

Qualitative Content Analysis of Some Selected News Stories of ETV

Temesgen Alemu Terfa

Jimma University, Department of Journalism and Communication

Email: talemu43@gmail.com

DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.9.05.2019.p8919

<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.9.05.2019.p8919>

Abstract

The paper aimed to analyze selected news stories of Ethiopian Television. Accordingly, the study focused on the critical reporting practices and how the media station covers development news stories. Besides, the study also examined the kind of news the media station prioritized. To do this, the study mainly used qualitative content analysis as a major tool. To substantiate the data, interview also used as another tool of data gathering. The findings of the study indicated that critical reporting on government which reveals the wrong doing of the government was neglected in Ethiopian Television (ETV). Rather it was used to manipulate and shape public attitude. The contents of ETV news reflected that development news was given above all a special attention over other issues. The news was presented in the way it brings forth government in most positive light. In the case of news coverage, ETV gave priority for government issues. This means that ETV served the interest of the government at the expense of the public. Most of the news was presented from the government point of view. Hence, ETV should revisit the way news stories in the media station are being produced and broadcast in accordance with the major principles of the profession of journalism.

Key words: Ethiopian Television, Content Analysis, News stories

1. INTRODUCTION

The media do not simply report something newsworthy as it is. News is the final product of various processes. MacDougall (1968) explains this: At any given moment billions of simultaneous events occur throughout the world... all of these occurrences are potentially news.

Though it is difficult to find a universal definition for news, scholars do have common agreement for news value being constant through different times and places. As Gans 2004:80, (cited in Gizachew, 38: 2006), news is "information which is transmitted from sources to audiences, with journalists -who are both employees of bureaucratic commercial organizations and members of a profession - summarizing, refining, and altering what becomes available to them from sources in order to become the information suitable for their audiences".

There are rules which guide journalists for the selection of news. One of these rules is the news value. According to Golding and Elliot (1979), news values are used in two ways. They are criteria of selection from material available to the newsroom of those items worthy of inclusion in the final product. Second, they are guidelines for the presentation of items, suggestion what to emphasize, what to omit, and where to give priority in the preparation of the items for presentation to the audience.

Media historian, Michael Schudson (1996) notes three approaches on the production of news. First is the political economy perspective, which relates news production to issues of political and economic structure and control. This means news tends to reflect the views of the political elite, or of the large corporations that own major media organizations. The second approach involves the influence of the social organization of the

journalistic processes. “The story of journalism, on a day-to-day basis,” wrote Schudson, “is the story of the interaction of reporters and bureaucrats”. Put another way, “the world is bureaucratically organized for journalists”. This approach also encompasses the role of public relations in shaping the news agenda by making potential stories easily available to journalists. Some adherents to the organizational perspective also contend that the personal values and social backgrounds of journalists shape the news product, whether in terms of political bias or coverage of underrepresented groups. Whereas the social organizational perspective emphasizes personal relations, the third approach, a cultural view, stresses cultural and symbolic aspects. This is when news stories are framed in terms of cultural stereotypes. It is apparent that the way these perspectives reflected in the production of news can affect the contents of news.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are different scholars who dealt with news selection process. Among them, Gans (2004:78) broadly categorizes the news selection into four theories. The first is, journalist- centered where the responsibility of selection lies on journalists. Here journalists have burden in selecting and gathering news stories. Here it is possible to deduce that the contents of news can be affected.

Gans’s second theory focuses on the role of news organization in the news selection process. This shows the power of news organizations in selecting and shaping news stories. This indirectly implies that journalists are supposed to select and gather news stories from point of views of their organization. The organization is there to determine what news is or not. Here the power lies not on journalists.

The third theory is event-centered or the so-called “Mirror theory”. This is where events play an important role for news selection and gathering. The fourth theory focuses on the factors that play a great role in affecting the news selecting and gathering processes. These factors can be economical, political, technological, and other factors can shape the production of news.

McManus (1994), Koch (1990) and others claim that the move over the past ten years to a ‘market-driven journalism’ has fundamentally changed the daily role of journalists in making the news. A survey in the year 2000, by the Pew Research Center for the people and the press and Columbia Journalism Review, reinforces this view. The study, which surveyed almost 300 journalists in the United States, found that four out of ten journalists purposely avoid or soften stories to preserve the interests of their news organization (Associated Press, 2000). Paletz and Entman (1982) found that where the primary objective of a news organization was efficiency in the gathering, describing and transmitting of news, the result was reliance on official sources and homogeneity of reporting. From this point of views, the researcher doubts that Ethiopian Television is practicing critical reporting to the development news. Hence, this specific study aims to analyze selected news stories of the media station.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

3.1 Major Objective

The study major objective is to qualitatively assess some selected news stories of Ethiopian Television

3.2 Minor objectives

-  To examine the critical reporting practice of Ethiopian Television

- ✚ To scrutinize the way the media station cover development news stories
- ✚ To find out the kind of news the media station gives priority.
- ✚ To identify if there is any pressure on the media station's practitioners when they make news stories.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the critical reporting practice of the media station?
2. How does Ethiopian Television cover development news stories?
3. What kind of news gets priority in ETV?
4. Is there any pressure on the journalists of media station in making news stories?

