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The Political Reform and the Amharic Biweekly *Reporter*: The Editorial Contents of the *Reporter* Newspaper in Ethiopia from 2017 to 2019

Abstract

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

Keywords: agenda, frame, editorial, reporter newspaper

1. Introduction

This research explores the print media agenda trends in Ethiopia, following a new political reform in 2018. The research chose The Reporter newspaper purposely as it has been the only few sustained private newspapers for long time in Ethiopia. The reform date was taken as a frame of reference to check whether reporting style, agenda, tone, and source varies.

1.1. Background

Ethiopia is the second populous country in Africa. The country has gone through a number of dictator regimes. The current ruling party took the power for 27 years and its name is Ethiopian People Republic Democratic Front (EPRDF). In 1991, the press law was pro-

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claimed, and a number of private presses flooded in the country; however, following 2005 election, except few, almost all of them were intimidated and closed. Among few private presses which were not closed is the Reporter newspaper.

In Ethiopia, Article 29 of the constitution, which was adopted verbatim from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), has been faithfully implemented. The article states everyone has the right to hold opinions without intrusion and to freedom of expression without any interference. It goes onto say that this right shall include freedom to receive, seek and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in print or in writing, in the form of art, or through any media of his/her choice. It also stipulates that freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is guaranteed and sets out the specific elements it constitutes. In addition, it offers that any citizen who violates any legal limitations on the exercise of these rights may be held responsible under the law. Moreover, Ethiopia is a signatory to other international instruments asserting the fundamental importance of freedom of expression including, the UDHR, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, the Windhoek Declaration, the African Charter on Broadcasting and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) program. These instruments would also have gone a long way to amplifying the constitution's protection of press freedom if they had seen the light of day. There still lie testing challenges ahead.

Though the press has a 120-year history in Ethiopia, the private press began full-fledged operations just 21 years ago. As a promising profession, it is affected with a raft of internal and external problems. A significant chunk of the private press is devoid of a code of conduct and editorial policy; it also suffers from chronic organizational weaknesses and the propensity to spurn neutrality and display political activism. The pathetic state of the various journalists' associations and the blatant factionalism characterizing the private press also serve to demonstrate this point. The problem is compounded by the government's reluctance to provide incentives for and overt animosity towards the private press. This was evidenced by Ethiopia's designation as the fifth worst jailer of journalists in the world and its enactment of a draconian mass media law. The testing challenges that attended the founding of the press council have left a scar on the right to organize the press. Although the media council was officially established after many trials and misfortunes in September 2016 with 19 media institutions and journalists' associations, its failure to be registered to date on account of the non-existence of an allowing entity has troupe a cloud over its future. No solution has been found to the problem in spite of bringing the matter to the attention of several government organizations.

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

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

1.2. Statement of the problem

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

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

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

A more recent study on the private print media in Ethiopia arrived at a pessimistic conclusion, questioning their role and forming uncertainty on their capacity in helping the transition to democracy, describing them as constitutionally motivated (Skjerdal, & Hallelijah, 2009). Viewing them as partisans of the opposition, the Ethiopian government responded to

the deeds of the private press in different terms ranging from denying access to government held information to imprisonment of journalists and owners (Skjerdal, & Hailelujah, 2009).

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

1.3. Objectives

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

1.4. Research questions

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

2. Theoretical framework

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

2.1. Conceptual Overview of Agenda setting theory

Historically, agenda-setting theory has contributed to the resurgence of moderate effects of the media after the era of limited media effects claimed by Lazarsfeld and his colleagues (1944) and Klapper (1960). Indeed, McCombs and Shaw's (1972) findings of the transfer of salience from the media agenda to the public agenda stimulated scholars to re-evaluate their thinking about the relationship of the media and the public. Agenda-setting theory set its place with this theoretical and methodological development and its multi-faceted applicability in various fields such as politics, business, and culture. If a successful theory is judged by its

potentials in generating new inquiries and venues of research (Conant, 1951), agenda setting clearly is one of the few in communication that has passed the muster of such tests. As McCombs and Shaw (1993) opined more than two decades ago, agenda setting had accumulated a healthy share of its literature, integrated other theories in its inquires, and developed a number of subfields along its historical growth.

Most agenda-setting research still tends to focus on newspapers and TV rather than other media. However, the prevalence of new media such as the Internet and social media calls for more attention from future researchers to examine these new media channels. In particular, considering that the Internet and social media are horizontal media which provide different kinds of information to different target audiences, additional work on agenda setting remains to be done in order to further study individual differences in agenda-setting effects. Consistent with McCombs' (2004, 2005) prediction that agenda-setting theory would expand to new contexts, the findings suggest that agenda-setting research has been conducted in many different domains.

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

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

The basic intention of agenda-setting theory can be stated broadly as elements that are prominent on the media agenda over time frequently converted prominent on the public agenda. The discussion of attribute agenda-setting explicitly introduced the conceptual language of objects and attributes that can be operationalized in many ways other than public issues.

There are several agendas in present-day society. Recently, researchers have practiced the central idea of agenda-setting theory, the transfer of salience from one agenda to another, to a wide multiplicity of new arenas as miscellaneous as professional sports (Fortunato, 2001) and classroom teaching (Díaz, 2004). One rapidly escalating area is the business news agenda and its impact on corporate reputations and economic outcomes ranging from profits to stock prices (McCombs, 2004). The internet is a major research frontier not only the traditional but also new domains of agenda-setting. For some observers, the obtainability of many channels and the opportunity for users to seek their own personal agendas challenges a basic tenet of agenda-setting which the media tend to share the same set of news priorities. Thus, the argument goes to the power of the mass media to set the public agenda may disappear. The evidence currently shows that courtesy to news on the web tends to be more highly con-

centrated than in the print world though this research has been continued to map the evolving agendas in the print media environment.

