



**HAWASSA UNIVERSITY**

**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION**

**ASSESSMENT OF THE CONFLICT REPORTING BY SRTA AND VOA:  
THE CASE OF KORE AND GUJI ETHNIC GROUPS CONFLICT IN  
ETHIOPIA**

**MA THESIS**

**BY: TEMESGEN MENESHA**

**ADVISOR: KEBEDE T/MICHAEL (Ph. D.)**

**NOVEMBER 2023**

**HAWASSA ETHIOPIA**



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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM AND  
COMMUNICATION, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND  
HUMANITIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN JOURNALISM AND MASS  
COMMUNICATION**

**BY: TEMESGEN MENESHA**

**ADVISOR: KEBEDE T/MICHAEL (Ph. D.)**

**NOVEMBER 2023**

**HAWASSA ETHIOPIA**

## **Declaration**

I, Temesgen Menesha, confirm that the thesis titled " Assessment of the conflict reporting by SRTA and VOA: the case of Kore and Guji ethnic groups conflict in Ethiopia" is entirely my original work. I conducted this research independently, with the guidance and assistance of my research advisor. I confirm that this study has not been previously submitted for any degree or diploma program at this or any other institution. Additionally, I have duly acknowledged all sources of materials used in the thesis.

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# Examiners' approval Sheet

## Hawassa University

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We the undersigned members of examiners of the final open defense by Temesgen Menesha have read and evaluated his thesis entitled "Assessment of the conflict reporting by SRTA and VOA: the case of Kore and Guji ethnic groups conflict in Ethiopia" and examined the candidate. This is, therefore to certify that the thesis has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the defense.

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Contents	
<b>Acknowledgment</b> .....	I
List of tables .....	IV
<b>Abbreviations</b> .....	V
<i>Abstract</i> .....	VI
<b>Chapter One</b> .....	1
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>1.1. Background of the study</b> .....	1
<b>1.2. Statement of the Problem</b> .....	3
<b>1.3. Objectives of the study</b> .....	5
<b>1.3.1. General objective</b> .....	5
<b>1.3.2. Specific objectives</b> .....	5
<b>1.4. Research questions</b> .....	6
<b>1.5. Significance of the study</b> .....	6
<b>1.6. Scope of the study</b> .....	6
<b>1.7. Limitations of the study</b> .....	7
<b>1.8. Organization of the Study</b> .....	7
<b>1.9. General Terms</b> .....	8
<b>Chapter Two</b> .....	9
<b>Review of Related Literature</b> .....	9
<b>2.1. Communication and Conflict</b> .....	9
<b>2.2. Understanding Conflict</b> .....	9
<b>2.3. Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict</b> .....	10
<b>2.4. Media and Ethnic Conflict</b> .....	11
<b>2.5. The Role of Media in Conflict Situation</b> .....	12
<b>2.6. Conflict Sensitive Reporting</b> .....	15
<b>2.7. Peace journalism</b> .....	16
<b>2.8. War journalism</b> .....	18
<b>2.9. Ethiopian Media and Their Coverage of Ethnic Conflicts</b> .....	18
<b>2.10. Overview of Related Studies to Conflict Reporting in Ethiopian Media</b> .....	20
<b>2.11. Overview of the Kore and Guji conflict</b> .....	22
<b>2.12. Background of SRTA and VOA</b> .....	25
<b>2.13. Theoretical Framework</b> .....	26

2.13.1. Framing theory .....	26
2.13.2. Agenda setting theory .....	31
<b>Chapter Three .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>3. Introduction.....</b>	<b>33</b>
3.1. Research Design .....	33
3.2. Research Approach.....	33
3.3. Sampling Technique and Sample Size .....	34
3.3.1. Sampling Technique.....	34
3.3.2. Sample Size .....	35
3.4. Source of data .....	35
3.5. Data collection instruments .....	35
3.5.1. Content analysis .....	36
3.5.2. In-depth interview .....	37
3.6. Coding.....	37
3.8. Data Analysis Method.....	39
3.9. Ethical consideration .....	39
<b>Chapter Four.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion .....</b>	<b>40</b>
4.1. Introduction.....	40
4.2. Presentation, and Findings of Quantitative Data.....	40
4.2.1. The Frequency of Reporting on Conflicts in Both Media .....	41
4.2.2. Broadcast Months .....	41
4.2.3. Types of News Stories .....	42
4.2.4. Byline (Reporter).....	43
4.2.5. Sources of News Stories .....	44
4.2.6. Types of Frames Used in News Stories .....	45
4.3. Presentation of Interview Data.....	47
4.4. Dominant Frames Used by SRTA and VOA.....	55
4.4.1. Annihilation frame .....	56
4.4.2. Attribution of responsibility frame .....	64
4.5. Discussion of the Findings .....	67
<b>Chapter Five.....</b>	<b>72</b>

<b>Conclusion, and Recommendations</b> .....	72
<b>5.1. Introduction</b> .....	72
<b>5.2. Conclusion</b> .....	72
<b>5.3. Recommendations</b> .....	73
References .....	76
<b>Appendix I</b> .....	85
<b>Guidebook for Coding Stories</b> .....	85
<b>Appendix: II</b> .....	88
<b>Appendix III</b> .....	89

## List of tables

TABLE 4.1 FREQUENCY OF THE CONFLICT .....	41
TABLE 4.2. THE MEDIA ORGANIZATION AND BROADCAST MONTH CROSS TABULATION .....	42
TABLE 4.3. NEWS STORIES TYPE WITH MEDIA OUTLETS .....	43
TABLE 4.4. DISTRIBUTION OF BYLINE OR REPORTERS OF THE STORY WITH MEDIA OUTLETS .....	43
TABLE 4.4. SOURCES (WITNESSES) OF NEWS WITH MEDIA OUTLETS .....	44
TABLE 4.5. TYPES OF NEWS FRAME.....	46

## **Abbreviations**

<b>CAPC</b>	Conflict Analysis and Prevention Center
<b>ISS</b>	Institute for Security Studies
<b>IPDs</b>	Internally Displaced Peoples
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OLF</b>	Oromo Liberation Front
<b>OLA</b>	Oromo Liberation Army
<b>PJ</b>	Peace Journalism
<b>SNNPRS</b>	South, Nation, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State
<b>SRTA</b>	South Radio and Television Agency
<b>UN</b>	United Nation
<b>VOA</b>	Voice of America
<b>WWII</b>	World War Two (the Second World War)

## **Abstract**

*Conflict is a multifaceted issue that has plagued several regions of Ethiopia in recent years. Conflict has been a source of tension and instability, leading to displacement, loss of life, and economic disruption. The media can play a crucial role in shaping public opinion regarding conflicts. This study examines conflict reporting by the South Radio and Television Agency and Voice of America Radio on recently developing conflicts between Kore and Guji ethnic groups. Due to the significant escalation of conflict between groups during the period between the end of 2021 and 2022, the researcher chose to focus specifically on the period from January 1, 2022, to July 30, 2022. To this end, there were three research questions, i.e., what is the extent of coverage? What sources are used by the two media outlets in reporting? What are the major types of frames used in the coverage? The study followed a descriptive research design and employed a mixed research method. The study used purposive sampling techniques, which means, the sampled media, the media contents, key informants, and the period were purposively selected. Content analysis and interviews are the major data collection tools. The data was analyzed through quantitative and qualitative techniques. Agenda setting and framing theories were used, as guidance to analyze media coverage, identify sources of stories, and determine the types of framing used by both media outlets. Both media outlets broadcasted a total of 25 news stories about the Kore-Guji conflict. SRTA relies more on government officials as sources, while VOA sources its stories from conflict victims, officials, and conflicting groups, providing a comprehensive understanding. The study revealed that conflict reporting, particularly by regional media outlets, displayed a lack of responsibility. They were found to withhold information about the conflict and not disclose the truth, essentially functioning as an extension of the government in efforts to restore peace in the area, and both outlets tend to bury important information. The study recommended that media outlets should improve their coverage by conducting in-depth investigations and delving deeper into stories. It should be crucial for professional journalists to provide accurate information without immediately assigning blame, and to refrain from using techniques that bury significant details. Recognizing and addressing the role of the media in conflict reporting should be an early consideration in any intervention.*

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**Key Words: Media Coverage/reportage, Media Framing, Conflict, Ethnic Conflict**

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the study

Conflict reporting is the practice of covering and analyzing violent conflicts, their causes, consequences, and solutions, in a way that is sensitive, accurate, and responsible. Conflict reporting aims to inform the public and policymakers about the realities and complexities of conflicts, as well as to promote dialogue, understanding, and peace among the parties involved. Conflict reporting also entails a high level of ethical and professional standards, as journalists face various challenges and risks in their work, such as safety, bias, misinformation, propaganda, and censorship (Bajraktari & Parajon, 2007).

Hence, conflict is a pervasive aspect of human existence that manifests in various contexts, presenting difficult obstacles to the economic, social, and political progress of societies (Shehu, 2017). According to Rahima (2001), conflict can be defined as an integrative process characterized by disparities, inequality, disharmony, or disagreements among social entities. On the other hand, ethnic conflict refers to hostility that emerges either between or within members of two or more ethnic groups (Obijiofor, 2011). Ethnic conflict can take diverse forms, ranging from communal disputes within a single state to internal conflicts, inter-state wars, and acts of violence, invasions, and even instances of genocide (Green & Seher, 2003).

Ethiopia, a country known for its rich culture and diverse population, is currently involved in a growing conflict that spans multiple regions. The severity of the situation has reached a high point, jeopardizing the very foundations of Ethiopia's socio-political stability. It has witnessed an increase in ethnic tensions and conflicts, often resulting in violence and displacement, as documented by the Human Rights Council between 1992 and 2023. In Ethiopia, conflicts mainly arise from territorial disputes and competition over natural resources (Abinet, 2006).

Scholars like Van Dijk, Hamelink, Galtung, Ruge, McQuail, and others argue that the media prioritizes reporting on conflict and negative events due to audience interests. Conflict is considered highly newsworthy, and it remains a top choice for news selection in the 21st century. Negative events easily capture journalists' attention and have a higher likelihood of being

covered in the media. The media plays a critical role in disseminating knowledge about conflicts and helping contain their spread (Pegu, 2014). The media has a deep understanding of conflicts' roots, leading up to their outbreak, and the existing political structures, making them valuable resources in post-conflict scenarios (Kuusik, 2010).

The Kore and Guji are two ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia. The Kore live in the Amaro special woreda of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region, while the Guji reside in the Guji Zone of the Oromia Region. The Kore speak the Koorete language, while the Guji speak an Oromo dialect of the Southern Oromo variety. Both groups have a lifestyle that involves farming and raising livestock. There have been conflicts between the Kore and Guji over land and resources, particularly along their border areas. Recently, there was a violent outbreak when a new border demarcation was proposed between the areas where the two groups reside (Institute for Security Studies (ISS), 2019).

South Radio and Television Agency, a regional government-owned (the previous SNNPR) broadcasting service based in Hawassa, installed a modern digital television studio in 2006 E.C. to expand its coverage area to the Middle East, Gulf States, and North Africa. Voice of America Radio (VOA) is an international multimedia broadcaster with services in more than 45 languages. SRTA produces weekly news by evaluating it from various perspectives. On the other hand, VOA is funded by the U.S. government and is the largest U.S. international broadcaster, providing information, programs, and online and social media content across the world. SRTA has 10 branch stations in the region and broadcasts in Amharic and other local languages. It provides news and information on political, social, economic, and cultural issues affecting the region and the country. According to a study by Alemu (2018), it provides news and information on political, social, economic, and other issues for Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as the rest of the world. According to its website, VOA Amharic attracts about one-fifth of the adult population in Ethiopia, which is one of the largest audiences proportionally of any service at VOA.

In the realm of journalism and communication, or media studies, there is a notable trend toward studying conflict reporting and considering the media's approach to conflicts, war, and violence. This change in perspective stems from acknowledging the profound impact media coverage can have on public perceptions, policy choices, and the individuals affected by conflicts.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Recently, conflicts have become a major concern in various regions of Ethiopia, affecting the progress of development, socio-political stability, and economic growth. Reports indicate that over 2.72 million people have been internally displaced, with violence and conflict becoming more frequent in many regions (OCHA, 2022; Yarnell, 2021). According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2021), the conflict between Kore and Guji since June 2018 has had devastating consequences, including killings, injuries, displacement, and property destruction. The main road between Kore-Guji and Gedio and Burji, covering 200km in length, has been blocked in the Gelana for more than six years due to the conflict. As a result of the road blockade, local communities have been deprived of crucial life necessities, including transportation, access to humanitarian aid, basic medicines, and emergency services. This conflict situation has escalated violence, forced people to flee their homes, and caused the loss of lives and widespread destruction of property (EECMY & GIZ, 2022).

Accordingly, the issue of conflicts in Ethiopia is complex and requires professional and moral aspects from journalists and the media. The media's intervention in reporting these cases professionally and responsibly is crucial to inform the public correctly, play a crucial role in solving conflicts, and have the potential to contribute to conflict reduction (Ross, 2004). Furthermore, good reporting has the power to contribute to the reduction of conflict (Pegu, 2014). Therefore, the media and journalists can act as a bridge between conflicting parties by providing them with a platform to express their grievances, perspectives, and proposed solutions. Through interviews, debates, and forums, the media facilitates dialogue and encourages constructive engagement between parties in conflict. Also, the media have the power to shape public perceptions of conflicts by framing narratives and involving the voices of the conflicting groups.