5. METHODOLOGY

The study employed qualitative research methodology. To critically analyze some of news stories of Ethiopian Television, the study used qualitative approach. The following deals with the tools separately.

6. Method of Data Collection

6.1 Qualitative content analysis

Qualitative content analysis refers to a research technique that is used to study the content of data qualitatively as opposed to quantitatively. Qualitatively here means that the analysis rules are followed in a step by step manner in order to achieve the right output. Content analysis is a purely descriptive method. It describes what is there, but may not reveal the underlying motives for the observed pattern ('what' but not 'why'). The early approach to content analysis was criticized because of its focus on basic quantitative elements. Therefore, qualitative content analysis has been used to analyze the text thoroughly.

Qualitative content analysis in media studies relies heavily on researcher 'readings' and interpretation of media texts. This intensive and time-consuming focus is one of the reasons that much qualitative content analysis has involved small samples of media content and been criticized by some researchers as unscientific and unreliable.

The present study employs qualitative content analysis believing that it allows the researcher to systematically analyze the latent content of the media content (the prime time news, 8:00PM, in this case) through the selection of units of analysis. According to Flick (2002:75), this "enables a distinction to be made between the objective facts of the situation and the interviewee's subjective definitions of the situation with a view of comparing them." This implies that content analysis would help the researcher to double-check the data obtained through qualitative content analysis and in-depth interview.

Generally, qualitative content analysis is important method to conduct a primary research and come up with facts to use as evidence. It can be useful technique for allowing us to discover and describe the focus of individual, group, institutional, or social attention (Weber, 1990 cited in Stelmer, 2001). Therefore, qualitative content analysis is a vital method in studying the focus of the media institution. This means that the method is important in assisting the present study find out the extent ETV is practicing journalism.

6.2 In-depth Interviews

The researcher employed in-depth interviews with editors and senior reporters found in the media institutions. Though the main tool of the study is qualitative content analysis, the researchers used in-depth interviews to corroborate the data gathered through the former tool. So that it assists the researcher to make a conclusion based on the data that the study would cause.

7. Sampling Method

For the media content sample, the study focuses on ETV's prime time news at 8:00 PM. The main reason the researcher focuses on news is because news is the big issue that separates journalism from public relations and it's the life of journalism; '...without news journalism would not exist' (Mwaffisi:1994). The researcher prefers prime time news believing most of the news presented in a day is repeated at this time and also the majority of news arrives at newsrooms in the afternoon. Also, this is the time most people come back to their home and watch the news.

The researcher believes that a sample of one or two month's prime time news of whatever issues can serve the purpose of the study. Accordingly, the study examined the first two weeks of each of the three months: December, 2012, January and February, 2013. This also has its own reasons.

Firstly, the researcher believes that ETV's news broadcast of any times can serve the purpose of the study. Secondly, in order to create variety, it is important to see news that was broadcast at different times.

Since the selected media institution broadcast in variety of languages, the study focuses on Amharic program. As Amharic is the working language of the country. ETV has been chosen for the study as it is the biggest media in the country.

8. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

8.1 Qualitative Content Analysis of Selected News Stories

Qualitative content analysis deals with analysis and interpretations of the themes of the categorized titles, tones, and with the analysis of news coverage. The identification of themes was conducted as Rice and Ezzy (1999:258) says through 'careful reading and re-reading of the data'. It is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis. Different researchers might implement content analysis differently.

Based on the framework of qualitative analytical procedures developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), Romanowski (2009) outlined the common strategies of qualitative content analysis as follows: (a) The researcher carefully examine the textual data and takes notes; (b) The researcher performs data reduction by selecting, focusing, and condensing the data in the way that could best answer the research questions; (c) The researcher organizes, arranges and displays the condensed data. Based on the display, the researcher identifies themes, patterns, connections, and omissions that could help answer the research questions. Further, quotations might be listed for supporting the themes and inter-connections among the themes. If necessary, categories could be added, deleted, and revised to maximize mutual exclusivity and exhaustiveness; and (d) The researcher revisits the data many times in order to verify, test, or confirm the themes and patterns identified.

Accordingly, dominant themes were developed from the sampled news stories of the prime time news (December, January, February i.e. the news stories taken from the first two weeks from each months). Thus, based on the gathered data, the researcher puts the news content under two big umbrellas: Social issues news and political news. The categories of social issues news include health, transportation, water and sanitation, education, agriculture, and industrial coverage. Whereas, corruption, democracy and good governance, speeches of different officials and organizations and Ethiopia's external relations news stories were categorized and analyzed under the political news umbrella. So, the central ideas of the news in relation with the categories were discussed. The tone of news signifies news which criticizes or supports government or neutral to anybody. The news coverage signifies how the media prioritize and cover specific issues or events as opposed to others. By and large, this approach is crucial in answering the major research question of the study- 'To what extent

ETV is practicing journalism?’ The analysis was done using the extracts taken from the sampled news stories and interviews concomitantly.