2.2. Framing theory

Framing is forming information in a very definite light to sway what people think, believe, or do. Its accustomed transfer a difficulty could be a priority to whom or what may be to blame for it, and what should be done about it (Iyengar, 1996). Framing is employed to speak in a very big selection of channels that include conversation, media reports and communal debate. They are accustomed to convey persuasive messages; as an example, marketing professionals and researchers have long employed and studied approaches to communicating in media to convince others (Kotler & Keller, 2015). Frames are expected to influence judgments about complex issues to an individual's prevailing ways of organizing, considering, and interpreting the sphere (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2009). Much of the research on framing thus far has involved experiments comparing equivalent messages that convey either gains or losses (gain/loss framing) related to an action while Others compare the results on audiences with different emphases which call it emphasis framing.

Emphasis frames are rendered as interpretive story lines that communicate what's at stake in a very complex policy debate and why the problem matters. The story positions influence decisions by posing different trains of thought. Each of which emphasizes one dimension of a posh issue over another. A customary type of research in emphasis framing compares episodic and thematic framing: information is cast either in terms of specific personalized stories (episodes) or more broadly (themes). Like gain/loss framing, however, evidence for the effectiveness of either approach in altering attitudes is mixed. Mixed are findings on framing complex related problems like obesity or temperature change in terms of personalized stories as a persuasive strategy for encouraging behaviors or building support for policy actions. Framing as an idea has become too broad and overlaps a disproportionate amount of with other effects of the media on people's decisions about the problems and ways of thinking that are relevant to them (Cacciatore et al., 2016).

The extent of issues coverage in the news is the principle by which the general public assesses the performance and credibility of agency, corporation, or scientific organization (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Nisbet & Feldman, 2011). Political leaders and organizations recognize and antedate these effects. Consequently, when an occurrence raises on the general news agenda and thereby becomes an object of public concern, political actors are likely to require some type of action to deal with it. This action could also be in loving little or no expert advice on the topic given. The action on contentious issues in society often is driven by values, beliefs, and other considerations. Thus, research on the agenda-setting effect of the media has repeatedly provided evidence that the problems portrayed within the media shape the problem priorities of the general public. The results of such agenda setting are often both positive and negative.

Framing has emerged together with the foremost popular areas of research for scholars in communication. The ambiguity of the concept begins with a insufficiency of consistency how the concept is defined or how these definitions connect with the descriptive models basic the idea (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

The communication literature is extensive with different conceptualizations of frames and framing. Druckman (2001) listed no fewer than seven definitions of the concept. These range

from frames as principles of organization (Goffman, 1974) to frames as principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation (Gitlin, 1980). Sweetser and Fauconnier (1996) defined frames as organized deliberations of the way aspects of the world function whereas (Capella & Jamieson 1997) offered a definition more directly tied to journalism, arguing that framing is the manner in which a story is produced.

The implications of these varied definitions are twofold (Cacciatori, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016). These scholars explain, first, there is considerable disagreement over what exactly constitutes framing. This is perhaps most readily outward in the different operationalization of the concept, particularly between equivalence framing and emphasis framing. The former is a form of framing that involves manipulating the presentation of logically equivalent information, and the later involves manipulating the content of a communication (Scheufele & Iyengar 2016). Second, framing overlaps with a number of other conceptual models, including priming, agenda-setting and persuasion, and related concepts such as schemas and scripts. This conceptual overlap has left scholars with an inadequate thoughtful of the framing notion both in terms of its theoretical boundaries and methods of operationalization.

Scholars' abandon the general framing label altogether and rely on (Cacciatori, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016) more specific terminology when discussing their work and the media effects models underlying it. They argue that scholars must do a much better job of distinguishing between different types of framing, most notably emphasis and equivalence framing. Some of the frames are field specific.

For instance, psychology-rooted framing refers to variations in how a given piece of information is presented to audiences, rather than differences in what is being communicated. The sociological beginnings of framing can best be traced back to (Goffman, 1974) and, later, to (Gamson, 1992). Compelled in part by concerns about the ecological validity of equivalence-based framing work, the sociological tradition views framing as a means of understanding how people construct meaning and make sense of the everyday world (Ferree et al., 2002). Goffman (1974) described framing as a method by which persons put on interpretive schemas to both classify and interpret the information that they encounter in their day-to-day lives, whereas (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987) defined frames as a central organizing idea or story line that gives aiming to an unfolding strip of events.

Unlike the equivalence-based delineation of framing, the sociologically rooted definition moves framing outside of the presentation of reasonably equivalent information into territory where the choice of one set of realities or arguments over another are often supposed a frame. As a result, framing definition in the sociological tradition, with studies often manipulating what an audience receives rather than how equivalent information is presented. This involves emphasizing one set of considerations over another; this sociologically oriented approach to framing has been labeled emphasis framing. This sociological tradition helped galvanize framing work by expanding the scope of studies that would fall into the framing label. This included, as an example , a growth of emphasis framing studies in communication that specialize in thematic framing, which involves placing a problem during a general context, and episodic framing, which treats an issue more exceptionally and without the context of its thematic-based counterpart (Iyengar, 2005).

Disagreements have emerged over the vividness of framing as compared to other related communication theories. Framing has been said to overlap with or be subsumed by theories like priming and agenda-setting (McCombs, 2004). The majority of the overlap concerning these different communication theories has to do with issues of applicability and accessibil-

ity. Entman's (1993) definition of framing is made around ideas of choice and salience, but it is frequently used incorrectly to subsume other media effects models under the framing label. Frames focus on some bits of data about an item that's the topic of a communication, (Entman, 1993).