However, Ethiopian media is often criticized for lacking professionalism in their journalism, and they often operate under political pressure from the government (Rahmato & Ayenew, 2004; Yonas, 2008; Mulatu, 2017 A). There have been numerous studies conducted on conflict and ethnicity in Ethiopia, but there is a lack of research on conflict reporting based on the researcher's knowledge or through the researcher's search efforts. Belay (2019) revealed how source selection, political ideology, and the neglect of the root cause of ethnic conflict shaped the

media framing of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. Desalegn (2020) found that media coverage of the Amhara-Qimant conflict was inadequate and biased, failing to uncover the truth and provide impartial perspectives from the parties involved in conflicts. Eden (2021) found that conflict reporting in Ethiopian print media was unprofessional and irresponsible, not revealing the truth about conflict and serving as an additional wing of the government to restore peace to the spot. Melkamu (2020) found that Amhara and Tigray Regional Television approached interethnic conflict news coverage differently based on their political affiliations and interests, resulting in contrasting and polarized portrayals of such conflicts in their programming.

Except for Melkamu (2020), these studies (Belay, 2019; Desalegn, 2020; Eden, 2021) focused on news framing in the print media. On the other hand, there are a few academic research papers on the broadcast media reporting internal conflict (ethnic conflict) (Mulatu, 2017 A). These studies indicated that media outlets exhibited distinct framing patterns in their coverage. These framing patterns included the selection of specific events, sources, and language used to describe the conflicts.

Consequently, this study extends previous studies by examining media reporting involving SRTA and VOA. There are clear gaps in the academic research and the literature that provide a comprehensive analysis of conflict reporting practices in the broadcast media of Ethiopia. No research has been conducted on the Kore-Guji conflict about media and conflict in both media outlets. There also exists a methodological gap; some related studies are conducted through qualitative methods and content analysis. In addition, the geographical gap implies that the above studies were conducted in other areas like Amhara, Oromia, Addis Ababa, and other areas, and regarding the time gap, most of the above research was conducted before 2021; hence, there is a clear gap between the current research and the previous studies.

Consequently, there are several reasons that the study involved SRTA and VOA. SRTA is a state-owned regional television and radio station in Ethiopia, funded by the South Nation Nationalities and People's Regional Government (the previous region). SRTV plays a crucial role in addressing regional issues and is considered more effective than federal or privately owned media outlets in covering regional events and concerns. It contributes to promoting diversity, inclusivity, regional peace, and stability. On the other hand, several studies have found that media in Ethiopia, regardless of ownership, covers issues in a similar way (Seble & Assefa,

2016; Daniel & Roland, 2015; Markos & Wondwossen, 2020). As a result, the researcher also includes international broadcasting media, such as VOA, which extensively covers conflicts in Ethiopia through various electronic platforms, radio, and television. To capture a broader perspective, the researcher purposefully included international broadcasting media. As an international broadcaster, it provides a platform for marginalized groups and voices that may not have access to other media outlets. Some other international broadcaster media focus on entertainment and shows, as well as many of them, focus on the city and around, but VOA's coverage extends to various parts of Ethiopia.

Amidst the above backdrop, a researcher poses a question: How do regional broadcaster SRTA and international broadcaster VOA report on and influence the understanding of conflicts? When the media prioritizes covering conflicts, it significantly influences how the international community responds to these conflicts. This research examined the extent of coverage, sources utilized, and frames employed by sampled media outlets in reporting conflicts. Emphasis was placed on the significance of SRTA and VOA, with a specific focus on their reporting of the Kore-Guji conflict and analysis of coverage, frames, and agenda-setting strategies.

### **1.3. Objectives of the study**

#### **1.3.1. General objective**

The general objective of the study is to assess the conflict reporting by SRTA and VOA about the ethnic conflict between the Kore and Guji groups in Ethiopia.

#### **1.3.2. Specific objectives**

Moreover, the study attempts to address the following specific objectives:

1. To explore the extent of coverage of Kore and Guji conflict by SRTA and VOA.
2. To identify the sources used by the two media outlets in reporting the Kore-Guji conflict.
3. To assess the major types of frames used in the coverage of the Kore-Guji conflict by the two media outlets.

## **1.4. Research questions**

Based on the objectives, the study focuses on answering the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of coverage of Kore and Guji conflict in SRTA and VOA?
2. What sources are used by the two media outlets in reporting the Kore-Guji conflict?
3. What are the major types of frames used in the coverage of the Kore-Guji conflict by the two media outlets?

## **1.5. Significance of the study**

The study has several significances in depicting the role of media in conflict reporting. The research result is important in showing to some extent the ways of conflict reporting, and this may alarm the media organizations; they will try to cover the often-happening conflicts in every society from several parts of the country. As academic research, it will fill knowledge gaps in the area of ethnic conflict and media reporting in the selected study area. And also, it showed the gaps in media accountability and media coverage. By picking out their strengths and weaknesses, media organizations may change and take measures for their future implementation.

In a wider context, the study will also enable the media outlets to reflect on how to give attention to conflict reporting. Moreover, future researchers who have the aspiration to conduct further studies in the area may use this study as a stepping stone, and the findings may help other researchers and media professionals carry out further research within this field. So, the study can add to the generally small pool of observational writing on journalistic practices on media scope in a conflict context.

## **1.6. Scope of the study**

The study is limited to two media outlets: South Radio & Television Agency and Voice of America Radio. The SRTA is regional government-owned and the VOA is an independent international broadcaster. The reportage of both media outlets, the source of stories, and the frames used in the coverage were the focus of the study. The study focused only on news content; there are several media contents like television programs, studio interviews, talk shows, documentaries, feature stories, and other social-political as well as developmental programs, which are not included in the study because these media contents are more subjective. The study

focused only on conflict-related news content about the Kore and Guji conflicts. Specifically, archival data or media content acquired from the official websites and social media platforms of both media outlets, all contents produced by these media for various platforms are uploaded on their website and social media platforms.

Moreover, the investigation restricted the news items that were aired in both media outlets between January 1, 2022, and July 30, 2022. Additionally, to get more information, the researcher conducted interviews with the journalists. The methodological scope of the study was defined by mixed methods and purposive sampling techniques; the data was collected through content analysis frame analysis, and interviews. Finally, the data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

### **1.7. Limitations of the study**

As is common to several studies or research projects, this study is not free from limitations. One of the major limitations of the study is that it only focuses on two specific media outlets, SRTA and VOA. The selection of these two outlets could reflect a specific perspective that is not representative of all media. The study has only included a limited number of news articles, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Because it only captures news articles from a specific period, which may not reflect the whole. The study only focuses on a specific aspect or specific conflict issues and does not cover other related conflict issues.

### **1.8. Organization of the Study**

This study has five chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic, the problem, the objectives, the questions, the scope, the significance, and the limitations of the research. It gives an overview of what to expect in the following chapters. The second chapter reviews the literature that is relevant to the research. It provides a theoretical framework for analyzing the data. The third chapter describes the research methodology and explains why it was chosen. The fourth chapter presents and analyzes the data collected from the two media outlets. The fifth chapter summarizes and concludes the research. The appendix contains the coded data and other supplementary information.

## 1.9. General Terms

**Conflict Reporting:** refers to the process of documenting, analyzing, and disseminating information about conflicts and their impact on society. It plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding of conflicts, influencing policy decisions, and promoting peace and reconciliation. Effective conflict reporting should be accurate, balanced, and sensitive to the complexities of the situation. It should provide an in-depth analysis of the root causes of the conflict, the impact on different communities, and potential avenues for resolution.

**Conflict** refers to a situation in which two or more parties have opposing interests or goals and engage in actions that interfere with each other's interests. Conflicts can occur on various levels, ranging from personal to international disputes. Conflicts are resolved through negotiations or other peaceful methods, but in some cases, they can escalate into violence and warfare.

**Media Coverage** refers to how information is presented in various forms of media, such as newspapers, television, radio, or online platforms. Media coverage can influence public opinion, shape political agendas, and impact social and cultural factors. It is important to note that different media outlets may offer different perspectives and biases on the same event or issue.

**Ethnic Conflict** refers to any conflict that arises between different ethnic groups. Such conflicts may stem from a range of issues, such as political power, economic resources, cultural differences, or historical tensions. Ethnic conflicts are often associated with violence, discrimination, and marginalization of the groups involved and can be difficult to resolve due to the deep-rooted nature of the underlying issues.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of Related Literature**

This review focuses on examining the literature related to conflict reporting and media roles to provide a comprehensive understanding of existing studies in this field. By analyzing scholarly articles, academic papers, and related relevant studies, the researcher finds key themes and theoretical frameworks that have been employed to study conflict reporting and coverage as well as conflict framing.

#### **2.1. Communication and Conflict**

The relationship between communication (journalism) and conflict is intricate. Communication plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions, framing narratives, and influencing public opinion during conflicts. Journalism, as a form of communication, serves as a mediator between conflicting parties, providing information, analysis, and a platform for different perspectives. Scholars often explore how media coverage can impact the escalation or resolution of conflicts. The framing theory, for instance, examines how journalists frame news stories, influencing how the audience perceives and interprets events related to conflict. Additionally, agenda-setting theory highlights the media's power to shape public priorities by deciding which issues receive more or less attention (Seib, 2006). Moreover, the role of propaganda and media manipulation in conflicts is studied within the realm of communication. Analyzing the ethical considerations of journalistic practices during conflicts is also a subject of academic scrutiny. Understanding the interplay between communication (journalism) and conflict involves delving into media effects, framing strategies, ethical dimensions, and the broader societal implications of information dissemination during tumultuous times (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2012).

#### **2.2. Understanding Conflict**

Understanding conflict has become increasingly important as societies have faced various challenges throughout history. However, comprehending conflict is not as straightforward as it may seem. While conflict often involves fighting, this is not always the case, as some conflicts remain latent and do not involve obvious physical confrontation. Additionally, not all fights are a result of conflict. Thus, it is crucial to establish a clear definition of what constitutes a conflict (Bartos & Wehr, 2002).

Scholars have diverse perspectives on conflict, leading to different definitions and explanations based on personal experiences and contexts. Unfortunately, conflict is often associated with negativity and violence, but it is important to note that conflict and violence have different definitions (Pani, 2017). Conflict refers to resistance, friction, or more members being opposed by others, regardless of whether it involves violence. Such opposition is inherent in all human relationships (Romsbotham, 2011).

According to Ross, conflict is a clash or disagreement of ideas, purposes, interests, or goals stemming from opposing needs, desires, demands, or derives. Conflict arises when two groups or individuals strive to pursue goals they believe cannot be shared (Ross, 2004). It is important to recognize that not all conflicts are violent, and conflict is a normal occurrence during times of change. When conflict is managed peacefully, it can have positive outcomes. However, if it is not handled properly, it can escalate into violence, leading to fear and threats to an individual's safety and survival (Ross, 2004). Consequently, conflict is a natural and inherent part of human relationships, involving disagreements over ideas, interests, or goals. It can exist without violence and is a normal occurrence during times of change. Conflict can have both positive and negative impacts on human life, depending on how it is managed. While conflict is impossible to eliminate, understanding and peaceful management can lead to positive outcomes, whereas mishandling conflict can escalate into violence and threaten individual safety.

### **2.3. Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict**

Different scholars discuss ethnicity in different ways. According to Bos (2015), ethnicity is recognized as a significant component of identity, referring to the similarity or sameness of an individual or group with itself over time and the characteristics that differentiate it from others. Ethnicity encompasses the culture and shared history of a particular group, including common rituals, worldviews, philosophies, language, mode of dress, and music that bind individuals together (Jimerson & Woehr, 2005).

In every society, there are valuable assets that contribute to creating wealth, such as mineral resources and land, as well as assets that involve the control and distribution of wealth. This creates an incentive for some individuals within society to form groups and attempt to gain control of these assets, often at the expense of the rest of the population (Coleman II & Caselli,

2012). When such conflicts occur along ethnic lines, it signifies a significant shift in the socio-political landscape. Ethnic conflicts arise when there is a rejection of the existing status quo, stemming from disagreements over economic, political, social, territorial, or cultural issues within ethnic groups (Husien, 2005).

Moreover, ethnic conflict refers to hostility between members of two or more ethnic groups. It encompasses actions by communities articulating specific racial claims and expressing attacks or grievances against members of another ethnic group or their properties (Green & Seher, 2003). As a result, ethnic conflict lacks a single definition, and there is an ongoing debate among scholars regarding its definition. Most scholars agree that ethnic conflict involves clashes between two or more ethnic groups over resources, identity, borders, or oppression. These conflicts arise due to differing interests, goals, motives, views, and feelings among the groups (Senggirbay, 2011).

Generally, ethnicity refers to a shared cultural heritage, ancestry, language, and traditions that unite a group of people who identify with one another based on their distinct cultural characteristics. Ethnic conflicts usually involve clashes between different ethnic groups that have conflicting interests, goals, or ideologies. These conflicts can be fueled by factors such as discrimination, inequality, economic disparities, political power struggles, identity politics, and historical grievances.