8.2 Themes of News Content

8.2.1 Social Issues News

Most ETV news of this category focuses on success stories. They deal with what the ruling party has done in every sector in the country. As informant 4 of the study said ‘ETV focuses on Development Journalism (DJ). However, the concept of DJ is misperceived by government.’ According to Hermant Shaw (1990:1035) development news should examine critically, evaluate and interpret the relevance of development plans, projects, problems and issues. It should indicate the disparities between plans and actual accomplishments. Based on this, the practice of DJ in ETV is in contrary with the argument of Shaw outlined above. Most of the news stories of different projects of social services deal with the final results not on the process of the projects. Some of the news was presented in the following ways.

A project of clean drinking water which benefits more than 100,000 refugees was inaugurated in Dolo Ado Refugee Camp, located in Somali region. It is also reported that the relief delivered by the Ethiopian government to the Somali refugees displaced by the internal troubled caused by insurgents of Alshabab, and it is also creates strong bond between the two countries’ people. (February 03, 2013)

Clean drinking water centers developed in more than birr 26 million have started delivery of service in East Wolega Zone as of last year. Hence, more than 200,000 people turned out to be beneficiary of clean drinking water. Like the explanation of the zone’s water and minerals office, in the current budget year, various activities also carried out to enhance the coverage of clean drinking water in the zone, in birr 30 million. (February 12, 2013)

The excerpts above reflect coverage of two government-sponsored projects and their inaugural ceremonies. They detail how the projects solved the problem of clean drinking water in certain regions. And yet the report didn’t give even the smallest glimpse of the problems project leaders encountered as the work was under way. Background information about the projects; the ups and downs that took place while the projects were in progress was not reported. However, the main intention of the news is to show as the government gave emphasis on society’s problem.

Journalists of the media cover only the positive aspects of the development activity that is taking place and leave aside the critical stories related to the projects. Scholars like Salter (2005) argues that what journalists are supposed to do are not only cover what happened, but also to show the progression of the event in question for their audiences. In line with this, the researcher asked the key informants whether or not they cover a critical story.

Informant 1 stated: we don’t cover it for the reason that the government believes as it is working for the public; construction of new roads, clean drinking water projects and others are really the service that the government is providing for its public. Conversely, we do not have the clout to inspect those things whether they are accomplished within the given time with appropriate utilization of the budget or maintaining their standards. What is more, we cannot cover the public complaints regarding the projects because we know that it is not permitted to give coverage for such critical issues.

Here, it is possible to understand that journalists are simply covering the constructive actions of the government and even they pass over critical things even if they come across due to lack of journalistic independence. They are acting as the mouth piece for the government. When journalists cover critical development news, legal and economic security of the journalists should be ensured. Otherwise the risk of a government-loyal development journalist emerges (Edeani 1993:131)-ultimately, this journalism can contribute to the stabilization of unjust power structures and become a servant of governments. This causes to occur what Herman Chomsky says 'media serve political ends' by mobilizing bias, patterning news choices, marginalizing dissent, by allowing 'the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public (1988:2).

On similar note, in ETV it is routinely mentioned that as the country is on rapid development stage from sub-Saharan African countries, but not many details are given about the process of the development. Here is one of the news stories that deal with this issue:

The ministry of finance and economy has announced that the execution of the two years growth and transformation plan was 10% in average. The minister also explained that the activities to be executed in the coming three years shall be a two digit growth. The economic growth has shown significant change as of 2003.

Hence, in the past nine consecutive years, the country has attained economic growth of 11%, like the deputy minister Dr. Abraham Tekest's explanation. Since the implementation of the 5 years GTP commenced, the execution of the growth plan for the past years has been 10% in average. The growth, the industrial sector 13.6% and the service rendering sector 11.1% as per the explanation of the deputy minister, the growth domestic product of Ethiopia has reached 7%, which is birr 37 billion. The amount of investment also has shown a rise of 34.6% in 2004 in comparison with 27.9 in 2003. Income per capita of citizens also has shown a rise of 513 US dollar in 2004 in comparison with 338 US dollar in 2003. (February 04, 2013)

The above selected news stories would imply that the country is on sustainable growth; as the growth is achieved in different sectors i.e. in agriculture, industry and service rendering sectors. It simply implies the government continuous effort in all sectors. From the text it is impossible to refer views other than the central idea of the text which worship the government role for the growth of different sectors. The text didn't incorporate views from different bodies only the government official view is reflected in the text. MaCnamara (1999:6) explains that PRs had its birth in the Press Agency Model, which focused on publicity (good or bad) from a very one-sided point of view. Scholars like Hatchen (1998:37) attaches Paramount importance to the diversity of views that are reflected through news. Conversely, most of the news stories of ETV present-ideas from one point of view where government officials dominate the media and news presented in the direction desired by the government. Similarly, the preferred meanings that are structured into news discourse are typically 'those that are functional for elites (Herman and Chomsky; 1988:23). So, most ETV development news was presented from one side in so far as it builds a good name for the government. The followings are news stories reflecting the issues outlined above.