Entman's meaning of framing is as a product of accessibility as disparate to applicability, and his definition is essentially aligned with several other salience-based definitions within the literature. For instance, (Gitlin, 1980) argued that frames are a way of presentation whereby certain essentials of the communicated text are highlighted or omitted by the communicator. These definitions, also as others overlooked here, suggest that framing operates by making some aspect of a drag or communication more accessible, visible, or salient to an audience.

Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar (2016) argued that agenda-setting and priming are also based on models featuring accessibility as a central construct. Agenda-setting refers to the thought that media tell people what to believe supported issues being covered more habitually or more prominently. Therefore, the media transfer salience to audiences. In some ways priming are often thought of as an extension of the agenda-setting process (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). The concept of spreading activation explains a process whereby media coverage serves to increase the salience of an issue in a person's mind, resulting in that issue being more likely to serve as a standard by which related issues are evaluated (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Priming is the process of activating a particular construct in memory resulting in that construct becoming more obtainable and powerful in succeeding thinking (Ratcliff & McKoon, 1988).

Price, Tewksbury, and Powers (1997), as well as Scheufele (2000) contend that agenda-setting and priming involve a different set of cognitive processes than those required by framing. Although agenda-setting and priming are said to rely on the notion of attitude accessibility, framing is rooted in Gestalt psychology and attribution theory, which explored the tendency among people to detect patterns in pieces of information that were consistent with preexisting rational schemas (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016). Hence, framing operates kept applicability effects that appeal particular interpretive schemas which determine how information is processed (Scheufele, 2000).

The accessibility–applicability distinction is crucial to (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016) understand of framing effects on a minimum of three fronts. First, as noted, Entman's, 1993 definition of framing played an important role in galvanizing framing work in communication. Unfortunately, this salience-based definition of framing is just too loose to possess practical value as it makes possible to argue that any number of differences in communication constitute a difference in framing. First, Entman's framing measure and far from his own empirical work on the subject (Entman, 1991) overlap with early studies in agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which makes it difficult to isolate framing effects from those supported agenda-setting.

Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar (2016) argue that emphasis-based studies push framing into a more general category of persuasion where any observed effects may be the result of differences in the convincing power or quality of a given message, rather than differences in the way the similar information is presented.

The accessibility–applicability distinction is important for (Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar, 2016) understanding of the mechanisms behind framing, priming, and agenda-setting. One can assume that accessibility effects (priming and agenda-setting) will operate, at least to some degree, among all members of a population (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016).

The same cannot be said about applicability effects as an audience member's preexisting cognitive schema or knowledge structures will determine the degree to which a frame will resonate. The presence of a cognitive schema that matches the frame should produce a framing effect, whereas a mismatch between frame and schema should fail to supply such an impact. It has been argued that disentangling the various mechanisms underlying priming, agenda-setting, and framing are critical for the trajectory of research in each of those different areas (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

The sociologically based definition both threaten to form framing as a laid off communication concept and pushes the sector of communications toward an obsolete and possibly unwarranted model of media affects that subsumes most effects under a broad persuasive framing authority (McQuail, 2005). This example has been built on the belief that mass media has potentially strong effects on attitudes and information processing but any effects was contingent on a host of individual-level characteristics (McQuail, 2005). As a result, this loose definition of framing has undoubtedly contributed to creating framing effects appear the maximum amount more widespread and powerful than they really are. After half a century of framing research, one would expect these studies to operate at least in part deductively and discover frames that previous research has shown to resonate well with culturally shared schemas among audiences. Specifically in the communication discipline, however, there seems to be little uniformity across studies in the types of content or framing categories identified. Instead, many studies still inductively discover issue-specific content categories with little conceptual concern for how these content categories would influence audiences within framing effects model.

Framing research be both terminologically and conceptually refocused around equivalence-based definitions that are more directly tied to alterations in the presentation of information rather than the credible value of that information, (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016). Although this narrows the scope of framing work by excluding emphasis-based manipulations, it should not be read as an effort to suppress framing research. To the contrary, Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar (2016) interpret this as an opportunity to expand and produce equivalence frames. These might include movement away from text-based framing operations and movement toward frames based on nonverbal (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016).

Although framing studies have exploded in recent years, the process behind the phenomenon remains a contentious issue, and one that only a limited amount of research exists. The best way to understand framing is to explicate the mechanisms behind the phenomenon as well as related phenomena such as priming and agenda-setting, (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016).

Moreover, the most successful way of pursuing these ends is paying more attention to the historical and theoretical foundations of these concepts. According to Price et al. (1997) framing effect is one during which salient features of a message to its organization, selection of content extract particular thoughts valid, leading to their activation and use in evaluations. Their view suggests that the act of reading a news article will determine which stored knowledge structure becomes active. In turn, the activated knowledge structure was used to interpret the news article. In this respect, choices made by journalists and editors can play a task in determining the cognitive schema that a reader will apply to a news article.

One of the operational problems related to framing and research, however, is that it can often prove difficult to isolate framing effects from agenda-setting and priming effects. This is because issues tend to be framed during a consistent manner as they emerge on the gener-

al public agenda (Downs, 1972). This is in part due to the journalistic norms associated with the issue-attention cycle, but also because journalists, just like everyone else, learn about issues in large.

The most promising model for distinguishing the mechanisms of priming, framing, and agenda-setting, scholars should devise research to test the ideas put forth in (Price & Tewksbury's, 1997) knowledge activation model, explicitly those regarding the mechanisms underlying framing, agenda-setting, and priming. For this research framing and agenda setting are taken as a theoretical frame work.

Media effects research ought to abandon the general term framing as a catch-all phrase for a number of distinct media effects models and substitute it with the more precise terminological distinction between equivalence and emphasis framing, (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016). They add that this is not only help resolve a number of the terminological confusion that has surrounded framing research for many years (Scheufele, 1999) but also benefit clarify the very distinct mechanisms that underlie both models. As (Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar, 2016) begin to explore the new paradigm of preference-based effects models, equivalence framing could also be crucial in helping to know strong media effects. However, emphasis frames will be increasingly faced with the challenge of distinguishing its understanding of framing effects from other persuasive media effects mechanisms in these new communication environments.