#### **2.4. Media and Ethnic Conflict**

The media holds a significant influence in shaping the social and political discourse of a country (Hass, 2009). It acts as a vital conduit for information between the government and citizens, playing a crucial role in the political, social, and economic processes. However, it is important to acknowledge that the media can be influenced by the government, leading to potential biases or entanglements with political actors.

In ethnic conflict, the media become more crucial as providers of neutral and factual information that enables citizens to make informed decisions (Hass, 2009). Access to accurate information is essential to preventing manipulation and ensuring that individuals have a comprehensive understanding of the conflict. Without such access, citizens may become easily misinformed.

Additionally, the media plays a significant role in conflict situations by influencing the perceptions of millions of people through the daily stream of information and analysis they provide on current events (Legatis, 2019). Media professionals have the power to shape public perception and guide conflicting groups or parties toward constructive solutions. They can contribute to the peace building process by presenting accurate and objective reporting, avoiding biases, and refraining from promoting violence (Legatis, 2019). They have the power to shape public perception and guide conflicting groups or parties toward constructive solutions through several means. Firstly, they can provide balanced and accurate reporting, presenting different perspectives and facilitating a better understanding of complex issues. By promoting dialogue and fostering empathy, media professionals can encourage constructive discussions that lead to compromise and resolution.

To ensure the media's power in conflict situations, it is crucial to prioritize the provision of neutral and factual information (Hass, 2009). This can prevent manipulation, promote informed decision-making, and contribute to peaceful resolutions. Ensuring press freedom or media independence and examining how the media reports on ethno-political conflicts, war, and peace negotiations are essential steps in utilizing its potential as a constructive force in society.

## **2.5. The Role of Media in Conflict Situation**

The media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and opinions about conflicts and wars. Through its coverage, the media can either escalate or de-escalate conflicts and influence the way people view the parties involved in the conflict (Lynch, 2016). Media coverage can impact the decisions of policymakers and the public's support for the government's actions in a conflict situation. Johan Galtung spent more time studying media coverage and found that the prevailing journalistic practice follows a particular convention. When covering conflict, the media focuses mainly on direct and visible violence (the dead and injured) and dichotomies (us and them). It does not explore the underlying causes of conflict, provides very limited context, does not address the consequences or the possible solution, and focuses on elites (military, police, etc.). In Galtung's (2006) study, the current common practice in journalism is referred to as "war journalism". He suggests an alternative approach called "peace journalism". While journalists aim to report accurate and unbiased news, they do not necessarily aim to reduce conflicts. However, effective reporting can often lead to conflict reduction (Ross, 2004).

Philip Seib (2006), in his study, explores the challenges faced by journalists when reporting on conflicts and the impact of media coverage on public perceptions. Seib argues that the fog of war, characterized by uncertain propaganda and misinformation, creates difficulties for journalists in accurately portraying/framing conflicts. He emphasizes the need for ethical journalism and responsible reporting to end the war and provide accurate information to the public (Seib, 2006).

The media plays a pivotal role in resolving conflicts by providing reliable information to the public. Yildiz (2020) notes that the media serves as a connection between opposing parties, a neutral intermediary, and a proponent of peaceful resolution for conflict resolution. Outstanding balance between the fact of the conflict, the desire for public perception, and the real public perceptions of the conflict, as well as the subsequent public actions or reactions, is the main role of the media while keeping the masses informed about events in the conflict. Human rights are paramount, and ways of upholding them through the media are inevitable. The audience's power primarily lies in their ability to comprehend and construe the polysemantic media message that can have multiple possible outcomes (Wasserman, 2007). The news aims to accurately report factually correct information to the audience.

Franks & Knowles (2009), explore the ethical dilemmas faced by journalists in reporting on conflicts, the impact of media coverage on public perception and policy-making, and the challenges of media access and censorship (Franks & Knowles, 2009).

However, conflict reporting has proceeded differently than other types of news, which often leaves it distorted. Distortion allows media organizations to exaggerate conflict to attract more audience members and viewers and generate more revenue. No matter how horrible the reality may be, the story attracts or buys the audience with its negativity bias and then leaves them feeling fulfilled, with a sense of pride and a high level of dopamine. Therefore, media and conflict coverage are intertwined, and the media's representation of conflicts can influence how the public perceives and reacts to conflicts. Journalists should aim to provide balanced, accurate, and objective coverage of conflicts while avoiding sensationalism or bias.

Although, the importance of the media in conflict reporting should be acknowledged and addressed early on in any intervention. An example of this is the conflict in former Yugoslavia, where the media played a role in fueling the conflict, but the Dayton Agreement did not include

provisions regarding the media. These provisions were only added later at the Bonn conference. To ensure a peaceful democratic culture, it is crucial to include provisions regarding the media as part of the peace agreement. These provisions should be binding for all participants in the peace process and subsequently enshrined in law and regulation (Puddephatt, 2006).

The media's role in a conflict, both before and after it occurs, is influenced by various factors. These factors include the media's relationships with the people involved in the conflict and how independent they are from those in power. The media can have a significant impact on reducing the negative effects of conflicts and highlighting positive possibilities. However, as noted by Forges (1999) in Demarest and Langer (2018), mass media can also worsen tensions and violence between different groups and, at the same time, promote unity and stability in diverse societies.

The media can have different roles in conflict situations, depending on their reporting and framing of the issues. Some roles have positive impacts, while others have negative consequences. Positive roles of the media include narrating facts impartially, accurately, and responsibly, thereby helping readers and viewers form an informed public opinion. This becomes particularly challenging during violent conflicts, but the media can utilize their power of information to facilitate conflict resolution processes (Ahmad, 2008). They can also create an environment that allows them to play a constructive role in addressing conflicts by avoiding portraying them as a zero-sum game between two combatants.

Instead, they can highlight the various interests involved and seek to humanize both parties, identifying common ground beyond their stated positions (Pudepahatt, 2006). Furthermore, the media can perform multiple functions, such as being an information provider and interpreter, watchdog, gatekeeper, policymaker, diplomat, peace promoter, and bridge builder. These functions enable the media to provide current and reasonable information, monitor maladministration and corruption, facilitate debate and discussions, disclose societal problems, collaborate with the government when necessary, foster democratic culture, promote national unity and stability, encourage dialogue and reconciliation, and contribute to the promotion of culture, history, and language (Bratic and Schirch, 2007).

On the other hand, the negative roles of the media include actively participating in conflicts and being responsible for increased violence. This occurs when the media are used to promote wars

and conflicts, spread fake news to generate fear and distrust, incite genocide or hatred against certain groups or individuals, serve as a platform for virulent nationalism or extremism, or organize violence (Suntai and Ishaku, 2017). Additionally, the media can contribute to the perpetuation of violent conflicts instead of promoting their peaceful resolution. This happens when the media are biased or partisan, focus on immediate and violent incidents at the expense of explaining the underlying issues, silence certain conflicts or voices, employ inflammatory language or images, or fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of the conflict's complexity (Chebi, 2010).

## **2.6. Conflict Sensitive Reporting**

In many parts of the world, the nature of violent conflicts that capture media attention has evolved significantly. These conflicts increasingly differ from traditional warfare between nations and instead manifest as violent strife within shared or loosely defined borders. Such confrontations often involve clashes between various communities, tribes, and other interest groups. What is particularly alarming is that these violent conflicts tend to operate outside the bounds of established laws and regulations (Demarest and Langer, 2018). They are marked by the terrifying exploitation of civilians and resources by inadequately trained soldiers, paramilitary forces, or even private armies engaged in criminal activities to sustain their violence. In many cases, state authority and the rule of law are either weak or have entirely collapsed, exacerbating the chaos.

Consequently, many journalists today find themselves practicing military journalism, a perilous occupation that places them squarely during events marked by death, violence, and personal risk. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an international organization dedicated to safeguarding the rights of journalists, maintains a grim record of media professionals killed while on duty. For instance, in 2014, the majority of such cases were recorded in conflict-ridden areas like Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, Israel, Somalia, and Pakistan, resulting in the tragic loss of 25 journalists (Shturkhetsky et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the statistics for 2018 reveal a deeply troubling trend, with journalists being targeted and killed as acts of reprisal nearly doubling. Journalists from countries as diverse as Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan. Hence, Journalists working in conflict-affected regions face

unique challenges compared to their counterparts in stable democracies. They are acutely aware that their work can appear inadequate, superficial, and even harmful both as journalists and as citizens. In such contexts, it's common to see simplified, vivid, and continuous coverage of conflict without a deep understanding of its underlying causes or a focus on potential solutions.

Moreover, Conflict-sensitive journalism offers a more responsible approach. It equips media professionals to provide the public with comprehensive, unbiased, and accurate information about conflicts. This approach empowers reporters to cover conflicts professionally without exacerbating the tension. Conflict-sensitive journalism means delving into the complexities of the issue, presenting all sides of the story, and allowing those involved to express their perspectives fully. There are specific principles or rules that journalists should follow when practicing conflict-sensitive journalism.

First and foremost, the safety of journalists and individuals in conflict zones takes precedence over the story itself. Second, journalists must gather ample information about the conflict and the region they are reporting from. Third, they should be prepared to operate in an environment where the usual norms and rules may not apply due to the armed conflict. Finally, journalists should not assume that national laws and international regulations will always be upheld in these situations (Shturkhetsky et al., 2016; Du Toit, 2012; Howard, 2009).

## **2.7. Peace journalism**

Peace journalism is a framework developed by Johan Galtung, a Norwegian academic in the 1960s that aims to enhance the probability of attaining peace by highlighting conflict and potential resolutions. It is not just about identifying as a pro-peace individual or journalist but adhering to a specific set of principles or guidelines that make conflicts more visible and create the potential for peaceful resolutions (Nayia & Christos, 2019). Galtung argued that the media focus on violence and conflict perpetuated a cycle of negativity and hindered the prospects for peace. He proposed that journalists should adopt a more constructive and solution-oriented approach to reporting, focusing on peace-building initiatives and nonviolent conflict resolution (Galtung & Ruge, 1965).

Also, as defined by Vasvi Çiftcioğlu in 2017, peace journalism involves objective, attentive, and proficient reporting that enhances the transparency of conflict (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). Peace

journalism aims to prevent and proactively address conflicts by exploring their root causes and contextual factors from all sides involved, not just the ones portrayed by mainstream media. It also prioritizes giving voice to rival parties and their perspectives, highlighting creative solutions for conflict resolution, development, peacemaking, and peacekeeping. Furthermore, it pays attention to positive stories of peace and post-war development (Nayia & Christos, 2019).

Thus, peace journalism is an alternative approach to traditional journalism that emerged in the late 20th century. It challenges the conventional narrative of conflict-oriented reporting by emphasizing nonviolent solutions, dialogue, and understanding. It aims to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of conflicts and their underlying causes, while also highlighting the efforts of individuals and groups working towards peace and reconciliation. Moreover, it encourages journalists to consider the broader context of conflicts and to explore the root causes, underlying grievances, and historical factors that contribute to them. This approach aims to provide a deeper understanding of the complexities involved and to challenge simplistic and biased narratives that often prevail in mainstream media.

Additionally, the key principle of peace journalism is the need for accuracy and fairness in reporting. Journalists are encouraged to provide context and multiple perspectives and avoid oversimplification or sensationalism. By doing so, they seek to promote a more balanced and nuanced understanding of conflicts. Moreover, peace journalism emphasizes nonviolent solutions and peace-building efforts. Journalists are encouraged to highlight the work of peace activities, grassroots organizations, and initiatives aimed at resolving conflicts through peaceful means. By showcasing these efforts, peace journalism aims to inspire and engage audiences in constructive dialogue and action (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005).

Thus, peace journalism is an approach to news reporting that focuses on presenting accurate, contextualized, and constructive information about conflict and violence. It aims to promote understanding, dialogue, and cooperation among conflicting parties rather than exacerbating tensions and fueling animosity. Peace journalism recognizes the complex roots and causes of conflicts and seeks to expose them while highlighting non-violent solutions and efforts to build long-term peace. Ultimately, peace journalism seeks to contribute to a culture of peace by empowering people to make well-informed decisions, promoting empathy and respect for diversity, and fostering a sense of shared humanity.

According to the above, journalists should play a crucial role in gathering information that clarifies misconceptions and publishing stories that illustrate dangerous misconceptions and help people get a better understanding of each other. Because the parties in the conflict see all the members of the opposite group in the same way. This means that if some of the group members behave in a racist, intolerant, or sexist manner, everyone in the group can be seen to share the same faults.

## **2.8. War journalism**

War journalism is often characterized by propaganda-driven, victory-driven, and elite-driven narratives. This type of journalism has the potential to escalate conflict and violence by perpetuating propaganda and promoting war efforts (Galtung, 2009). In the news industry, conflict coverage is often associated with the notion of conflict as a news value. Consequently, reporting on conflicts is frequently sensationalized and utilized to increase newspaper circulation and television ratings (IMS & IMPAC, 2004).

War journalism tends to portray conflicting parties as winners and losers, employing triumphalist language that focuses on military achievements. This narrative often lacks context, historical perspective, and background information, presenting a superficial account of the conflict (Galtung, 2002). Conflict is depicted as a zero-sum game, akin to a sport, where groups are polarized into opposing sides (i.e., "us-versus-them"). This approach emphasizes the visible effects of war while disregarding the less apparent consequences (Galtung, 2002). According to Johan Galtung, by perpetuating propaganda and supporting war efforts, war journalism has the potential to contribute to the perpetuation of conflicts. It may inadvertently fuel the continuation and intensification of violence by presenting a one-sided and simplistic narrative that fails to provide a comprehensive understanding of the situation (Galtung, 2009).