Farmers of Elubabor turned out to be beneficiary from the spices and coffee they grow on their farm land. The farmers also explained that the support delivered by agriculture professionals has made them successful. (December 09, 2012)

The central statistic agency has announced that the inflation in the country has declined to 12.9% in comparison with the Hidar month 15.8%. According to the explanation of the agency, which is based on the country's 129 market centers, and to be announced on monthly basis, the inflation has witnessed a declination with 30% within one month only. It is believed that the figure indicates the government's effort to bring the inflation down to one digit. (January 10, 2013)

If one examines critically the two extracted news stories above, their central idea rests upon the crucial efforts of government in increasing the produce of farmers in agriculture and in decreasing the inflation rate in the country respectively. They appeared on the media because they build a support of the public for government. Such kind of coverage is given in almost in all sampled news stories.

It is also possible to take and see the theme of a sample of news that deals with health related issues. The news runs as follows:

In the past 10 years, Ethiopia has managed to decrease the infant death in the country in 47%. The health service installed at every level has played a vital role for the attained result. The death of infants who passed away before the age of 5 years has also declined in 47%. As per the official announcement of the UN, in the year 2000GC, 166 infants out of 1000 live born babies were exposed to death. Nevertheless, currently the number has declined to 77. The expansion and installation of health care institutions in every area has contributed a vital role. The result attained by the country regarding the declination of the number of infant death, the representative of UNICEF-Ethiopia Dr. Piter's explanation, it is a very swift progress when considered internationally. (February 06, 2013)

As the above news story shows, the coverage of the news is all about the decline of infant mortality in the country. It portrays the government attention to reducing the rate of infant mortality rate in Ethiopia, as the numbers dropped dramatically. The report also reveals as the improvement is recognized by international organizations like UN and UNICEF. However, the main intent of the news story is to show the government's activity in increasing the coverage of the health service that benefits the public. Giving coverage for such stories helps the ruling party to acknowledge itself in front of the public and other organizations found internationally. This reflects the practice of PRs in order to create and maintain favorable relations between organization and the public in various forms of media as Sandia and Simolin (2006) reflect.

Thus, though few news stories are extracted in this section, the majority of news reflects the same theme as discussed so far. The study by Terje Skjerdal (2009) on how development journalism is practiced in Ethiopian media institutions corroborates this finding. It revealed as the Ethiopian media institutions neglect critical stories, avoid oppositional voices and hide information from the public. Every story published either in print media or broadcast media is about the positive role of the government. It is tough to see a critical or investigative story which is designed to act as a watchdog over the government. This shows as journalists are there to serve the interest of the government against that of the large public. Therefore, it can be concluded that ETV largely focuses on development news and the theme for the majority of the news is centered to build the good images of the government and void of critical reporting in general.

8.2.2 Political News

In ETV, political news stories were presented in a manner that embellished the actions of the ruling government. The news stories were presented to exhibit the strength of the ruling party and its contribution in the development activity of the country. It seems that what Herman argues for a 'propaganda model' of journalistic production, to analyze the numerous and important cases where the mass media serve as instruments in campaigns of ideological mobilization (Herman and Chomsky 1988:175). Below is some of the news:

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn explained that Ethiopia is currently established on soiled foundation of peace, as well as the EPRDF government is a government of development, and the people of the country are also peace loving. In the aftermath of the passing away of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, some parties

have reflected suggestions that the development activities will come to a halt, a suggestion which failed to take the governing party's and the development governments' institutional strengths, as well as the diligence and peace loving people of Ethiopia into consideration. (December.02, 2012)

Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP) marks its 13th founding anniversary in Logia and Avira towns. Regional chiefs and party chairman took note that the public in the state are benefiting from fruits of development happening in the country. The party has taken massive activities in combating, progressing and improving the livelihood of pastoralists. (December 05, 2012)

In ETV, whatever the issue is, in one way or another the news can be related with the development and growth of the country. The following news stories illustrate this:

Ethiopia is elected to host the 2013 Africa and European Union parliaments' combination assembly. The speaker of house of people's representatives, Mr. Aba Dula Gemeda explained that Ethiopia was elected as a host country due to its significant role throughout Africa and other areas. 13 countries in the zone also delivered their support to Ethiopia's election. Like the speaker explained, the election was made in consideration of the current peace and security, as well as the development activity in the country. (January, 03, 2013)