Though framing has diverse meanings having field rooted backgrounds and strong and weak effects, this study proposed five deductive frames. These are attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic consequences, human interest and morality frames.

Attribution of responsibility frame shows the problem or issue focusing on who caused a situation or who must solve it. The conflict frame presents the issue from the perspective of polarization and battle of individuals or social groups sometimes using a language of war or games and competitions (Patterson, 1994; D'Haenens & De Lange, 2001). The human interest frame is used to bring the issue or problem closer to any type of receiver as the human emotion captivates everyone. The issue is personalized, showing the human side, and can reach dramatization (D'Haenens & De Lange, 2001). The economic consequences frame stresses the economic effect that a certain issue may have on citizens in general or on any particular group might seem irrelevant (D'Haenens & Lange, 2001). The morality frame gives reputation to the religious or moral implications of an issue or indicates a group or an individual should behave.

3. Research design and methodology

3.1. Research design

The study was based on a quantitative content analysis design. Content analysis is a research technique for the systematic, objective, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Berelson, 1952). One of the most frequent uses of the content analysis is to study the changing trends in the theoretical content and methodological approaches by content analyzing the journal articles of the discipline (Loy, 1979). It shows the variety of messages used to draw inferences about the source, content of the message etc. Therefore, using content analysis as a quantitative method used to analysis the following variables in the Reporter Newspaper editorials before and after the new reform in Ethiopia.

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

3.2. Samples, and Sampling Technique

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

Related to sample size, Kothari (2004) defines sample size as the number of subjects or items selected from a researcher's target population in order that it represents the target population. Sample size is a set of units drawn from a population, so an estimation of the characteristics the population can be made. The total samples were 99 (57 of them were before the reform and 42 of them were after the reform) articles.

3.3. Data gathering instruments

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

3.4. Inter-coder reliability

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

3.5. Data analysis procedures

The coded collected data screened and filled into the SPSS Version 20 software. After filling the variables and data into the software, descriptive Statistics such as frequency, percentage and Chi-square test were computed. Frequencies and percentages were used to show the comparison between two periods within the investigated variables. The Chi-square test was used to see whether the two independent variables have relationship with date of publication

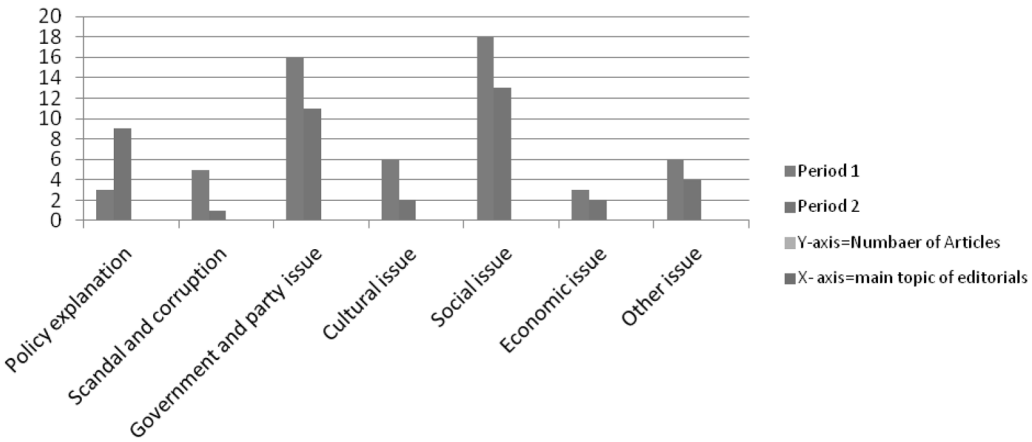
or not. Finally, the out puts were displayed into tables, which were analyzed by using words under each table.

4. Findings

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

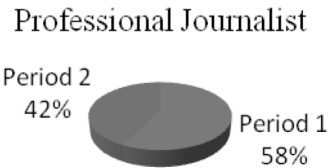
Figure 1. The main topic of the editorial.

To examine the statistical significance of changes in the main topic, percentage and frequencies were used. The results across the two time periods show that government and par-



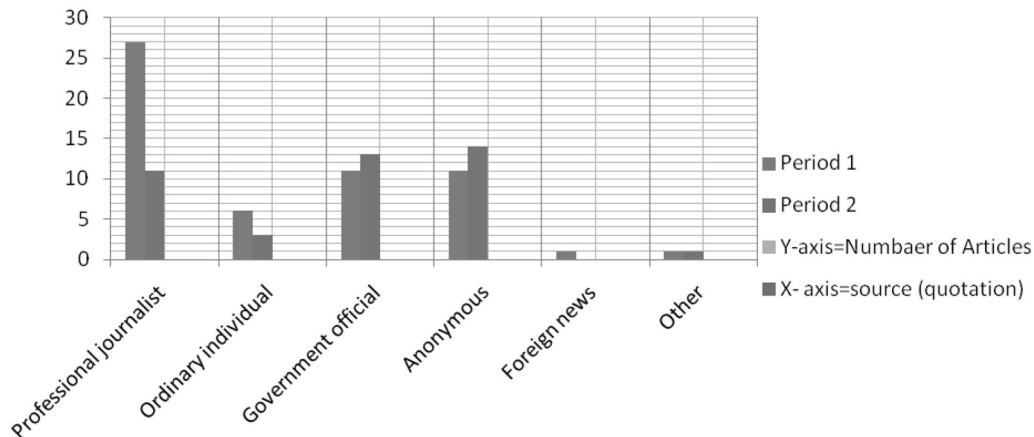
ty issues appear more frequently in Period 2(3(25%), 9(75%)) than in Period 1. In contrast, editorials covered more societal issues in period 1(18(58.1%)) than period 2 (13(41.9%)). Editorials cover less scandal and corruption in period 1 (1(16.7%)) than in period 2 (5(83.3%)). Government and party issues were frequently covered in period 1(16(59.3%)) than period 2(11(40.7%)). Editorials covered cultural issues more in period 1(6(75%)) than period 2(2(25%)). Economic issues appeared less frequently in period 2 (2(40%)) than period 1(3(60%)).Pearson chi- square =7.908, p=.245 and p >.05, two-tailed. This indicates there is no shift in editorials’ main topics across two periods in the Reporter newspaper editorials before and after the reform.