## **2.9. Ethiopian Media and Their Coverage of Ethnic Conflicts**

Ethiopia has indeed experienced various internal and external conflicts, with one of the most prominent being the conflict in many regions of the country. The media coverage of internal conflicts in Ethiopia can be influenced by several factors, including government control, ethnic divisions, and the availability of information.

One significant factor impacting media coverage in Ethiopia is government control. The Ethiopian government has exerted control over media outlets in the country, leading to a lack of media independence and potentially impacting the accuracy of reporting. The government has a history of restricting media coverage, particularly in regions affected by conflicts. Journalists and media houses critical of the government's actions have faced harassment, arrest, and closure (Moses, Alagaw, and Hubert, 2022). This control over media outlets can result in limited access to unbiased information and a skewed representation of events.

Ethiopia is a diverse nation with numerous ethnic communities, and some news organizations are associated with particular ethnic groupings. This association can exacerbate ethnic tensions during conflicts and result in biased reporting. Media outlets aligned with specific ethnic groups may prioritize their group's interests, leading to a lack of comprehensive and objective reporting (Moses, Alagaw, and Hubert, 2022).

During conflicts, both the government and opposition groups have been accused of using media outlets to promote misinformation and propaganda. This further complicates the ability of the general public to separate factual information from biased or deceptive narratives. The manipulation of media narratives in such a context can hinder the public's understanding of the situation on the ground (Moses, Alagaw, and Hubert, 2022).

International media outlets have reported on Ethiopian conflicts and often offer a more critical viewpoint on government activities. These outlets may have greater freedom to report independently, providing alternative perspectives. However, accessing areas of armed conflict in Ethiopia can be challenging, making it difficult to confirm information and gather accurate accounts. The limitation of access to conflict-affected regions can impact the depth and accuracy of international media coverage (Moses, Alagaw, and Hubert, 2022).

In recent years, social media platforms have played a significant role in disseminating information about Ethiopia's internal conflicts. While the accuracy of information shared on social media can vary, citizen journalists and activists have utilized these platforms to provide firsthand reports and photographs. Social media has allowed individuals on the ground to share their experiences and offer alternative perspectives outside of traditional media channels. However, it is crucial to critically evaluate and verify information from social media sources due to the potential for misinformation and biased narratives (Moses, Alagaw, and Hubert, 2022).

The independence and coverage of Ethiopia's local and regional media sources also vary. While some media outlets strive to deliver fair and balanced news, others may align with specific political or ethnic agendas or work under government influence. This variance in media sources further contributes to the complexity of obtaining accurate and unbiased information about the conflicts in Ethiopia (Moses, Alagaw, and Hubert, 2022).

## **2.10. Overview of Related Studies to Conflict Reporting in Ethiopian Media**

Research related to conflict reporting in Ethiopian media has been conducted from various perspectives and has shed light on issues related to media freedom, journalistic practices, and the role of media in promoting peacebuilding and conflict resolution. One such study by Gemechu Alayu, published in the *African Journalism Studies* journal, examined the coverage of the 2005 post-election violence in Ethiopia by the private and state-owned media. The study found that both types of media demonstrated bias and a lack of objectivity, with state-owned media showing strong support for the government and private media being more critical of government actions. The study suggested that media freedom and independence were important factors in promoting an ethical and balanced coverage of conflicts in Ethiopia.

Several studies have highlighted the need for media outlets to be neutral and objective when reporting on conflicts in Ethiopia. For instance, a study by Abiy Alemayehu (2014) focused on the role of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) during the Oromo farmer conflict in 2014. Alemayehu concluded that the EBC provided biased coverage, which had the potential to escalate tensions.

Abera investigated how the national and global media outlets framed the Oromo protests of 2015–2016 (Abera, 2018). Using text analysis, he has. The researcher's main interests were understanding how stories influence readers' perceptions, commonly employed frame types, and how the three newspapers framed the protest. The researcher has determined that the state-owned daily employed an anti-peace frame; as a result, rather than shaping their opinion, this disappointed the respondents in this instance and caused them to halt a thorough reading.

A study by Gobena (2019) compares the coverage of the Oromo protests in Ethiopia by Al Jazeera and the BBC. Using framing theory, the study analyzes how these global news media outlets frame the protests and the narratives they use in their reporting. Another study by

Muluken Alene (2017) focuses on the media coverage of the Oromo and Somali conflict. Alene found that the media provided incomplete and biased coverage, often failing to highlight the root causes of the conflict.

A study by Getaw Adane and Amanuel Gessesse, published in the *Journal of Conflictology*, examines the coverage of the 2015 Oromo protests by three Ethiopian media outlets: ESAT, Addis TV, and the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC). The study reveals significant differences in reporting styles and framing techniques among these outlets. The study emphasizes the need for media literacy programs and ethical journalism training to improve the quality of conflict reporting in Ethiopia.

Another study by Nega and Tarekegn (2015) evaluates the peacebuilding potential of two Ethiopian newspapers, *Addis Zemen* and *The Ethiopian Herald*. The study examines how these newspapers cover peace and conflict in Ethiopia and their contributions to peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, a study by Mosisa (2019) explores how Ethiopian print media outlets, specifically *Addis Fortune* and *The Reporter*, framed the Oromo protests in 2015. The study employs critical discourse analysis to identify underlying narratives and ideologies that shape the reporting of the protests.

These studies collectively highlight the importance of media representation and framing in conflict reporting, particularly in the context of Ethiopia. They underscore the need for balanced, accurate, and inclusive coverage to foster peacebuilding efforts and mitigate conflicts.

Concerning the specific objectives of the current study, previous research has shown that the types of sources used by media outlets in Ethiopia can impact the accuracy and objectivity of conflict reporting. For example, studies have found that regional government-owned media outlets often rely on government sources and official statements, while internationally broadcast media outlets tend to use a wider range of sources, including victims' views, civil society organizations, and experts. Additionally, research on framing techniques has shown that media outlets in Ethiopia often use simplistic and polarizing framing techniques, such as "us vs. them" narratives, which can exacerbate conflict and undermine peacebuilding efforts.

*The Role of the Media in Peacebuilding in Ethiopia: a Comparative Analysis of Addis Zemen and the Ethiopian Herald* (by Nega and Tarekegn). This study evaluates the peacebuilding

potential of two Ethiopian newspapers, Addis Zemen and The Ethiopian Herald. It examines how these newspapers cover peace and conflict in Ethiopia and how they contribute to peacebuilding efforts (Nega & Tarekegn, 2015).

### **2.11. Overview of the Kore and Guji conflict**

The Kore ethnic group is a part of Ethiopia's diverse population in the southern region. According to oral tradition, they migrated from the Gamo highlands in the 14th century (Wondaferahu, 2021). The Kore people predominantly reside in the Bench Maji Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) (CSA, 2007). They speak the Kooretee language, which belongs to the Omotic language family. The Kore community, along with other ethnic groups like Amhara, Oromo, Gurage, and Tigray, live in the Amaro Special Wereda. Agriculture, with a focus on coffee and inset as major cash crops, is the primary livelihood in the area (ASPWCHB, 2016)

While, the Guji ethnic group is part of the larger Oromo ethnic group and resides in the southern region of Ethiopia, around 470 km south of Addis Ababa. They primarily inhabit the Jamijam highland between the Galana and Genale valleys. The Guji people speak Affan Oromo and follow traditional Oromo culture. They are spread across 15 districts of the Oromia regional state. Additionally, they have a presence in neighboring areas alongside communities such as Gedio, Sidamo, Kore, Arisi, and Bale, sometimes leading to conflicts. (Jamjam, 2011; Dejene, 2009).

In addition, the contemporary history of Ethiopia is marked by the presence of ethnic rivalries and confrontations (Keller, 2002; Valfort, 2007). Following the year 1991, the country has witnessed various instances of violent conflicts between adjacent ethnic communities due to disputes over disputed borders (Asnake, 2004). Ethiopia has experienced ongoing tensions among its various ethnic groups, which can be attributed to historical, social, and political factors. These ethnic competitions and conflicts have roots in past grievances related to the distribution of resources, power imbalances, and historical marginalization of certain groups (Keller, 2002).

While ethnic federalism aimed to address historical grievances and promote inclusivity, it also led to the emergence of tensions between different ethnic communities. Disputes over territorial

boundaries have been a prominent issue, as certain areas were claimed by multiple ethnic groups, leading to clashes and violence (Asnake, 2004). These conflicts often result in large-scale displacement, loss of lives, destruction of infrastructure, and hindered economic development. Furthermore, they contribute to the erosion of social cohesion and national unity, posing significant challenges to the country's stability and progress (Keller, 2002). Nevertheless, addressing the root causes of ethnic tensions and building a harmonious society requires sustained efforts in promoting dialogue, fostering inclusivity, and ensuring equitable distribution of resources (Valfort, 2007).

The conflict between the Kore and Guji peoples in South Ethiopia has indeed been a complex issue rooted in resource disputes and territorial boundaries. Despite linguistic similarities and shared cultural practices, the administrative division between the SNNP and Oromia regions since 1991 has contributed to the separation of these communities. The conflicts, particularly since 2008, have caused significant social distress, economic instability, and political strain in the border regions. Limited intermarriage and movement of individuals across ethnic borders have not been enough to mitigate the conflicts. The mismanagement of agricultural land, pasture, and water resources has further exacerbated the situation, leading to severe food insecurity for the Kore agricultural group and a shortage of vital resources for the Guji agro-pastoral group (Abbink, 2006).

Numerous reports and studies by conflict professionals have highlighted the ethnic nature of the conflicts between the Kore and Guji. These studies provide valuable insights into the underlying causes and dynamics of the conflicts. According to the EHRC report dated April 25, 2021, there were attacks by armed groups in Limmu Kosa Woreda in Jimma Zone and Amaro Special Woreda in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR) of Ethiopia.

*“The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is monitoring reports of an attack by armed groups in Limmu Kosa woreda, Ket’cho Kirkira and Gale Kebele, Jimma zone on April 23, 2021. Civilian casualties have already been reported. The local administrative bodies of Amaro Special Woreda, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region (SNNPR) have also reported that on April 22, 2021, an armed group killed 6 people in Dano Kebele.”*

The report highlighted that civilian casualties were reported in these attacks. The EHRC urged the federal and regional authorities to respond urgently and appropriately to the situation. The report also emphasized the need for improved prevention and preparedness capacity of the security mechanisms, given the increasing frequency and spread of these attacks. In summary, the main. The news report from the Reporter Gazette on August 5, 2017, titled "Opposition demands government intervention in Kore, Guji clash," highlights the demand made by the Ethiopian Social Democrat Party for government intervention in addressing recent border clashes between the Kore ethnic group in the Southern Regional State and the Guji Oromo in the Oromia Regional State.

*“The Ethiopian Social Democrat Party (ESDP), one of the four member parties of the coalition of The Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum (Medrek), demanded the intervention of the government to take all the necessary measures to address the recent border clashes between Kore of Southern Regional State and Guji of the Oromia Regional State. The recent clash erupted when the administrators of the area tried to introduce new border demarcation between Amaro woreda, where the Kore ethnic group resides, and Gelana Abaya and Bule Hora woredas, where the Guji Oromo resides, deputy chairperson of ESDP Tilahun Endeshaw told The Reporter.*

*According to Tilahun, the clash between the two groups which lasted between July 23 and 29 resulted in the death of 13 residents of the area, 40 being injured, and some seven hundred houses and 400 piles of grain of various types burnt to the ground. Apart from this, a large amount of maize was also lost to the fire after being torched while it was still in the field.” The Reporter Gazette August 5, 2017*

The clash arose when new border demarcation was attempted between Amaro woreda (where the Kore ethnic group resides) and Gelana Abaya and Bule Hora woredas (where the Guji Oromo reside). The clashes resulted in casualties, injuries, destruction of property, and displacement of residents. The Ethiopian Social Democrat Party attributes the conflict to the federalism arrangement implemented over the past 26 years. The party calls for the government to halt the border demarcation, resolve the underlying issues between the two ethnic groups, ensure peaceful coexistence, provide support for the displaced, and hold accountable those responsible for instigating the conflict. The report also mentions that the Government's Communication Affairs minister confirmed the occurrence of the conflict, stating that it had calmed down. Officials from the Oromia Regional State were present at the location to assist with the border demarcation.

Furthermore, according to a report by the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRC) in 2023, a violent conflict took place between the Kore and Guji ethnic groups. This clash led to the loss of lives among the residents of the area, numerous injuries, and the destruction of around 700 houses. Additionally, several piles of various types of grain were set on fire and completely burnt down. This particular conflict between the Kore and Guji groups had severe consequences, resulting in a significant loss of life, widespread injuries, and extensive property damage. The loss of lives highlights the extreme and tragic nature of this conflict, as individuals from both Kore and Guji communities suffered fatal consequences. The exact number of casualties is not specified in the given statement, but it implies a significant impact on the local population.

The EHRC report also mentions the burning of several piles of grain of various types. This act of destroying food supplies can exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation caused by the conflict. Food security is a fundamental aspect of human well-being, and the deliberate destruction of food reserves can lead to hunger and further suffering for the affected communities, potentially triggering a long-term humanitarian crisis.