Members of AEDM in Addis Ababa have announced that they strive to ensure and hasten the country's renaissance and to sustain the results of development activities in the country, through good governance. The 32th anniversary of AEDM was celebrated in Addis Ababa under the name of 'Operation Meles for Growth and Green Development'. As per the explanation of the ministry of trade attended the celebration, AEDM has executed a number of activities to ensure the benefit of the people. (December 01, 2012)

Mr. Ali Suleman, commissioner of the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, was elected as the advisory member of board for the anti-corruption commission of African Union. It is announced that the election of Mr. Ali is a proof that the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission is carrying out encouraging and producing activities, as well as it is an indicator that Ethiopia has a solid anti-corruption stand. (February 06, 2013)

One can discover the same theme for the texts above though the issues in question are different. The texts worship the development activity that is taking place in the country. The texts illustrate the ideology of ETV, which is pursuing Development Journalism. As one of the informants of the study revealed so far as the notion of development journalism is misinterpreted in the country, the main purpose of ETV is heralding the success of the country in different aspects by hiding critical stories that may hamper the country's image. It is the government that can benefit when the country is portrayed in positive way. Whatever the event is in ETV, what can be raised on the event is obvious because they all relate with the success of the country economically, politically and socially. Government uses events or occasions to bring to light the validity of its work so as to influence others. And the above texts reflect this notion.

In the following news stories, the speeches of different organizations and individuals were incorporated in a manner representative of the development activity taking place in Ethiopia.

World Bank announced that the growth attained by Ethiopia in the past nine successive years is a double fold in comparison with other sub-Saharan countries. The bank also announced that the growth enables more than 2.5 million citizens to break free from poverty. (December, 13, 2012)

The European Union member states ambassadors explained that the union appreciates the fast growth secured by Ethiopia in every sector. It is reported that service delivery of health care

centers situated in Benishangul Gumuz has shown progress from time to time. (December 13, 2012)

Japanese Professor Turtu Shih explained that Ethiopia is in the right trajectory of development. As per the explanation of the professor, Ethiopia is one of the African countries in the middle of better industrial growth, and country with the appropriate industrial development. (December, 11, 2012)

Like the news stories discussed so far, the above news stories which incorporate speeches of different bodies deal with the same core point as before though they came from different bodies. They all deal with the economic growth of the country. These show the news stories that were given coverage in ETV are those that deal only with the progress of the country. The researcher doesn't find news critical of government in this regard. So, it is possible to conclude that ETV doesn't give coverage for speeches or reports of international or individual that is critical to government. An informant of the study said 'BBC doesn't work to ruin its country's image, ETV too' (informant 5). As informants of the study, ETV doesn't give coverage for either internal or external sources that are critical to the national interest.

When we look at some news stories which deal with the constitution of the country, it is possible to discover its interior as of the subsequent demeanor.

The announcement is made that various opposition forces have entered in the city of Addis Ababa pursuant to the peace call made by the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to various insurgents and territories groups. An opposition/insurgent group namely AL-ATHAD has accepted the call of the Ethiopian government to peace and development, and commenced taking part in the development activities exerted in Somali region. The AL-ATHAD insurgent group has also accepted the peace process carried under Kenya's negotiator role, which was commenced by the great Ethiopian leader, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. The anti-constitution forces are not acceptable any more in Ogaden. They have a very limited support in the region. The Somali region, which is benefited from the system of the Federalism, has started to administer its affairs like other regions, hence, the anti-peace forces has joined the mainstream. (December, 02, 2012)

The above news story seems to suggest that the FDRE government is the peace loving and development-centered government and shows as the system of federalism is the fruitful system of governance. This builds good name for the ruling party. In line with the above context, the following sound bite by the Deputy Spoken Person of the House of People's Representatives followed by the news story broadcast on December 07, 2012 corroborate what has been said above.

The people of the country are becoming beneficiary in economic and political aspects due to the ratification of our constitution after steadfast process and its implementation has played a significant role for the overall positive direction of the country and the economic growth, which is astonishing to the whole world. Due to each nation and nationality was emancipated by the constitution, and each ethnic group has equivalent right and freedom, they carry out their education in schools in their own language, as well as in court of laws. Thus, the constitution is a source of pride and beneficiary to the people.

The head of Harreri region administration explained that the constitution is fundamental and base for the journey of the renaissance of the country. Like the explanation of the head of the region, Ethiopia has managed to attain successive economic growth as of the time it has started following the constitutional system. In the future, as per his explanation, it is important to ensure

the renaissance of Ethiopia through policies and strategies designed by the great leader Mr. Meles Zenawi. (February 11, 2013)

As can be deduced, every government officials rejoices in the ratification of the FDRE constitution. They all celebrate as the implementation of the current constitution in the country, apparently, have paved a way for national renaissance of the country and have given equal rights to all people of Ethiopia. Within the sampled news stories, the way most news stories were presented especially with regard to the constitution is to capture the attitude of the audiences; the researcher couldn't find any story that damages government's image and most of them were presented from the angle of the opportunity that the constitution created for people of the country. So, the political theme revealed that most news stories of this category were centered on presenting government in most positive way.