Figure 2. Author identity.



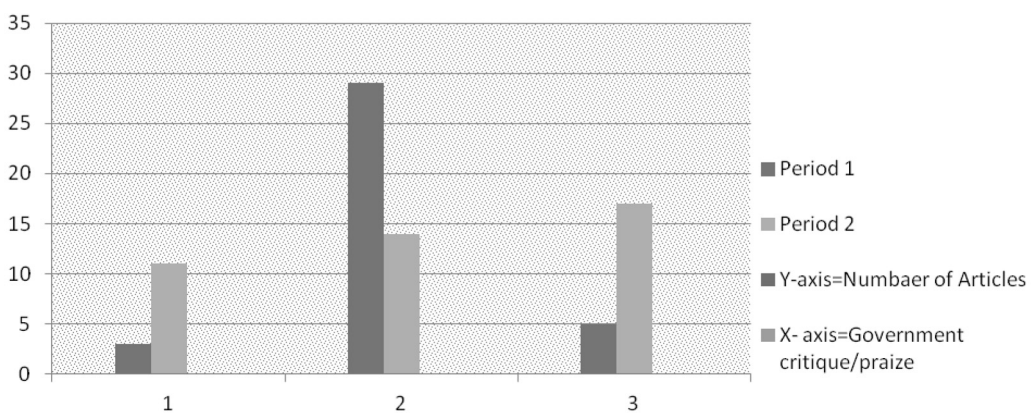
In all the sample editorials of the selected periods (1 &2), professional journalists were the only author of the editorials. Hence, there was no relationship between author identity and date of publication in the Reporter editorials as (Chi-square=2.99, p=.83 and p>.05)

Figure 3. Source (content quotation).



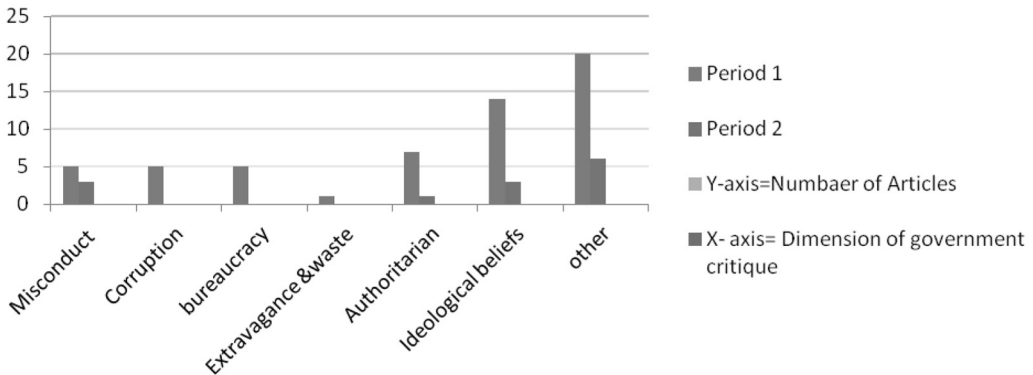
As the data portrayed in Figure 4.3, the difference in number of quotations is especially evident in five categories. Professional journalist quotations were frequent before the reform (27(71.1%)) than after the reform (11(28.9%)). Ordinary individual quotations were less frequent after the reform (3(33.3%)) than before the reform (11(45.8%)). Government official quotations were more frequent after the reform (13(54.2%)) than before the reform (11(45.8%)). Anonymous sources were less frequent before the reform (11(44%)) than after the reform (14(56%)) whereas Foreign news and other sources were not frequently sourced in the two periods. Therefore, chi-square =7.15, p=.20 >.05, two-tailed revealed that there is no changes in sourcing before and after the reform in the Reporter newspaper editorials.

Figure 4. Government praise/critique.



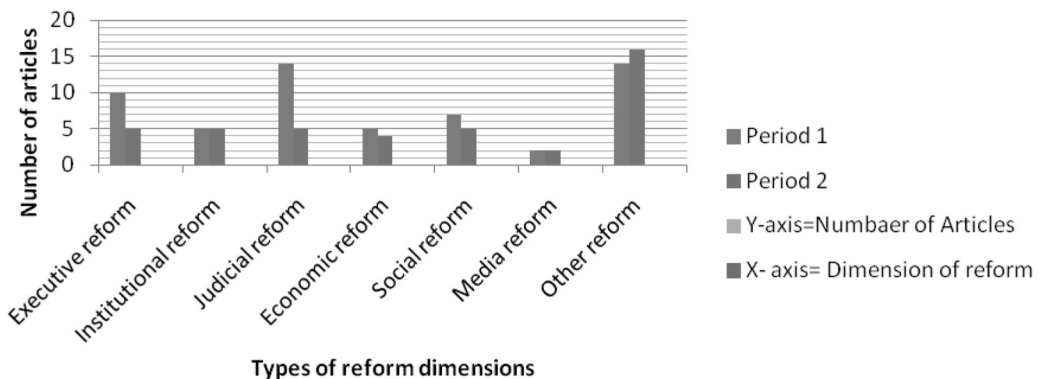
The result in Figure 4.4 depicted that government praise more frequent after the reform (11(26.2%)) than before the reform (3(5.2%)). Moreover, government critique was less frequent after the reform (14(33.3%)) than before the reform (29(50.9%)). However, $P = .86 > .05$, two-tailed as there is no significant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

Figure 5. Dimensions of government critique.