## **2.12. Background of SRTA and VOA**

This study was conducted on two Media outlets, South Television, and VOA. The South Television is the previously SNNPRS Ethiopia Government Owned media and Broadcasting service. The Television station was founded in Hawassa, the former regional city of SNNPR. South Television installed a modern digital television studio in 2006 E.C. with a high cost. South television's actual transmission coverage area extends up to the Middle East, including the Gulf States, as well as North Africa and North West African countries. The television news department produces top news weekly by evaluating them from different perspectives (SRTA News case team director, 23 March 2017).

The Voice of America (VOA) is a dynamic international multimedia broadcaster with service in more than 45 languages. Serving an estimated weekly global audience of more than 326 million, VOA provides news, information, and cultural programming through the Internet, mobile and social media, radio, and television. VOA is funded by the U.S. Government through the U.S. Agency for Global Media (VOA Public Relation, 2022). The Voice of America began broadcasting in 1942 to combat Nazi propaganda with accurate and unbiased news and

information. Ever since then, VOA has served the world with a consistent message of truth, hope, and inspiration (VOA Public Relations, December 5, 2016). Today, VOA continues to examine new technologies and digital platforms and refine its programming to reflect the needs of its listeners. One goal remains, however, for the hundreds of professionals who make up the Voice of America to deliver comprehensive, timely truthful information. The VOA broadcasts the sounds of freedom and serves as a beacon of hope for its audience around the world.

## **2.13. Theoretical Framework**

In this study, the objective is to assess conflict reporting by SRTV and VOA regarding the conflict between the Kore and Guji ethnic groups during a specific period. To achieve this aim, the researcher used agenda-setting theory and framing theory as a framework, which grounded the research in established ideas and aided in answering the research questions. Therefore, these theories serve as a roadmap for developing arguments and ensuring that the research is well-grounded.

### **2.13.1. Framing theory**

According to Tuchman (1978b), news organizations shape the knowledge and perspectives of the audience through selective and shaped texts, acting as a window on the world. Gitlin (1980) explains that the media frames events by selectively presenting and emphasizing certain aspects while excluding others, influencing the audience's perception. Framing involves the selection, emphasis, and presentation of issues, aiming to convey a specific viewpoint (Gitlin, 1980). Journalists play a crucial role in framing by choosing and presenting issues and views in the media (Gitlin, 1980). Reese (2001) defines frames as socially shared organizing principles that structure the social world symbolically. Framing is also linked to second-level agenda-setting, influencing the public's perception of an issue (McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Carroll & McCombs, 2003; McCombs, 2003). (Tuchman, 1978b; Gitlin, 1980; Reese, 2001; McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Carroll & McCombs, 2003; McCombs, 2003)

Framing theory posits that issues can be perceived from multiple perspectives, and individuals develop a specific conceptualization of the issue or update their thinking about it. The process of framing involves categorizing, organizing, and solving situations through publicly presented definitions that include a problem, a solution, and a protagonist (Liven, 2005). This theory

suggests that the media plays a critical role in shaping the attitudes of their audience by presenting particular frames. Framing is closely related to agenda-setting theory, which also explores how media influence audience attention. Both theories acknowledge that the media shapes interpretations or meaning (Entman, 1993; McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The framing process involves constructing and setting frames in communication. Frames can be constructed by both senders and receivers of information. Sources, such as politicians and elites, play a significant role in constructing frames as they disseminate information through the media to promote specific ideas (Entman, 2003). Journalists also contribute to framing by shaping the meaning of media texts and highlighting certain aspects of issues (Gerth & Siegert, 2012; Reese, 2001). Internal factors within the journalism profession, such as editorial policies, news values, and organizational constraints, influence how news organizations frame events (de Vreese, 2003/2005; Matthes, 2011). Identifying the framing in the news content (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), identifies five major ways for framing news stories: Conflict frame, Human Interest frame, Consequence frame, Morality frame, and Responsibility frame.

#### **A. Conflict frame**

This frame is focused on presenting news stories in terms of disagreement, or confrontation between individuals, groups, and nations. This frame tends to highlight differences of opinions, controversies, or adversarial relationships. It often emphasizes the sensational aspects of the story, attracting the audience's attention. Hence this framing approach can be found i.e. in conflict coverage, where conflicts between two groups, or individuals, as well as nations, are emphasized to make the story more compelling (Tuchman, 1978).

The conflict between parties can be prioritized, as opposed to the actual decision made. In reporting the conflict the media define the conflict through the language used and the issue included in their stories. Conflict framing includes the naming or labeling of a controversial situation, exploring causes for it, and providing an explanation for ongoing events. Thus the media frames some elements of a conflict as a figure and others as ground, searches for labels to capture the nature of a struggle, and try and try to forecast the outcomes of a dispute (Cottle, 2006).

In some cases, the media may prioritize the conflict itself over the actual decisions or outcomes. For example, in coverage of political campaigns, the media may focus more on the heated debates and personal attacks between candidates rather than their policy proposals. On the other hand, in the conflict frame, media outlets delve into the causes of conflicts and provide explanations for ongoing events. This can involve in-depth reporting on the historical, social, or political factors contributing to a dispute.

Moreover, the conflict frame in media coverage is a powerful tool for attracting audience attention by highlighting differences, controversies, and adversarial relationships. However, it also raises questions about the potential impact of this framing on public perceptions and the overall quality of news reporting. Scholars have extensively studied the effects and implications of the conflict frame in media, shedding light on its role in shaping public discourse and opinion.

### **B. Human Interest/Personalization Frame Bulletin**

The human interest/personalization frame aims to evoke emotional responses from the audience or viewer by emphasizing the personal or human aspects of a news story. It seeks to make the audience relate to the people involved and evokes curiosity. This frame often intends on human experiences, personal narratives, or stories that emotionally engage the audience. The human interest stories often cover topics like human triumphs, struggles, or extraordinary personal experiences. Presenting a story with a human face, personality is promoted over more important aspects. Identified in a news story that presents an issue from a more emotional angle or point of view and personalizes a conflict (Cottle, 2006).

The human interest frame is a widely used approach in journalism and storytelling to connect with audiences on a deep emotional level. This frame emphasizes the personal or human aspects of a news story to evoke emotional responses and make the audience relate to the people involved. Hence, in cases of conflicts, the human interest frame can personalize the issue by focusing on the experiences of those affected. For example, when reporting on a natural disaster, news outlets may share individual stories of survival, loss, or heroism to help the audience connect with the broader impact of the event.

### **C. Consequence Frame**

Consequences can be wide-ranging. Pursuing a policy may be unwise in terms of unity within a party or coalition or in terms of the status of a nation globally. The consequence frame highlights the possible outcomes, impacts, or consequences of a news event or issue. It intends to illustrate the significance or potential effects of a story on individuals, communities, or societies. This frame approach focuses on the practical implications and societal repercussions of an event or decision. This type of frame is often utilized in stories related to public policy, disasters, or major societal changes (Entman, 1993; McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The consequence frame is essential for providing context and depth to news stories. It helps the audience go beyond the surface of an event or decision and understand its broader implications. Journalists use this frame to analyze, inform, and provoke thought on how various aspects of society and individuals are affected by the issues at hand. By highlighting the potential consequences, the consequence frame adds depth and significance to news reporting.

### **D. Morality Frame**

Media coverage can often moralize, sometimes due to the indiscretions of political actors; or alternative, policies can be seen as morally questionable. The morality frame is more revolves around ethical value-based judgments, and considerations. It emphasizes issues of right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable, and good and bad behavior. Through this frame news stories are presented in a way that appeals to the moral values or principles of the audience. It frequently prompts discussion about justice, fairness, or moral implications of actions. The morality frame can be found in stories related to crime, corruption, or social issues that bring up ethical dilemmas (Liven, 2005).

One common area where the morality frame is prominent is in crime reporting. Media outlets often cover criminal cases by highlighting the moral aspects of the crimes, the victims, and the perpetrators (George, 2020). For example, news stories about a heinous crime may focus on the suffering of the victim's family and the moral outrage it generates within the community. This framing aims to engage the audience's moral compass, evoking feelings of sympathy, anger, or a call for justice. Hence, the morality frame in media coverage plays a vital role in shaping public opinion and fostering discussions about ethical values, right and wrong, and societal norms. By

highlighting the moral dimensions of various issues, the media can influence public perception and drive debates on topics that matter to society. However, media consumers need to be critical and aware of how this frame may shape their views and opinions.

### **E. Responsibility Frame**

Attributing responsibility, either for a cause or a solution. In the wake of the Asian Tsunami one frame was global responsibility for finding solutions as well as blaming the lack of preparedness on the local governments. The responsibility frame centers or focuses on attributing accountability, blame, or praise to specific individuals, organizations, or entities. It highlights the actions or decisions of various actors involved in a news event, focusing on their responsibility or lack thereof. The responsibility frame aims to shed light on who should be held accountable and who deserves credit, shaping the audience's perception of the issue. It is often utilized in political scandals, conflicts, corporate misconduct, or controversies involving prominent figures.

Script structure, on the other hand, focuses on the storytelling aspect of the news item and considers how different events are connected (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). The thematic structure of a news item concentrates on the communication of particular topics, such as the repetition or rephrasing of topics, or the development of stories through the analysis of characters and dramatic elements (Tuchman, 1972). Lastly, the rhetorical structure of news items concerns how language is used to frame events or ideas to affect the way they are perceived (Entman, 2007). It is important to note that news stories can be framed using one or more of these frames, even if other additional frames simultaneously, and the choice of frame can significantly influence how audiences interpret and understand the information. Each frame emphasizes different aspects of a story, enabling news organizations (media houses) to present information from different angles to cater to diverse audience preferences and interests.

In general, the relevance of framing theory in analyzing conflicts is demonstrated through the use of Entman's functional classification (1993) and Kothari's deconstruction of content (2010). These frameworks help identify frames by examining how problems are defined, causes are diagnosed, moral judgments are made, and remedies are suggested in newspaper articles. The absence or presence of certain issues and the emphasis placed on causes, background information, and solutions are crucial in framing analysis. Additionally, framing theory serves as a tool for interpreting media texts, employing an inductive approach to identify frames specific

to the analyzed issue. The hermeneutic approach of Matthes and Kohring (2008) aids in providing an interpretative account of media texts, particularly in qualitative analyses. The process of framing analysis helps identify major frames in internal conflict stories, with a focus on the roles of communicators (sources) and the media (text). However, this research does not extensively examine the influence of audiences and culture. The construction and identification of frames in this study employ hermeneutic, indicative, and issue-specific framing approaches.

### **2.13.2. Agenda setting theory**

In the field of mass communication, there are many media effect theories, and the agenda-setting theory is one of them. McCombs and Donald Shaw developed the agenda-setting theories based on their seminal study published in 1972. Meanwhile, then, many empirical studies have been conducted to test the theory, hence cumulatively establishing the theory's predictive power (McCombs, 2004).

Agenda-setting researchers often study content analysis to examine the level or degree of the object silence in the news coverage for the agendas of media. For the public agenda, a public opinion survey is often conducted the level or degree of object silence is determined based on the total percentage of the public's mentions of whatever the object of interest is in the research (McCombs, Lopez Escobar, and Llamas, 2000). The original Agenda-setting theory proposed a reasonable media influence on social cognition and how individuals are informed or learn about the important issues of the day.

General media coverage supplied media users with silent cues regarding the relative importance of these issues. The agenda settings have main assumptions these are the media filters and shape what we see rather than just what the audiences reflect on the stories. Also, the more attention or coverage the media gives to an issue, the more likely the public will consider that issue to be more important (Wayne, et al. (2004).

Because the selection of events for inclusion in the media's agenda is influenced by prevailing interpretations of the world, agenda-setting is inevitably linked to framing research. Simultaneously, media agendas are likely to also shape the frame of interpretation of a news event by the recipient. In a contemporary extension of the original theory, the second level of agenda-setting, the media also suggests how people should think about the issue. There are two

types of attributes: cognitive (substantive or topical) and affective (evaluative, positive, negative, and neutral). Adopting this notion, McCombs and Shaw now contend that the media may not only tell us what to think about but also tell us who and what to think about and perhaps even what to do about it (Stephen and Karen, 2009). Agenda-setting states that to the idea that there is a strong association between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues (e.g., based on the relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (McCombs & Shaw, 2003).

The silence of certain issues is based on the choice of coverage/reportage of different media and journalists/practitioners. This can be seen in the duration allocated by journalists for a certain issue/topic on television, radio, newspapers, online media outlets, etc. In this framework, media reportage determines media, public, policy, and corporate agendas (Sullivan, 2011). When we relate agenda-setting theory to the current study, the theory emphasizes that the media sets the public agenda in several ways, so it can be beneficial as it highlights important societal issues (like conflict reports) by actively discussing them. The repetition of conflict news raises awareness among people about the issue and how to solve it.

Therefore in the current study, agenda-setting theory will be used to identify that editors, writers, and reporters can choose conflict stories and how much space should be allocated to them. Because generating awareness, agenda-setting can be important as it highlights conflict issues by actively discussing them. The recurrence of specific news is raising awareness among people about the issues and how to solve them. The agenda-setting offers a structured framework for shaping discussions surrounding information. It suggests that the media agenda should align with the public agenda, as agenda setting can be advantageous in influencing the collective opinions of the general population.