8.2.3 News coverage

The foundation of journalism is the desire to serve the general public interest and to act as a check and balance on society and government. As communication policy scholar Robert Horwith (2005) has written, "The public interest in broadcasting was translated to mean the presentation of diverse viewpoints-a general balance of programming-and equitable treatment of political candidates". If we take a look at some selected news stories, the majority of the reporting in question deals with government interest news because it is framed in the way that lauds the actions of the government. Here is one of the selected news stories.

The Ministry of Agriculture announced that the model farmers in all areas have increased their produce through using fertilizers such as Urea, Dap and Potassium on their farm. (February, 12, 2013)

As can be inferred from the above excerpt, the model farmers increased their produce due to the government support paid to agriculture sector. The aim of the bulletin is to show the government role in increasing the production output of farmers. So, this builds the government's good image in front of the audiences.

The Silte Zone trade and industry department explained that it has rendering training for more than 400 small and micro finance enterprises. It is also delivering various enhancement trainings. It is believed that the training could tackle the problem of joblessness in the region as well as to strengthen the enterprises. (January 14, 2013)

Southern Gondar farmers who sow in the method of line sowing explained that they have achieved the produce of more than 40 quintal per hectare. They explained that the technology has helped them to increase their produce in double fold. (February 07, 2013)

These extracts aptly demonstrate the role of government in decreasing the problem of joblessness and increasing the output of farmers by equipping them with modern technology. So, the extracts are more beneficial for government rather than for the public's. They build a good name for government. Moloney (2000:65) argues that PRs is often used to support the government interest at the expense of other interests. The excerpts given above also reveal the interest of the government because it has a little to do or to serve the interest of the public. With regard to this problem, the researcher asked the informants 'to which issue (public/government) do ETV's media professionals give priority in their coverage? The informants responded as follows:

Informant 4: Exceptional coverage is given for government related issues. There is a rationale for this, Most of the time we collect 'Tikoma' (lead) from different sources. The *Tikoma(lead)* is based on government plans. There is an extraordinary case in which we collect news based on

our own plans because we are not permitted to do so. This hinders us to leave the public's interest; news stories which deal with different problems of society will not be discovered. This doesn't mean that ETV doesn't give treatment on public related issues, but it is given less focus when we weigh against the government.

This argument substantiates the themes discussed within the extracts above. The main reason why most of ETV's news stories resemble public relations work is that reporters depend on events that the government prepares. This means that ETV is serving the governments' interest at the expense of the public. Journalists have the responsibility to serve the public's best interest. It is rare to see stories critical of the events. The majority of the reporting at ETV focuses on copying the speeches of government officials without critically analyzing them. Thus, it is difficult to see in ETV when journalists produce news based on their professional judgment and creativity. This displays the manner in which media cover the speeches of government officials in order to manipulate public attention. Bernays (1955) provided a seminal view of public relations, defining it as "the attempt, by information, persuasion and adjustment, to engineer public support for an activity". The journalist is considered to be the independent source of information, and it is believed that the information provided by the journalist is free of any manipulation, exaggeration, and nepotism. The following news story shows how reporters at ETV transcribe the speech of government officials without critical analysis.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn has announced that most of vast projects in the country are executed in line with the set forth plan. As per the explanation of the prime ministers, Ethiopia is in the right trajectory of growth. The country's economy is also expected to show a rise of more than 11% in the current budget year, like the prime minister explanation. He is also explained that it is obvious that as the country is known in agricultural sector, our produce of agriculture is increasing from time to time. Farmers training centers were established and various efforts were made to enable the farmers. With regard to the industrial sector, various industrial zones were established. (January 01, 2013)

The above text serves as evidence that ETV's reporters focus their full attention on the speeches of government officials. Viewers are hard-pressed to see a sentence critically analyzing the problems of the country. All of the coverage deals with what government is doing and has done to improve the country. ETV's reporters focus on government speech and the achievement of Ethiopia's ruling party. It is thus rare to see diversified coverage in ETV's news programming because most of the news stories depend up on the government's agenda. In line with this view, the researcher asked whether ETV's coverage reflects attention to the public interest.

Informant 3: Substantiates what is said above in the following manner: In ETV it is not the public that can be seen; it is the government officials that speak and seen on media most frequently. To me, I don't think that ETV is giving a chance for the public to transmit their voices in the way it should be. It is the government plan that the station is reflecting. This means, to me, a kind of propaganda. *Justify why ETV reflects government plans/interests at the expense of the other.* The informant said: we are under pressure of our bosses; so we don't have the power to use the journalistic independence.

From the above excerpt, it is again apparent that reporters from ETV focus on the speech and actions of government officials because of the institutional pressure weighed upon them. There is a 'systematic and highly political dichotomization in news coverage that is based on serviceability to important domestic power interests' (Herman and Chomsky, 1988:35).