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

Figure 6. Dimensions of reform.

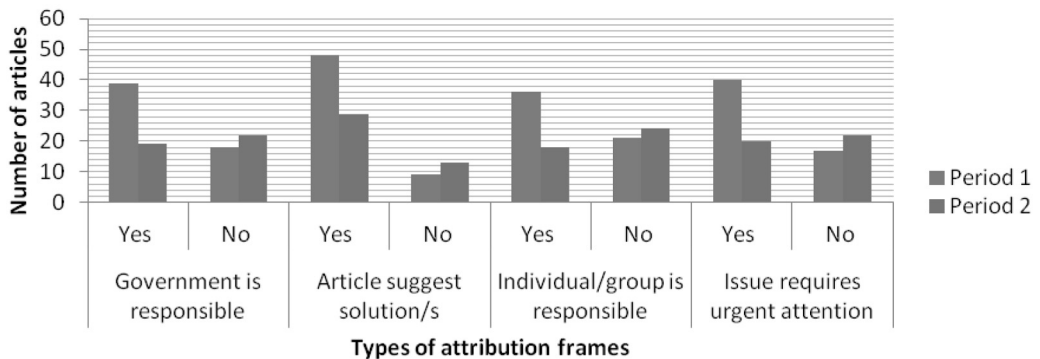


The frequencies showed that executive reforms were mentioned more frequently in Period 1 (10(66.7%)) than in Period 2 (5(33.3%)). Judicial reform was more frequent in period 1(14(73.7%)) than period 2 (5(26.3%)). Economic reform was less frequent in period 2

(4(44.4%)) than period 1 (5(55.6%)). Social reform was mentioned more frequently in Period 1 (7(58.3%)) than in Period 2 (5(41.7%)). Other reform was mentioned more frequently in Period 2 (16(53.3%)) than in Period 1 (14(46.7%)). Four out of the seven types of reform were mentioned more frequently in Period 1 than Period 2. However, there were no difference between institutional reform and media reform in the two periods. (Chi-square = 4.33, $p = .86 > .05$); as a result, there was no relationship between reform and periods of the reform.

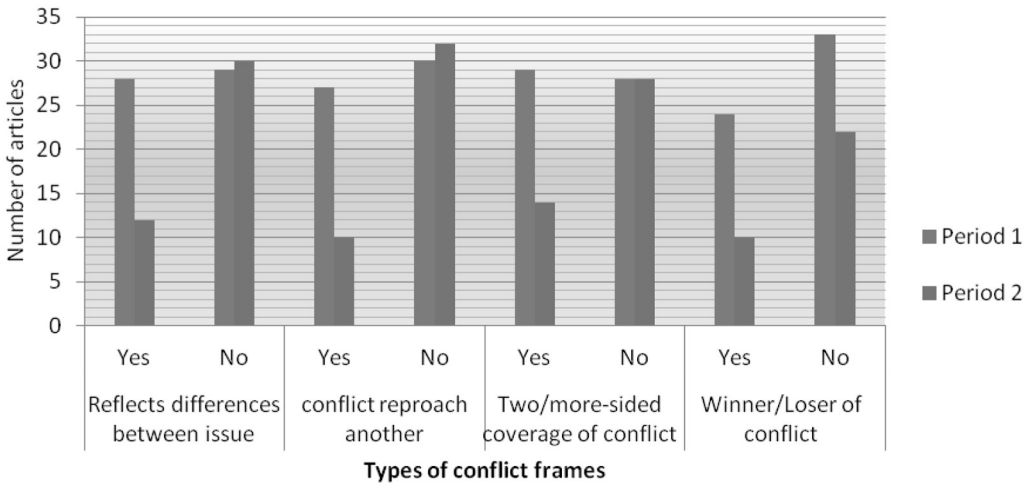
The study also compared the frequency of frames, before and after the reform: attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, ideology/morality, and economic consequences in the Reporter newspaper editorials.

Figure 7. Attribution of responsibility.



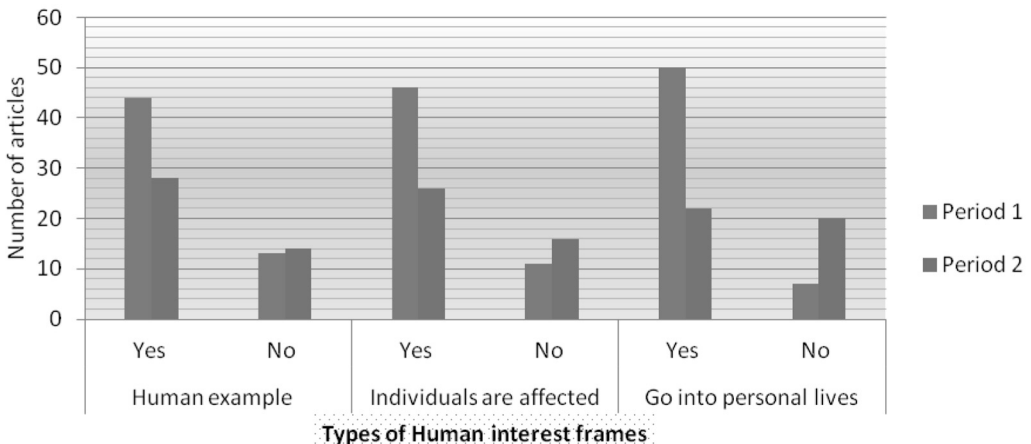
Findings in these categories showed that government responsibility provided in articles was more common before the reform (39(67.2%)) than after the reform (19(32.8%)), Chi-square = 6.16, $p = .04$ that is, $p < .05$, two-tailed. Therefore, government responsibility is dependent on the dates before and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

Figure 8. Conflict coverage.