Agenda-setting research has seen a growth in scope and interest across various fields, including sociology (Dearing & Rogers, 1996), health communication, political communication, business communication, and psychology (Coleman, McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 2009; McCombs & Stroud, 2014). This theory has been used to examine how media influences public perceptions of specific issues. It has been employed as a theoretical framework in this study, contributing to the framing, instrument development, and data analysis (Gerbner, 1972, p. 44).

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3. Introduction**

In this chapter, the study presents how data was collected to address the research questions. The chapter focuses on explaining how these methods were utilized to collect and analyze the data. The chapter also discusses the specific steps taken when using each instrument, along with the rationale for their selection.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

In this study, a descriptive research design with a sequential explanatory design was used. Using a descriptive research design with a sequential explanatory design allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic by providing additional insights, explanations, or context to the initial quantitative findings. This design uses the idea that the quantitative result is not enough and the researcher wants to explore participants' perspectives, or experiences in more detail. In this regard, the descriptive design benefits the researcher by clearly identifying and describing the data. A descriptive research design is used to describe social structures, social events, social situations, and so on (Akhtar, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Kothari & Cherian, 2020).

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), there are more three mixed designs, such as the convergent design, the explanatory sequential design, and the exploratory sequential design (Creswell & Plano, 2018). The researcher utilized the explanatory sequential design due to its suitability for mixed research methods. In this study, a descriptive research design was employed alongside an explanatory sequential design to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation. This sequential design involves collecting and analyzing quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to explain and elaborate on the quantitative findings.

#### **3.2. Research Approach**

This study employed a mixed research method, which utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods to identify patterns in the collected data and establish relationships between elements.

By incorporating statistical trends and in-depth analysis, this method supports existing theories while also generating new ones.

According to Creswell (2013), the mixed research method is an important and evolving approach in research, enabling the examination of human and social problems through the combination of both quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative research method is used to generate the meaning of the numerical data by using a numerical description to give the meaning of the sampling data. The qualitative research method was used to describe in-depth interviews conducted with key informants to validate and deepen the quantitative data.

### **3.3. Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

To achieve the study's objective, it is crucial to determine the appropriate sampling techniques, and the appropriate sample size.

#### **3.3.1. Sampling Technique**

In this study, purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling technique was employed. To select the sample period, news items and the journalist's purposive sampling are appropriate. And also conducted the interview purposefully, which means the researcher used a purposive sampling technique to select informants who were engaging in reporting the ethnic conflict issue to get important information for the study. Purposive sampling was chosen by the researcher for several reasons: to gather in-depth information about a specific conflict characteristic and select purposefully chosen news stories (the stories about the sampled conflict under this study), ensuring the sample provides the required insights. It was also used to select key informants or experts in the field who have information about the conflict. Additionally, the researcher faced limited sources that were not easily found, as the conflict received minimal media coverage.

The purposive sampling technique involves selecting certain units based on specific purposes rather than arbitrarily (Kothari, 2004; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). It is also called judgmental sampling; it is a non-probability sampling technique that involves the conscious selection by the researcher of a certain sample to include in the study. The selection of a sample is based on the researcher's knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of the research aim (Verma, Gautam, Pandey, Mishra, & Shukla, 2017).

### **3.3.2. Sample Size**

The researcher conducted a study focusing on specific media outlets to assess the coverage of Kore-Guji conflict stories. The study examined all the news stories related to the conflict that were aired or broadcast between January 1, 2022, and July 30, 2022, in both media outlets. According to some reports by EECMY and GIZ (2022), Amnesty International (2022), and Human Rights Watch (2022), it is evident that the conflict and violence between the groups intensified during the latter half of 2022.

The researcher specifically chose news stories in the Amharic language that discussed the Kore-Guji conflict, limited to the specified timeframe. Hence, the selected time scope is the sample size of the study; all news items related to the Kore-Guji conflict that were broadcast as news content by both media outlets were collected. All data was collected from both media outlets' official channels (YouTube, Website (VOA), and Facebook channels).

### **3.4. Source of data**

When deciding on the source of data, researchers considered two types of data: primary and secondary. Primary data refers to information that is collected for the first time, is fresh, and is original. On the other hand, secondary data has already been collected by someone else. In the study, both primary and secondary data were utilized. The primary data was gathered through interviews conducted with key informants, while the secondary data consisted of news items or news content obtained from both media outlets.

### **3.5. Data collection instruments**

Content analysis and semi-structured in-depth interviews with frame analysis are employed as data collection instruments in this study. The researcher collected news items about the Kore-Guji conflict from both media outlets official websites and social media platforms under the study; these news contents were in Amharic. Hence, the researcher conducted a frame analysis in addition to categorizing the data. This procedure entailed the compilation and evaluation of media content, specifically archival data or media content that was obtained from the official websites and social media platforms of both media organizations. Therefore, content analysis, and semi-structured in-depth interviews are used as data collection tools in this study.

### **3.5.1. Content analysis**

Content analysis is a systematic and objective method used to study media and communication content. It involves quantitatively analyzing texts to measure their characteristics (Krippendorff, 2004; Weerakkody, 2009). In this study, content analysis is used to assess the overall presentation and coverage of the Kore-Guji conflict. By analyzing the content of media stories, the researcher was able to quantify the extent of coverage and identify patterns and trends in how the conflict was reported. This information provided valuable insights into the conflict's characteristics and dynamics. To address any limitations, frame analysis, which examines the textual messages, was combined with content analysis.

After content analysis, a frame analysis of news frames was undertaken to examine the news items. To enhance the objectivity, validity, and applicability of this study, a deductive approach (from the two approaches; deductive and inductive) was chosen based on the major common generic frames in the literature. The inductive approach allows the study to reveal the presence of possible frames with an understandable definition of the frames in advance (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000); the deductive approach is based on a priori defined generic frame to examine which frames are in a news story (De Vreese, 2005; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The inductive approach is too broad, subjective, and hard to replicate; many scholars have argued favorably for applying a deductive method using generic frames (Tankard, 2001; De Vreese, 2005).

To measure the presence of the five generic frames identified by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and Entman (2001), a list of questions for each frame has been formulated. The questions are based on a questionnaire developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and Entman (2001) and adapted to analyze the news articles about the Kore-Guji conflict from both media outlets. If a question can be answered with yes, it means that the frame is present. These questions were the leading thread in identifying the presence of the five most common generic frames: conflict frame, human interest frame, economic consequences frame, morality frame, and responsibility frame. In addition, the dominant frame was identified and discussed with news, and evidence.

### **3.5.2. In-depth interview**

In addition to assessing the reportage of the conflict through quantitative content analysis and framing the stories using qualitative analysis, it was found to gain in-depth viewpoints from the journalists regarding why the report was carried out in such a manner and why not. The two (first and second) objectives of this study need deep insight and more investigation. Once the media content was collected, a thorough analysis was conducted. This analysis involved examining the content for patterns, themes, and key insights. After the analysis, the interview stage was initiated.

Therefore, the researcher employed an in-depth interview (in the Amharic language) to meet the objectives of the study. Integral to this study is the significance of interviews in elucidating how journalists, within selected media outlets, framed and covered conflict stories. Key informant interviews, tailored to unveil underlying motivations and aspirations, were employed to explore the needs, desires, and sentiments of respondents (Kathori, 2004). Four journalists (two journalists from each sampled media outlet) were selected for interviews based on their contributions during the conflict period and their roles in story production. The chosen informants, who frequently participated in covering the selected conflict in the sampled period were selected for an interview. The researcher determined the experts who were regularly involved in reporting on the conflict by examining the bylines of the news stories. Notably, the SRTA key informants were interviewed at the SRTA head office in Hawassa, utilizing a free studio, on April first. For VOA, interviews took place in Hawassa town and via phone at the end of April. The researcher personally transcribed the interview data from both media key informants, a meticulous process spanning three days.

### **3.6. Coding**

Coding was used in the content and fame analysis. Coding is used to narrow the frameworks and convey senses to the raw data, which is going to be analyzed or evaluated. The researcher coded the contents (texts) that related to the Kore and Guji ethnic conflicts. Coding is a system of assigning code that has been previously emphasized in a codebook to raw data. It enables the researcher to engage in data reduction and simplification. A listing of the codes (checklist) is used in the analysis of the data. The type of credited sources in the news items, the concepts

related to the five generic frames, and the war and peace frames were coded (the checklist attached in Appendix I).

The researcher's decision to do so was to adopt deductive theories (Given, 2008). The frames deductive coding (checklist) was adopted from Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) and Fong (2009), and the war or peace categories coding checklist was adopted from Fong (2009), Lee & Maslog (2005), and Mulatu (2017). In addition, the rhetorical structure of news items is examined based on the used words and sentences, and these are linked with pieces of evidence. Framing devices in news items are classified into four structural dimensions: syntactical structure, script structure, thematic structure, and rhetorical structure (Entman, 2007).

The researcher in this study used deductive theories or existing research as a basis for analysis. Specifically, pre-determined coding from Semetko and Valkenberg, Entman, and Kothari was used to analyze texts within the stories. This coding was carried out by the researcher and a graduate student in journalism and mass communication who understood Amharic. Before commencing the coding process, the researcher provided the coder with an explanation of coding categories that align with the three objectives. To ensure the reliability of the coding, the percentage of agreements between the two coders was calculated, which was calculated as  $2M/N1+N2$  (Krippendorff, 2004), and among the 116 total (63 generic frames, 53 sources) judgments, 110 similar agreements were recorded, and it was found that there was a 96.5% agreement rate, indicating that the measurements were reliable. Any disagreements between the coders were addressed during the second round of coding.

### **3.7. Unit of Analysis**

The choice of unit of analysis in research is contingent upon the investigative focus, with variations ranging from words and sentences to entire documents. In this quantitative content analysis, a singular narrative served as the unit of analysis, specifically a story depicting conflict across diverse genres. The unit of analysis, denoting the fundamental text unit subject to classification in content analysis, formed the basis for presenting quantitative data results (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

### **3.8. Data Analysis Method**

Data analysis is a continuing process that demands all the integrity and preservation the researcher can master. The image of the researcher carefully laying out the hypotheses and testing them in a ritualistic fashion results only in ritualistic research (Babbie, 2013).

In this study, the researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data and opted for a sequential presentation. Quantitative data, analyzed with SPSS, was presented numerically in tables, exploring variables through frequency analysis and cross-tabulation. Personal interviews supplemented the analysis thematically, offering insights into media outlet content production. In addition, the researcher conducted a framing analysis using textual analysis. One of the key advantages of textual analysis is its ability to provide insights into the language, rhetoric, and framing techniques used by media outlets (Babbie, 2013). Moreover, this analysis focused on identifying the dominant frames within the stories and further examined them by providing relevant examples (a scholarly checklist) and supporting them with scholarly ideas and previous research findings.

### **3.9. Ethical consideration**

As a scholar and academic, maintaining ethical standards is crucial in research. In this study, the researcher adhered to a professional approach by implementing several fundamental principles. These principles included obtaining informed consent from participants, refraining from providing incentives to informants, ensuring the confidentiality of sources, minimizing any potential harm to respondents, using collected data for only research purposes, and avoiding promoting the researcher's agenda.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, the collected data was presented, and delved into the key findings, engaging in a comprehensive discussion. The data was collected from SRTA and VOA between January 1 2022 and July 30, 2022, regarding the coverage of Kore-Guji conflict stories. Furthermore, key informants from both media outlets were interviewed to gather additional data. The first section provides information on the extent or frequency of conflict-related stories broadcasted by both media outlets in the sampled period. Subsequent sections focus on the authors of the stories (by-line), broadcast month, types of news stories, and the sources of information used in reporting conflicts. These aspects are presented separately to understand who wrote the stories and where the information came from.

Lastly, the chapter examines how conflict stories are framed by media outlets and highlights the prevailing narrative perspectives. Deductive theories were utilized as a foundation for frame analysis. Pre-determined coding methods from Semetko and Valkenberg, Entman, and Kothari were employed to analyze the texts within the stories. The analysis was done by examining media content and interview results in combination to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The data was presented and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods, respectively.

#### **4.2. Presentation, and Findings of Quantitative Data**

The analysis considered issues such as the frequency of coverage, the types of stories that received attention, and the by-line (reporter or specific reporters). These elements have significant implications for the way conflict is reported in the media. The frequency of reporting can indicate the level of importance and relevance assigned to this conflict in the public eye, the types of stories covered about this conflict hold significance, that can shape the narrative surrounding the conflict, and the by-line facilitates public recognition and feedback, encouraging responsible reporting and journalistic integrity as well as it helps to identify that the journalists on the spot or not.

### 4.2.1. The Frequency of Reporting on Conflicts in Both Media

The first step of analysis is to quantify the news stories (about the Kore-Guji conflict) collected from two media outlets. Analyzing the frequency of news coverage is crucial for understanding the level of attention and significance that groups assign to a particular conflict through media reporting.

*Table 4.1 Frequency of the Conflict Reported in*

The frequency of the conflict news stories in both media outlets			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	SRTA	11	44.0
	VOA	14	56.0
	Total	25	100.0

*Source: Survey 2023*

The findings in Table 4.1 indicate that in the sampled period, a total of 25 stories were broadcast in both media outlets, whereas 11 (44%) stories were covered by SRTA and 14 (56%) stories were covered by VOA, and all transmitted stories in the sample period were checked.