Similarly, most news coverage of ETV aligns with the interests of the government. Danny (2000), proffers that the job of journalism is to provide service for the larger publics by uncovering truth that otherwise hidden. From here it can be deduced that journalists are a vital source of information for society. The service to the

public involves revealing necessary information of which average citizens may not be aware. Some news stories that appeared in ETV served little value to the public. Rather, they lauded the achievements of government for the purpose of constructing a positive image. The following news broadcast on January 02, 2013 deals with this issue.

It is announced that the utilization of technological inputs for farmers has increased in 2005 in comparison with the year 2004. Pursuant to the forecast the national statistical agency, the produce secured in the year 2004 was 218 million quintal. As per the current year research of the national statistical agency, it has forecasted 229 million quintal produce will be attained. According to the announcement made by the ministry of agriculture, the produce is increased due to the agricultural inputs have progressed. The other reason for the increase of the produce is wide utilization of technologies and new methods of implementation.

Thus, according to the researcher, the aim of the above text is to show the sustainable effort of the government to increase the production output of farmers by providing agricultural inputs. It is thus obvious why the news is broadcast in such a manner. Based on the text, it is due to the fact that the inputs have increased which have increased farmers produce. This has something to do with government's image. Riaz (2008) contends that the increase in the news coverage is thought to bring about an increase in the salience of particular issues or events. Journalists are required to "Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts" (Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance 2012). One can from the excerpt above, deduce that ETV values government interest news stories above all other types of news. It covers issues of the government. The media are there to serve the government at the expense of the interest of the large public. As the media products showed and confirmed by most informants of the study, journalism practice of ETV seems PRs of the government. It is possible to say that most stories of the media product build the image of the government. From this point of view, it is possible for somebody to bring to a close this media institution as PRs organization. This is where the media role in building democracy and in reflecting diversified views would stop working.

8.2.4 Tone of the News

McCombs (2000) argued that the content of mass media messages including the tone of the messages influence the pictures of the world in our minds. The news coverage of ETV lacks critical reporting. Though there are hardly negative stories in the media's news coverage, they deal with how the government is playing its own role to alleviate the problems or how the government solved the problem. Besides, the news stories are presented as the problems occurred due to other bodies not due to the negligence of the government. The news stories excerpted below justify this claim:

The Gedo Bako Nekemt road construction project's delay has created serious and negative influences on their day to day activity, as per the explanation of the dwellers of the area and road users. The Ethiopian roads authority also explained that the problem is created by the contractor, which is in charge of the construction of the road. According to the explanation of the authority, possible effort will be made to finalize the construction of the road. (January, 09, 2013)

As can be seen from the extracted text above, though it deals with the problem residents of the area are facing, the blame is placed on an entity other than the government. The passage displays how ETV provides very scant coverage for potentially critical stories. It is the way it not negatively affects the government.

From the sampled news stories, almost all of the news deals with positive actions of the government. The news celebrates and appreciates the progress and development in the country in different sectors. What the researcher observed in the news coverage of ETV is that the network prefers to cover the problems of society, whether they involve scarce access to clean drinking water or transportation-related issues, after the problem is solved by government. There is no evidence of the network detailing the complaints of society before the project had been started.

The following news story further illustrates this problem:

The administration of Hosana town has announced that different investors with capital of birr 1.5 billion have contributed significant role to the town's growth. The dwellers of the town also explained that as the project of clean drinking water commenced its service, the problem of drinking water is tackled. According to their explanation, they used to get clean drinking water once in 3 days. Nonetheless, the project carried out in birr 120 million has sorted out the problem of drinking water. The lack of drinking water also discouraged the investors to invest in the town previously. As the explanation of the Hosana municipality, the completion of the project will sort out the problems once and for all. The current investment activity also will be improved. (December, 09, 2012)

It is possible to understand from the above news story that the government solved the problem that the area residents encountered. Maybe it hasn't been given any coverage about this problem before the problem overcame. From this excerpt, it is easy to conclude that ETV as a media network follows and reports on governmental progress rather than revealing the problems Ethiopians face. Such kind of coverage is not in the interest of the society. The public does not benefit if reports of such issues are filed after the problem is solved. This type of coverage benefits the government in molding the attitudes of society members by displaying positive actions of the government in media. The mass media are instruments of power that mobilize support for the special interests dominating state and private activity (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: Xi). PR academics similarly claim (Bernays and Goldman and others) that PR has served as a type of manipulative communication in the vast majority of its practice.

One can thus conclude that ETV is providing coverage for the stories of most positive tone which vaguely resemble development journalism in their content. This refers to the absence of critical reporting, which may have affected the attitudes of people to government in ETV. This calls to question whether ETV is really practicing journalism. So, government is using the media as a means to control and shape the public's attitude for the purpose of building good name.

