the reporting causes, courses, and consequences of the conflict briefly and also focus on the culture of building a peaceful society, resolution, and reconciliation that have been achieved by sourcing government officials.

In OMN, 69.23% of the total used labeling/grouping frames, and in sampled time, 7.7% of news is broadcast at the frame conflict framing, and labeling/grouping of frames also accounts for 23.03% of the total 13 (100%) news broadcasts in OMN.

Both media broadcasting stories place more emphasis on labeling and grouping frames. [Laura \(2010\)](#) and [McAuliffe and Weeks \(2015\)](#) define the categories of framing in terms of the theme of the media contents. Types of framing refer to the central message or the dominant theme of the stories. The findings of this study indicate that both media used labeling and grouping frames. They realize that both media are highly biased toward their own ethics.

Both give less attention to public affairs, framing that to reporting causes, courses, and consequences of the conflict briefly and also focus on the culture of building a peaceful society and resolution, as well as reconciliation that has been achieved by sourcing government officials.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Source of Conflict News

Both of them gave more priority to the victims than mixed-source sources and government officials. All interviewed informants agreed that in both media, if one story is composed by an official government voice, it must be transmitted. An informant described that:

‘we were ordered from our boss that this story must be transmitted and this is not. I myself remembered that around five stories were jammed due to sourcing victims. In addition, there was a big challenge to report from the spot. The issue of protection was a major one. ‘

Sometimes the trend towards conflict reporting is going towards superficial, less-than-well-informed reporting, often based on second- or third-hand information as opposed to primary data. The growing drift towards comment and opinion journalism is also identified as an obstacle to a clear and impartial comprehension of a conflict and its root causes. In countries facing violent conflict and in post-war countries, journalists are often victims of human rights violations. Journalists therefore need to know about their rights and means of protection ([Entman, 1993](#). [Skjerdal, 2012](#))

3.2.2. By line (Reporter) of Conflict News

ASRAT covers 11 (84.62%) news stories by staff reporters, and OMN covers 12 (92.3%) stories by staff reporters; both media didn't receive any production from local media as well as from news agencies (local as well as international).

‘Sometimes when there are national issues covered by other media, and when we are losing to cover them, we will use another byline story to fill those gaps, unless we never use it’

This infers that the two media may be self-sufficient in covering stories they want to cover. But it was identified that, during the study period, there was also another national media and news agency that covered the situation, which the two media did not receive.

3.2.3. Duration Conflict News

In relation to duration, ASRAT TV uses more than 65% of the news broadcast above three minutes. In the same manner, OMN covers almost half of all news categories less than three minutes.

'most of our news stories are very long or very short. We do not have the standard for it. If the issue seeks public attention and there is a government official saying in the story, we make it long unless it is short, '

Even though the story length is decided by the media house, Reuters, on its behalf, recommends that newsbreaks or urgent stories should be no more than about 100 words, or two or three paragraphs. Newsbreaks that include pre-written material may run longer. An update should be no more than about 300 words, or five or six paragraphs. A longer update may be cut by desk editors in order to move the copy quickly. Updates that include pre-written material may run longer, provided this does not prevent the editing desk from moving the story quickly (Mickey, 2013).

As discussed above, most of the stories are produced in the form of news and sourced from victims (see Table 4). Due to this fact, the media produced a large number of stories that had a length of more than three minutes (see Table 6). This may, on the one hand, be a good way to explain the situation clearly. But the problem is that they were not focused on showing the real situation; rather, they were ruled according to the sources in the story, which were victims.

3.3. Framing of the Conflict Stories

This section aims to present the framing of some stories covered during a sampled period of time in the selected media. The discussion mainly focuses on how the two media framed the stories during the study period. These include the reporting method and priority the sampled media were giving to incidents in the specified sampling period. The theme or central idea of the covered stories is also discussed in this part. This way helps the researcher explain how the selected media are paying attention to giving latent meaning to the conflict stories and to reveal how the two media are portraying the conflict. This is conducted by taking some samples from the broadcast stories during the sampled period.

3.3.1. Labeling or Grouping Frame

During the pretesting conducted in the selected media, one of the frames identified was grouping or labeling frames in some broadcast stories. Labeling or grouping frames were identified in reporting conflict stories in the selected media in the form of news. This is the major reason for the preparation of this labeling frame. As explained in the theoretical framework section, the media frame the stories to transmit the message they want, not what the audience needs. This grouping or labeling frame was identified to assess the stories by organizing and uniting the group the media called us 'and exposing the other group they called them' to different public pressures.

Under this category, news stories that the two media transmitted by focusing on categorizing the conflicting groups between us and them in reporting conflict incidents and supporting us and blaming them in covering the stories will be thoroughly analyzed. Some of the officials systematically presented the people (a specific ethnic group) as a group that was surrounded by enemies. They speak loudly; the other group was responsible for all of the misdeeds. Then the media also broadcast those messages as they happened. This frame is highly reflected in the

selected media because the two media consider themselves to be sole representatives of that specific ethnic group from both sides.