The result shows that both media outlets provided coverage of the conflict among the group, with VOA broadcasting a slightly higher number of stories. This finding provides an overview of the distribution of coverage between SRTA and VOA during the specific period. The fact that all transmitted stories in the sample period were checked ensures that the data is compressive and accurate, while some stories may have been missed if they were not transmitted in the sample period.

### 4.2.2. Broadcast Months

During the period from January 2022, to July 2022, the study mainly focused on news stories related to the Kore-Guji conflict that were reported by both media outlets. The table below presents the distribution of news coverage, showing the number of news stories for each month.

**Table 4.2. The media organization and Broadcast month Cross tabulation**

The media organization		Broadcast months							Total
		January	February	March	April	May	June	July	
	SRTA	1(9.09)	1(9.09)	2(18.2)	2(18.2)	1(9.09)	2(18.2)	2(18.2)	11
	VOA	2(14.3)	3(21.4)	5(35.7)	2(14.3)	1(7.1)	0	1(7.1)	14
Total		3(12%)	4(16%)	7(28%)	4(16%)	2(8%)	2(8%)	3(12%)	25

Source: Survey 2023

Table 4.2, shows the number of conflict stories broadcasted by two media outlets, SRTA and VOA, for each month in the sampled period. Let's take a closer look at each media outlet separately.

#### **SRTA Outlet:**

According to the table, a total of 11 stories were broadcasted by SRTA during the sampling period. In January, February, and May, 9.09% of the stories broadcast were about the conflict between Kore and Guji. In March, April, June, and July 18.2% of the news broadcasts were about the Kore-Guji conflict.

#### **VOA Outlet:**

The data shows that VOA broadcasted a total of 14 stories during the sampling period. In January and April, 14.3% of the stories broadcast were about the conflict between Kore and Guji. In February, 21.4% of the stories were about the same topic. In March, 35.7% of the stories broadcast were about this conflict. Moreover, in May and July, 7.1% of the stories were broadcast by VOA in June.

Overall, both media outlets covered the conflict between Kore and Guji, but the frequency and timing of the coverage differed and were limited. SRTA covered the topic more frequently in March and April, whereas VOA covered the story more in February and March.

### **4.2.3. Types of News Stories**

The table below provides the number of news stories in two categories, hard news, and soft news, for two media outlets, SRTA and VOA.

**Table 4.3. News stories type with media outlets**

Types of news stories with media outlets		Types of a news story		Total
		Hard news	Soft news	
The media organization	SRTA	5(45.6%)	6(54.4%)	11
	VOA	12(85.7%)	2(14.3%)	14
Total		17	8	25

Source: Survey 2022

In media and journalism, news stories can be broadly categorized into two types: hard news and soft news. Hard news refers to "breaking news," which includes the most important, recent, and urgent information of public interest. Soft news, on the other hand, encompasses human-interest stories and covers topics other than "hard news" events.

Based on the data presented in the table, it can be observed that the SRTA outlet broadcasted a higher percentage of soft news stories (54.4%) compared to news or hard news stories (45.6%). On the other hand, VOA outlets broadcasted 85.7 percent of hard news stories and 14.3 percent of soft news stories during the sampled period. This information could be used to discuss the difference in the types of stories broadcast by the two media outlets without making a direct comparison.

#### **4.2.4. Byline (Reporter)**

Similarly to the type of news story, the byline of conflict stories can indicate the level of attention given by journalists and media outlets. The table below shows the number of stories produced or written by different sources, including the media's journalists, government communication affairs offices, local or international news agencies, and others.

**Table 4.4. Distribution of bylines or reporters of the story with media outlets**

Reporter (bylines) of the story with the media outlets		Reporter (bylines) of the story				Total
		The media staff reporters		Gov't Communication office		
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
The media outlets	SRTA	6	54.5	5	45.5	11
	VOA	11	78.6	3	21.4	14

Source: Survey 2023

According to Table 4.4, out of a total of eleven news stories sampled from SRTA media, 6 (54.5%) were produced by their reporters, while the remaining 5 (45.5%) were written by the government communication affairs office. No news stories were bylined by national or international news agencies. Also, out of a total of 14 news stories sampled from VOA media outlets, 78.5% (11) were produced by their correspondent reporters, and the remaining 21.4% were produced by the government communication affairs office. Overall, this analysis suggests that both media seem to rely on their journalists for their news stories.

**4.2.5. Sources of News Stories**

Sources can be individuals, organizations, or entities that offer information or firsthand accounts of events or situations covered by news organizations. Sources can range from experts and government officials to eyewitnesses and event participants. The trustworthiness and credibility of these sources or witnesses are crucial for news outlets to ensure the accuracy and fairness of their reporting. Additionally, it is essential to safeguard the anonymity of sources who may be at risk or face consequences for sharing their information.

*Table 4.4. Sources (witnesses) of news with media outlets*

	SRTA		VOA	
	Frequency of Stories	Percent	Frequency of Stories	Percent
Victims	6	27.3%	13	41.9%
Gov't Officials	11	50%	11	35.4%
News Agency	1	4.6%	3	9.7%
Opinion leaders	4	18.1%	3	9.7%
Others			1	3.3%
Total	22	100%	31	100%

Source: Survey 2023

Based on the data collected, it appears that the SRTA relied heavily on government officials as sources for the stories included in their news content, with 11 (50%) out of 22 sources being sourced from them. And six (27.3%) stories were sourced from victims. In addition, 4 stories (18.1%) were sourced from opinion leaders and another 1 (4.6%) from a news agency.

It is concerning to see that government officials are identified as the primary sources of news stories, as reported by SRTA. The media need to seek a diverse set of perspectives when reporting on sensitive topics like conflict. The voices of victims and news agencies are particularly crucial in providing a comprehensive and balanced view of the situation. It is also worth noting that the lack of representation of the perspectives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in news stories is troubling. NGOs often work on the ground and have valuable insight that can help shed light on the situation. Media outlets should maintain their journalistic integrity by reporting on issues in an impartial and balanced manner.

On the other hand, based on Table 4.4, it can be observed that the majority of stories produced by VOA, which were sampled, were sourced from victims of the conflict, accounting for 13 (45.5%) of the total stories. Government officials were the second most common source of stories, accounting for 11 (35.4%) of the stories produced. The news agency was the source for three stories, making up 9.7% of the total. Opinion leaders were also a source of stories, accounting for 3 (9.7%) of the total, while other sources (NGOs) accounted for 1 (3.3%). This variety of sources and perspectives helps to ensure that VOA's reporting on the conflict is thorough and balanced, providing audiences with a more comprehensive understanding of the situation.

#### **4.2.6. Types of Frames Used in News Stories**

The focus is on how media outlets covered and prioritized the conflict within the sampling period, as well as the themes and central ideas of the stories. The aim is to understand how the media outlets gave meaning to conflict stories and how they portrayed the conflict.

To analyze the generic frames in news articles in both media outlets regarding the Kore-Guji conflict, a list of questions was developed based on a questionnaire by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and Entman (2001). This list served as a guide for identifying the presence of five generic frames in news articles: conflict frame, human interest frame, economic consequences frame, morality frame, and attribution of responsibility frame. The checklist (see Appendix, I) determined the presence of these frames by asking specific questions that required a yes or no answer.

*Table 4.5. Types of news frames used in news stories*

<b>Generic frames</b>	<b>SRTA</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>VOA</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Conflict Frame	6	23	8	21.6
Human Interest Frame	3	11.5	8	21.6
Economic Consequences Frame	4	15.5	5	13.5
Morality Frame	3	11.5	4	10.9
Attribution of responsibility	10	38.5	12	32.4
Total	26	100	37	100

Source: Survey 2023

The above table depicts the types of frames in which the news stories were framed. It is important to note that one news story had more than three frames. The distribution of these frames in both media outlets:

### **SRTA**

Based on the table, the attribution of responsibility frame takes the highest share of the news stories broadcasted by SRTA outlets, with 10 news stories (38.5%). The conflict frames were ranked second in six news stories (23%), which present the conflicting parties on different fronts, entertain polarized views, reveal the presence of conflicting parties, and mention different groups as victims and attackers.

Another frame found in the SRTA media outlet news items is the economic frame that deals with the effect of the conflict on economic activity, as observed in four news stories (15.5%). Another three news stories (11.5%) are framed as having moral values that employ opinion leaders, usually religious fathers and community leaders, as a source of the news to guide people, which helps them to behave ethically, avoid conflict, and foster a peaceful community. At the same time, human interest was framed in three (11.5%) of the total stories by SRTA outlets.

## VOA

Likewise, for VOA, the attribution of responsibility frame takes up the highest share of the news stories, which focus on the causes and solutions for the conflict, made up of 12 news stories (32.4%). The conflict frame and human interest frame were found in the second news frame, which proves the presence of an antagonistic relationship between the two groups, one as an attacker and the other as a victim, often the Kore and Guji ethnic groups, respectively. The conflict frame and human interest frame count for 21.6% of the total (in 8 news stories). The morality frame was another type in the news stories broadcasted by the VOA outlet, which counted in 4 news stories (10.9%). And the economic consequence frame is found in five news stories (13.5%).

Based on the findings, both media outlets consequently use the attribution of responsibility frame. To clarify the findings, it needs to find out the dominant frame used by both media outlets because the quantitative finding is not enough to conclude the finding.

### **4.3. Presentation of Interview Data**

To foster a comprehensive grasp of the subject under examination, interviews were systematically conducted with key informants affiliated with the media outlets incorporated in this study. A purposive selection approach was employed to deliberately choose four participants, encompassing two reporters from each media outlet, ensuring a deliberate diversity of perspectives. These interviews served the purpose of triangulation and validation of the quantitative data, thereby ensuring a well-rounded methodological approach to the research. The presentation of the interview findings was structured thematically, delineated across four distinct themes: the first pertained to the frequency of coverage, the second provided a detailed exposition on the typologies of news stories, the third expounded upon the attribution of authorship (byline), and the fourth delineated the sources utilized by both media outlets. Specifically, key informants from the South Radio and Television Agency were denoted as ST01 and ST02, while those affiliated with the Voice of America were designated as VA01 and VA02. This coding methodology serves the dual purpose of preserving confidentiality and facilitating organized data management throughout the research endeavor.

## Theme I.

In general, it seems that both media outlets provided limited coverage of the conflict issues during the sampled period. Given that they only featured 25 stories related to the conflict, it is understandable that the media did not give high priority to reporting on the situation. In the fact that during the sampled period, which coincided with a heightened state of conflict between the groups, (Amnesty International, 2022; EECMY & GIZ, 2022), both media did not give the coverage more on.

Regarding the extent of coverage (frequency of report), the key Informants shared their views, and a justification for the limitations of coverage, which included factors such as safety concerns for the journalists and the people involved in the conflict, limited access to information, and sources, and ethical considerations on how to report on sensitive issues without causing further harm or exacerbating the conflict. In terms of the coverage one of the key informant's shares:

*“In some cases, reporting on a conflict may not yield positive outcomes, and we choose not to cover it due to fear of escalating tensions. Government interference often hinders the independence of the media. Typically, the media reports on the conflict after they have occurred, indicating limited freedom of the press and government control over information dissemination. The main challenges in reporting this conflict include logistical difficulties, government censorship, and journalistic negligence. Because of these hindrances, we weren't able to give much coverage on this conflict.”* (Informant ST01, April 2023)

The informant mentions several factors that hinder the media's ability to provide sufficient coverage and accurate information. One significant concern is the fear of escalating tensions, which may lead to a decision not to cover certain conflicts. And also government interference, which limits the independence of the media and restricts the dissemination of information. Concerning this another key informant added:

*“Giving enough coverage, and obtaining accurate and up-to-date information is challenging due to limited access to the conflict zone. The lack of access and closer of roads by military groups hinder effective coverage.”*(Informant ST02, April, 2023)

Additionally, logistical difficulties are mentioned as challenges that affect reporting on conflicts. The lack of access to conflict zones and road closures further hinder effective coverage. These issues collectively result in limited coverage and difficulties in obtaining accurate and up-to-date information about the conflict.

However, it is important to note that there are also media outlets and journalists who strive to report on conflicts as accurately and objectively as possible, even under difficult circumstances. Regardless of the reasons, it is clear that the lack of media attention has made it harder for the public to stay informed about the situation and to understand the complexities of the conflict under the study and other similar conflicts.

However, the root cause of this conflict is highly intricate and multifaceted. In interviews conducted in April 2023 with key informants ST01, ST02, and VA01, it was highlighted that the Kore and Guji conflicts pose a substantial problem, demanding urgent attention from the media and other concerned entities. These informants unanimously agreed that the conflict is persistent and driven by a multitude of factors.

The informants agreed that it is an ongoing conflict driven by various factors:

*“it seems that as a competition for resources like land and water”* (Informant ST01);  
*“some elders told that it is a political grievance and historical disputes”* (Informant ST02); *“this conflict is very complex and multifaceted, requiring a comprehensive understanding because most of the time different factors risen as a reason like competition for resources, the presence of armed groups in the area and so on....”*  
(Informant VA01 April 2023)

The key informant’s view is that the conflict being discussed is multifaceted and complex. They believe that the reasons for the conflict are not limited to a single factor but can include competition for resources, political grievances, historical disputes, and the presence of armed groups in the area.