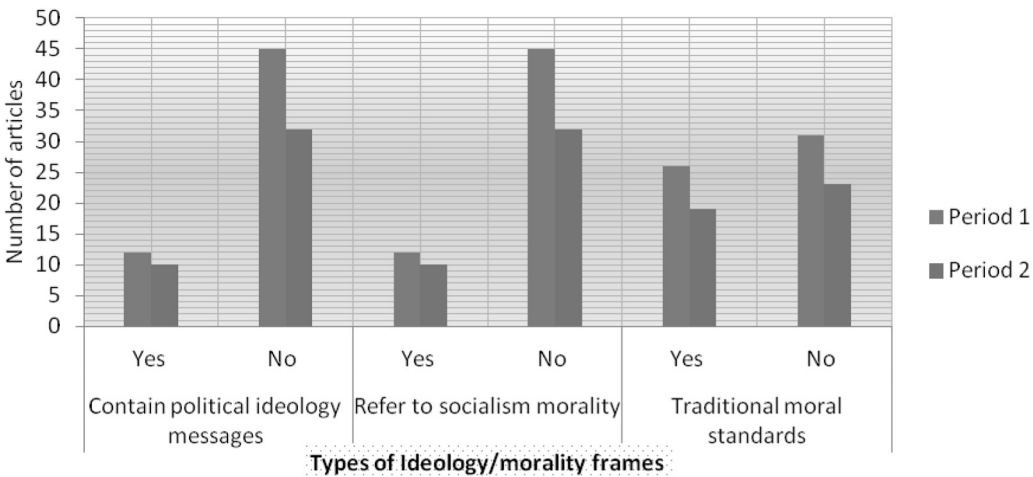
It inquired whether the story reflected any differences between issue/individual/group/country. The result showed that more differences reflected before the reform (28(70%)) than after the reform (12(30%)), $P = .03 < .05$. So, there was relationship between date and story reflection among or between groups. The editorials showed conflict reproach another more frequent before the reform (28(70%)) than after the reform (12(30%)), $P = .01 < .05$, two-tailed; as a result, there was a relationship between date of reporting and conflict reproaching. The editorials tended to have two or more sided coverage of a conflict before the reform (29(67.4%)) than after the reform (14(32.6%)), $P = .10 > .05$, two-tailed. Therefore, coverage of conflict did not relationship with date of editorial publication. The winner/loser in a conflict is less likely to be specified after the reform (10(29.4%)) than before the reform (24(70.6%)), whereas Chi-square = 3.59, $p = .86 > .05$, two-tailed. Consequently, winner/loser of conflict did not have relationship with before and after the reform periods.

Figure 9. Human interest.



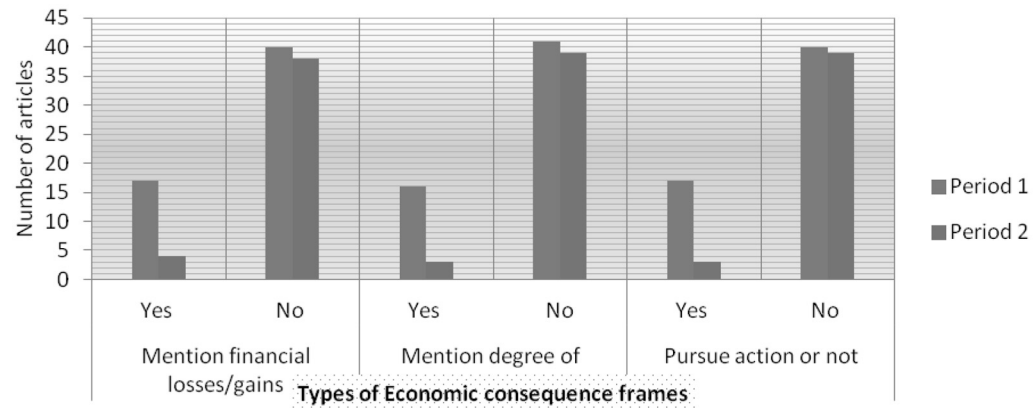
As indicated in Figure 4.9, editorials contained more human example in Period 1(44(61.1%)) than Period 2(28(38.9%)), $P = .24 > .05$, two-tailed. Human example and date of editorial publication did not have relationship. The editorials covered affected individuals more in Period 1 (46(63.9%)) than Period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

Figure 10. Ideology/morality.



Editorials mentioned more political ideology messages before the reform (12(54.5%)) than after the reform (10(45.5%)), $P = .74 > .05$, two-tailed. As a result, political ideology messages did not have relationship between dates of editorial reporting. Referring socialism morality story were covered more before the reform (12(54.4%)) than after the reform (10(45.5%)), $P = .74 > .05$, two-tailed although there was no relationship with date of reporting. Editorials mentioned traditional moral standards more frequently before the reform (26(57.8%)) than after the reform (19(42.2%)) $P = 1.00 > .05$, two-tailed, so there was no relationship with date of reporting. It is noted that if the editorial offered specific social prescriptions about how to behave, the result showed that specific social perspective were less frequent after the reform (23(43.4%)) than before the reform (30(56.6%)), $P = .83 > .05$, two-tailed while relationship within date of reporting were not noticed.

Figure 11. Economic consequences frames.