The researcher questioned the informants of the study on how they cover critical stories in their news reporting. Their comments are displayed below:

Informant 1: in the first place, to do a critical reporting you need to have journalistic independence. And when follows you need to select news and source of the news by yourself. However, in ETV both news and its sources are selected by our bosses who are parts of the government. The source we contact is also parts of the government. So, there is no way in ETV to do critical reporting. Sometimes when you bring critical news, they can edit it the way they want it.

Informant 2: though it is rare, we cover critical reporting, but neither in-depth nor the way the name of government officials are negatively raised.

The arguments offered by the informants reflect the issues plaguing the stories discussed so far. In ETV though, sometimes critical reporting is given coverage, but they are not the way the government name is mentioned

negatively. This shows as the media is working or giving coverage for news story which doesn't affect any government officials. This means ETV is serving the interest of the government rather than focusing on the problem of the society. It is clear to infer also that there are external pressures on journalists not to engage on investigative reporting.

Generally, the findings reveal that ETV gives more coverage from the government interest's news stories. As a result most portraits of ETV are deal with positive tone which is concerned with success and development stories. In contrary, the investigative responsibility of media is disregarded in ETV.

9. FINDINGS

The majority of ETV's news content, whether it was social or political news, was presented within the aim of lauding the government actions in front of the public. The news was presented in the way it served the government. The themes that emerged from the data mostly centered on quoting government as development government and celebrating its actions.

In the case of news coverage, ETV gave priority for government issues. This means that ETV served the interest of the government at the expense of the public. Most of the news was presented from the government point of view. Journalists directly quoted government officials posted at different levels and presented it in the media. It was too rare that news of public interest was given coverage. The voices of ordinary people were also absent in ETV.

It was also found out that almost all of the tone of ETV news about government was positive. It was rare to find news stories that were critical of the government. Even if the news was critical, it was showed from the angle of the government's effort made to solve the problem as there were pressures on the media professionals from their bosses.

10. CONCLUSION

Critical reporting on government which reveals the wrong doing of the government was neglected in ETV. Rather it was used to manipulate and shape public attitude. Herman and Chomsky (2002) state, through the structure of ownership, and power and pressures on news organizations, business and government elites are able to ensure that certain views prevail and news become a means for the ruling to control ideas in society to produce its pre-eminence. This notion was reflected in the finding of the study. The media professionals were acting as the mouth piece of the government to make laudable the voice of government officials as there were pressures on them from their bosses. The media acted to shape the public attitudes by presenting the views of the government elites. Moreover, the contents of ETV news reflected that development news was given above all a special attention over other issues. The news was presented in the way it brings forth government in most positive light.

REFERENCES

- Associated Press (2000). 'Poll: Four in 10 US Journalists Say They've Softened Tone', *News Report Circulated on Wire Service*, 5 January 2000.
- Bernays, E.L (1955). *The Engineering of Consent*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Edeani, DO. (1993). *Role of Development Journalism in Nigeria's Development*, *Gazette*, Vol. 52, No.2.

- Flick, U. (2002). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Sage publications Ltd.
- Gans, J. H. (2004). *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek; and Time*. Evanston Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Gizachew, D. (2006). *A Study of Source Consideration and News Selection in Ethiopian Television*. Addis Ababa University: Unpublished MA thesis.
- Golding, P. and Elliot, P. (1979). "Making the News." In Tumber, H. (Ed.). *News: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hatchen, W.A. (1998). *The Troubles of Journalism: A critical look at what's rights and wrong the press*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Koch, T. (1990). *The News as Myth: Fact and Context in Journalism*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- MacDougall, C. (1968). *Interpretative Reporting*. New York: Macmillan.
- McManus, J. (1994). *Market Driven Journalism: The News Media and Power in Australia*. Melbourne, Australia.
- Macnamara, J. (1999). Research in Public Relations: A review of the use of evaluation and formative research', *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2, University of Canberra, 107-133.
- Moloney, K. (2000). *Rethinking Public Relations: PR, Propaganda and Democracy*, Routledge: New York.
- Mwaffisi, S. (1994). "Ethical Issues in News Selection and Processing". In Kasuma, F. (Ed.) *Journalism Ethics in Africa*. Nairobi: African Council for Communication Education.
- Rice and Ezzy. (1999). *Qualitative Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Romanowski, M. (2009). *What You Don't Know Can Hurt You: Textbook omissions and 9/11*. Clearing House, 82, 290-296.
- Salter, L. (2005). 'The Communication Structures of Journalism and Public Relations' in *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism* 6(1), February, 90-106.
- Schudson, M. (1996). *The Sociology of News Production Revisited*. In James Curran and Miles, M., and Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. California: Sage.
- Skjerdal, T. S. (2009). Between Journalism 'Universals' and Cultural Particulars: Challenges Facing the Development of a Journalism Programme in an East African Context', *Journal of African Media Studies* 1: 1, P. 23-34.
- Stelmer, S. (2001). "Overview of Content Analysis." Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecord.org/content.asp?contentID=10634>; accessed on April 12, 2012.