In this section, specifically, the investigation of the message transmitted from the two media attribution sides is conducted thoroughly. This includes textual as well as audio-visual content analysis. In giving a clear meaning for frame analysis, specific techniques will be used. These are taking responsibility and blaming others for all of the misdeeds.

3.3.2. Taking responsibility Vs blaming others

By taking responsibility, it means that the two media experts sometimes did not believe they had shares and took off their responsibility during the conflict situation. In other times, they took sole responsibility for what happened. The media systematically broadcast those news stories more than three times (see figure 4). This has been purposefully done as if there is a truth behind that news story for the specific ethnic group that the talking individual victims were representing. But this may not be true in all stories. Due to this fact, the media presents the other group, or the labeled group, as a responsible body for the resulting problems.

Oromia Media Network (OMN) broadcast some of its news stories, grouping the Oromo as “us and the other group as them”, quoting the victims from this category. The first was a story produced on November 20, 2019. It was a conflict between students at the university. The victims, according to the media, were stressed on attacking another group, whom he called an enemy for the region, and they must stop their evil doings.

The whole story was talking in OMN about unidentified groups that are ready to intrude on or attack the region (Oromia) by disuniting the Oromo. Another issue stressed in the news is that the group referred to as other “is enemy ‘for the region and people of Oromo.” Our media is the voice of Oromia, so we can distribute the attacks on Oromo. You know the ways of Oromo students that studied in Amhara region universities.” The viewers may simply assume that the Oromo’s are encircled by enemies.

3.4. Challenge of conflict reporting

Regarding to getting source from government in conflict reporting in ASRAT TV and OMN TV has faced some common problems. The first problem is getting government official as attribution is difficult. Most often they have meeting or filled work and if the agenda collapse with the political view haven’t give any information. They do not give journalists enough time if that journalist came from media which protest government. However journalist is time bounded they usually went their plan. According to Belay Manaye reporter of ASRAT moreover the officials sometimes my hold information for a long period of time “sometime we challenge them based on our right in the constitution we tell that they have responsibility to give us the public information otherwise they make you bored” (personal interview on December 20, 2020).

And the other respondent of ASRAT TV says that the problem is not only the official but also due to the management and policy of their station. The management should have arranged many appointments with the ranking official but it is not doing that. That is filer of the media. On the other hand he expires that there is understanding of reporter in part of the officials. This

is another problem for the journalist. They do not consider them as professionals. Especially on the issue of related with to the conflict and grievance of society

Most of the informative of OMN journalism say that many politicians and government officials do not give them the information because if they are private media journalist. Some officials have fear to give them information. The most difficult thing for them is that many of the officials give them wrong and biased information. As a result they don't trust anyone. The source always tells them only a good image of their organization or parties. And also many of the officials doors are closed to the journalist come from media that protest the government.

According to Abreham Bru "almost all government officials never see us if we produce stories that on side of protest immediately we expected warning letter from Ethiopian broadcast authority." Especially journalist come from private media have not an access to get the political type of issue the political issue and conflict related information from government officials. The other challenge is getting the official directly by the journalist. Many of journalist question about this are why not the government officials themselves contact the journalist.

4. CONCLUSION

The main objective of the study is to analyze conflict reporting in Ethiopian broadcast media, with a focus on OMN and ASRAST TV. In order to analyze conflict reporting, the researcher used content analysis and interviews as tools. The researcher also used quantitative and qualitative descriptions to analyze and discuss the findings. To sum up, the following conclusions are derived from the presented and discussed findings: The result of quantitative content analysis shows that the two media concentrated on the soft news that indicates continuously broadcasting the event, which is descriptive, often to the point of capturing video for the audience.

Regarding the placement of the stories, both media broadcast a large number of stories in the inside package. It indicates that there is no more emphasis on the issue. In relation to the duration of the story, the two media almost jointly broadcast more than 75% of their news stories that have lasted more than three minutes. This might be too long in the context of PEJ's detailed studies of the medium. The median length of a story with video on local television is 41 seconds.

In looking at the bylines of the story, the two media jointly produced (79.8%) stories by their own staff reporters. This infers that the two media may be self-sufficient in covering stories they want to cover. But other media broaden the situation to another paradigm,

OMN media sourced victims in more than half of their stories, rather than government officials, and mixed, while ASRAST used half of the victims and mixed on their story source.

The two media were covering stories by labeling or grouping conflicting groups between 'us-them' by referring their specific ethnic group. This creates the illusion that one group is in danger and the other is the one who dominates.

The two media did not cover the incidents clearly by showing the cause, course, and consequences of the overall conflict situation and reported most of the conflict as non-stoppable. This contributed to raising the tension or exaggerating the conflict rather than managing and

reconciling it. Ethiopian media have experienced different interventions from the government to the immediate leaders of the media

5. FUNDING

No fund was received.

6. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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