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

5. Discussion

The study explored the changes in editorial content in The Reporter newspaper before and after April 2018, a watershed year in Ethiopia history. The results identify some significant changes after the reform. The extent of issues coverage in the news is the principle by which the general public assesses the performance and credibility of agency, corporation, or scientific organization (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Nisbet & Feldman, 2011). As a result, some noteworthy shifts occurred in the main topics of the Reporter newspaper editorials. These changes may indicate frequency of topics, with fewer government official topics before the reform than after the reform. Additionally, type of government critiques, and mentioned reforms significantly decreased after the reform compared with before the reform, while government praise changed after and before the two periods.

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

The focus of the writing of foreign issues is different before and after the reform, as the editorials on foreign issues are mostly critiques towards national governments; the only difference is that after the reform, they seem to focus more on domestic issues. Recently, researchers have practiced the central idea of agenda-setting theory, the transfer of salience from one agenda to another, to a wide multiplicity of new arenas and sources as miscellaneous as professional sports (Fortunato, 2001) and classroom teaching (Díaz, 2004). This may imply in Reporter editorials be considered an improvement after reform put more emphasis on

domestic Ethiopian issues. Also, perhaps surprisingly, the earlier editorials cover more scandal and corruption issues than those of the more recent period although there is more government critique and more reform mentioned, the *Reporter* tends to give less coverage of the scandals and corruptions today. Another possible explanation is that, although the *Reporter* may mention anti-corruption policies and discipline many times, it rarely names the corrupt official or describes the case in detail. Mass media has potentially strong effects on attitudes and information processing but any effects was contingent on a host of individual-level characteristics (McQuail, 2005). Similarly, the *Reporter* editorials tend to talk more about how to adopt anti-corruption measures rather than reporting the actual corruption cases.

Deacon et al. (1999) say that it is the usual practice of the media to find a greater number of sources cited in favor of a particular outlook or a line of interpretation and evaluation. Certain sources are undermined, discredited or disclaimed, particularly those advanced by others whose positions are at variance with those, which are given priority. According to Deacon et al (1999), quoting certain sources in their ranks and others without makes significant differences in shaping the news content in terms of influencing how the political power is distributed among various parties.

The difference in number of quotations is especially evident in five categories as the media agenda varies on different periods. Agenda setting refers to the idea that there is a strong relationship between the emphasis that mass media places on certain issues and the importance endorsed to these issues by mass audiences across different periods, (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Professional journalist quotations were more frequent before the reform than after the reform. Ordinary individual quotations were less frequent after the reform than before the reform. Government official quotations were more frequent after the reform which indicates the media are inclined to celebrity sources than ordinary citizens. Anonymous sources were less frequent before the reform than after the reform whereas foreign news and other sources were not frequently sourced in the two periods. The number and frequency of sources were different as (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016) argue that emphasis-based studies push framing into a more general category of persuasion where any observed effects may be the result of differences in the convincing power or quality of a given message or sources, who says what matters, rather than differences in the way the similar information is presented.

This study proposed five frames. ‘Attribution of responsibility’ shows the problem or issue focusing on who caused a situation or who must solve it. The ‘conflict’ frame presents the issue from the perspective of polarization and confrontation of individuals or social groups, sometimes using a language of war or games and competitions (Patterson, 1993; D’Haenens & De Lange, 2001). The ‘human interest’ frame is used to bring the issue or problem closer to any type of receiver, because the human emotion captivates everyone. Before the reform human examples were frequent since framing accustomed to transfer a difficulty could be a priority to whom or what may be to blame for it and what should be done about it (Iyengar, 1996).

The ‘economic consequences’ frame emphasizes the economic impact that a particular issue may have on citizens in general or on any particular group, making the public aware of a problem which, otherwise, might seem irrelevant (D’Haenens & Lange, 2001). The ‘morality’ frame gives prominence to the religious or moral implications of an issue or indicates a group or an individual how should behave. This framing is often camouflaged through the use of quotes, attributing the moral or religious recommendations or evaluations. To the contrary, the sociological tradition views framing as a means of understanding how people construct meaning and make sense of the everyday world (Ferree et al., 2002). Goffman (1974)

described framing as a method by which persons put on interpretive schemas to both classify and interpret the information that they encounter in their day-to-day lives, whereas (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987) defined frames as a central organizing idea or story line that gives aiming to an unfolding strip of events. Therefore, before the reform, economic consequence, human interest, and conflict frame got a priority.

The overall pressure of these on journalists has thus been said to result in the change in the manner in which journalism is practiced. According to Campbell (2004), in order to produce an audience-friendly and sellable content, journalists have been made to be technically uniform, and as a result, produce visually sophisticated, easy-to-understand, fast-paced, and people-oriented programmes in a minimum amount of time. The result of such a trend, as to Rayner, Wall and Kruger (2004), makes power elites, celebrities, surprises, bad news, good news, and greater magnitude (in either number of people involved or potential impact), increasingly dominant news values in the Western world. By the same token, all the Reporter newspaper editorials have visual cartoons; the author was only journalist and dominantly used human examples.

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

6. Conclusion and recommendations

It can be concluded that the Reporter newspaper did not have consistent coverage of editorial contents in many aspects. As it compared with editorials published before and after the reform, noticeable changes were observed in government critique, attribution of responsibility frames, human interest frames and economic issue frames. However, content selection, sources of information, mentioned reforms, conflict relationship frames and ideological frames did not have relationship with date of publication. As this study focused only on one private newspaper, it is likely that it could not test the impact of media independence and ownership. It examined the changes in media topics, author identity, source, criticism and praise, and reform, which is taken together, could be seen as proxies of media freedom.

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

It is recommended that journalist ought to be loyal to the profession. They should not be the material of their employers. The Reporter newspaper should have clear ideology instead of waving towards or against the ruling party ideologies. Finally, I would like to recommend the Reporter newspaper editor to have diversified source of information to be reliable. This research is delimited to one newspaper and limited time frames, hence it will work as a benchmark to extend in wider context and longer period data.

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