Most of the key informants agreed that despite this complexity, it is true that both traditional and social media outlets have not given enough attention to the conflict. One reason for this could be that many conflicts and crises in Ethiopia demand media attention, and it can be challenging to prioritize coverage of one particular issue over others.

*"We did not prioritize the conflict issues reporting compared to the crisis that occurred at that time, possibly due to various reasons. However, it is generally acknowledged that the issue was not given priority." (Informant ST02 April 2023)*

The informant discussed that there was a lack of priority given to reporting conflict issues compared to a crisis that took place at the same time. The informant acknowledges that there could have been various reasons for this, but overall, they believe that the reporting of conflict issues was not given the necessary importance. A quantitative content analysis revealed that the media gave less priority to covering the situation, indicating that they did not effectively inform the general public about the case. These findings suggest that the media did not fulfill their role in providing information on the sampled conflict.

## **Theme II**

During the sampled period, VOA and SRTA presented conflict situations through different types of news stories. VOA focused on hard news, reporting a significant number of conflict stories, while SRTA chose soft news coverage. These contrasting approaches highlight how media outlets' ownership, identity, and objectives influence their coverage. It is crucial to recognize that journalism practices carry implications, as media organizations operate based on distinct goals and values that shape their editorial choices.

In this regard, key informants have shared their views,

*"Reporting conflict news as soon as it breaks often exacerbates the situation, necessitating further analysis. However, due to our affiliation with the government as paid employees, sometimes we do not cover ethnic conflicts as breaking news, for example, the Kore-Guji conflict (under your study) is between the two regions, hence sometimes it takes time to check the facts on both sides. As a regional media agency, we wish to avoid the difficult task of thoroughly researching essential facts for news and providing in-depth analysis." (Informant ST01 April 2023)*

The key informant's view is that reporting conflict in hard news or immediately as it occurs can often worsen the situation, thereby requiring further analysis. However, due to their affiliation with the regional government as paid employees, they sometimes delay covering ethnic conflicts as breaking news, stating that it takes time to verify facts from both sides. As a regional media

organization, their preference is to avoid the challenging task of thoroughly researching essential facts and instead present conflict within the context of soft news.

In addition, Informant ST01 April 2023

*“If we report on the conflict as breaking news, it has to potential to escalate the conflict further and may result in media bias towards one particular group due to SRTA being a regional media outlet.”*

Reporting on conflicts immediately is a standard practice in journalism, especially for hard news. It allows the public to stay informed about current events and can put pressure on relevant authorities to take action. However, reporting conflicts in real-time can also have negative consequences, such as sensationalism or misinformation, which may escalate tensions. Therefore, SRTA prioritizes analysis and interpretation of news events, and they report it very delayed, which means in soft news. As their media house, soft news can be more nuanced and empathetic. The appropriate approach to reporting conflict in the media involves a careful consideration of journalistic ethics, the need for accuracy and verification, and the potential impact on the situation. While the media need to provide information to the public, especially in conflict-prone regions, responsible reporting that avoids exacerbating tensions is equally important.

Hard news stories were given the highest importance in VOA outlets.

*“Timeliness is crucial in media, as today’s news becomes outdated tomorrow. That’s why we often broadcast news as it happens. As a global broadcaster, our primary focus lies in covering conflict through hard news for our international audience. We consider hard news to be more objective, informative, and captivating, for audience or viewers with a keen interest in events unfolding across various regions of the world.”* (Informant VA01 April 2023)

According to the key informants, VOA's primary focus lies in covering conflict through hard news. This suggests a preference for socially significant stories that involve conflict or crisis and have a direct impact on international affairs. The hard news is considered more objective, informative, and captivating. In journalism, hard news stories are typically expected to be objective and provide facts without excessive commentary or bias. Timeliness is indeed crucial

in the world of journalism, and broadcasting news as it happens is a common practice in the industry. In this regard, VOA, like many other news organizations, aims to deliver breaking news and updates promptly to keep their audience informed. This implies that VOA prioritizes covering hard news events as they happen. While hard news reporting can provide valuable information and contribute to public knowledge, it can also have negative effects, such as sensationalizing violence or reinforcing stereotypes.

These differences in coverage reflect different audience preferences or mission statements for the two media outlets. In general reflections from both media, their intention seem to be that one possible explanation for international broadcasters (VOA) focus on conflict in hard news is their global audience. Hard news is often seen as more objective, informative, and engaging, especially for viewers who are interested in the events happening in different parts of the world. On the other hand, regional government-owned media outlets (SRTA) might have different priorities, such as promoting the government's policies or presenting a positive image of the region. In this case, soft news, which focuses on human interest and local perspectives, might be more suitable for their agenda.

### **Theme III.**

The quantitative results indicate a difference in the byline of news stories between SRTA media and VOA media outlets. SRTA Media produced 54.5% of the sampled news stories by their reporters, while 45.5% were written by the government communication affairs office. On the other hand, for VOA media outlets, 78.5% of the sampled news stories were produced by their reporters, indicating a higher reliance on their reporters compared to SRTA media.

Regarding the byline, the key informants raised some basic points

*"Sometimes, when national issues are being covered by other media outlets or other media house reporters and we are unable to provide comprehensive coverage, we resort to using alternative stories under different bylines to fill those gaps, unless we have never done so before."* (Informant ST02 April 2023)

Based on the informant, it implies that this is not a regular practice and is only employed on occasions when necessary. The decision to utilize alternative stories under different bylines could have several implications, both positive and negative. On the positive side, filling the gaps

in coverage ensures that the audience remains engaged and continues to receive a diverse range of news content. It allows for a more comprehensive understanding of various topics and issues. Additionally, it ensures that the publication maintains a consistent flow of news and avoids any perception of incompetence or negligence in reporting crucial events.

A strategy employed by media outlets when faced with a gap in coverage of national issues due to other media already reporting on them. While it can be beneficial in maintaining public engagement and delivering varied content, it also introduces challenges concerning transparency, credibility, and proper allocation of resources.

*"We occasionally face delays in providing firsthand reporting for certain cases. As a result, we rely on official statements from the government for information. The conflict issue can be quite complex, leading to restrictions placed by involved bodies. In such cases, we depend on the government's statements. Additionally, we receive news updates through our reporters stationed in conflict zones." (Informant ST01 April 2023)*

Based on the informant's view, they sometimes encounter delays in providing firsthand reporting due to the complexities and restrictions associated with conflict situations. As a result, they rely on official government communication statements for information. Therefore, some of their conflict story is based on the government communications statement. They have also used reporters from their branches in conflict zones as well as those around the conflict zone who provide them with news updates.

On the other hand, most VOA news stories are bylined by their reporters. Based on the key informants, VOA media outlets place a greater emphasis on their own when it comes to news production. In this regard:

*"Our media relies primarily on its reporters stationed in different countries to gather and report information. Reporting on the spot can sometimes be challenging, so we often conduct phone interviews as an alternative. To ensure the information's accuracy, we verify it using multiple trustworthy sources before publishing. Consequently, the majority of our news and other programs are created by our reporters. However, there are instances where it becomes difficult to offer extensive coverage. In such cases, we rely on content provided by other media or news agencies." (Informant VA01 April 2023)*

The key informant discussed is that the media organization depends on its journalists, who are deployed in different countries to collect and present news. These reporters play a crucial role in providing current information on a wide range of topics, particularly conflict-related issues. Their work helps ensure that the media organization has comprehensive coverage of global news and keeps the public informed about important events in various regions.

The content and interview results highlight the differences in the byline of news stories between the two media outlets, with SRTA media relying more on their reporters and the government communication affairs office, while VOA media outlets place a higher emphasis on their correspondent reporters. This distinction in news sources may influence the diversity and perspectives presented in the news content produced by these outlets.

#### **Theme IV.**

It needed to see the view of key informants in terms of the sources that they use in their reports when they produce conflict news stories. When the media sourced the stories, the government media (SRTA) outlets tended to rely on government voices, with less representation of other sources like victims' viewpoints as well as opposition parties and rebel groups. In this regard, key informants raise some reasons why they rely on the government's voice or other sources.

*“Reporting on the conflict on the spot is an immensely challenging task. It is common for us to experience fear when faced with volatile situations, and unfortunately, the limited government support we receive impedes our ability to access areas directly impacted by the conflict. Consequently, we are compelled to depend on government statements for information when reporting.”* (Informant ST01, April 2023)

This implies that reporting on conflicts on the spot is extremely difficult. Journalists often experience fear and danger when covering sensitive situations. Additionally, the limited government support they receive hinders their ability to directly access areas directly affected by the conflict. As a result, journalists are forced to rely on government statements for information when reporting on the conflict. Consequently, there may be challenges in obtaining objective and accurate information about the conflict, as the government may have control over the narrative or not provide complete information.

*“The reason is that there is a risk, every time a report is made, it is not known what the result may be. Therefore, to address conflict various governmental bodies, mediator elders from both communities, as well as residents and groups involved in the conflict come together during reconciliation.”* (Informant ST02 April 2023)

On the other hand VOA

*“Our aim in producing news is to ensure that all relevant voices are included when reporting on an issue, particularly in cases of conflict. This involves cross-checking all sides and striving for balance. By including the perspectives of all conflicting groups, concerned government bodies, officials, victims of the conflict, and other relevant voices, we strive to provide unbiased information.”* (Informant VOA1 April 2023)

The key informant discussions revolve around their commitment to inclusive reporting, cross-checking information, striving for balance, and providing unbiased information by including all relevant voices, especially on conflict-related topics.

However, media outlets should diversify their sources to provide a well-rounded and objective perspective to their audience. This can also help to ensure that the stories presented are not biased or influenced by individual interests or agendas, yielding more accurate and reliable coverage. It is worth noting that journalism ethics and professionalism require journalists to seek a balanced representation of perspectives and to fully investigate the veracity of claims and information presented, regardless of the source of the story.

#### **4.4. Dominant Frames Used by SRTA and VOA**

In this study, Entman's framing function and Kothari's message deconstruction were used as benchmarks to analyze texts in the stories (Entman, 1993; Kothari & Cherian, 2020). By utilizing these benchmarks and evaluating the information presented in the texts, two dominant frames emerged: the annihilation frame and the attribution of responsibility frame. Therefore, the identification of dominant frames in the textual analysis is essential, as it allows for a better understanding of how the conflict is framed in both media outlets.

#### **4.4.1. Annihilation frame**

This frame, either directly or indirectly, aims to encourage the audience to understand the causes of conflicts, although not necessarily the true causes, as if they were initiated by a third party. In their work, Kothari & Cherian (2020) identify some key techniques, including mudding information, withholding information, and discrediting sources. In this study, these techniques are taken from Kothari and Cherian (2020). In both selected media outlets, there has been a prevalence of annihilation frame techniques, which involved mudding information, withholding important details, and discrediting sources. These techniques have been commonly observed in the collected news stories; each technique is discussed with the evidence stories as follows:

##### **A. Omission Technique**

In the collected stories, it was found that certain important facts were left out of the narratives. In some cases, when these stories were published by media outlets under the study, the cause of the conflict was not presented. It appears that the media faced a dilemma regarding whether they should include the names of the fighting groups and the causes of the conflicts in the texts or not. This omission, particularly when it comes to concealing the ethnic nature of the conflicts, is one way in which the annihilation frame utilizes the technique of omission. In some stories, important details are omitted, thereby depriving viewers or readers of a complete understanding. It is crucial to include key facts such as the causes, effects, and outcomes of conflicts. In this case, significant omissions involve hiding the conflict's cause and the ethnic group involved. The causes of ethnic conflict, or the groups who instigated the conflicts, were not fully presented in some stories. The evidence shows that the story was broadcast by SRTA on March 19, 2022:

##### ***It is working with the Oromia region to eliminate Shene***

*Ato Alemayehu Baudi, the head of the Southern Region Peace and Security Bureau, said that it is working in coordination with the Oromia region to eliminate ONG Shene. Ato Alemayehu stated that the regional government is working hard to bring peace in Amaro, South Omo Zone, Salamago, and neighboring areas of Gofa and Basketo, Konso, and Gedo areas. He said that he is working in coordination with the Oromia region to solve the security problem in Amaro Special Woreda. "Shene is an enemy to both the Oromo and the Korean people," said the official, adding that the southern region is working closely with the Oromia region to eliminate Shene, who is brutally killing and displacing citizens.*

The preceding news story failed to provide a clear and comprehensive explanation of the root causes behind the conflicts. While the headline states that efforts are being made to eradicate the Shene group in collaboration with the Oromia region, the body of the article discusses various conflicts in the region without highlighting the main agenda. This lack of clarity may confuse the audience. Therefore, a clearer and more concise version of the article needs to be written to provide a comprehensive understanding of the conflicts and their significance. Moreover, some stories by SRTA do not mention the cases of the conflict and simply discuss the attack of the military group without the cases of the conflict in both communities; for instance:

***The Southern State of the Southern region continues its efforts to promote the well-being of the community both domestically and internationally.***

*We are committed to addressing the challenges of poverty and ensuring stability for our citizens.. ..... In the Amaro Woreda and West Guji Zone of the Oromia region, the enemy forces movement in the area. The government is actively collaborating with the people to find a solution to this problem. Both the regional government and the federal government are working together to address the impact of these hostile activities. Unfortunately, these actions have resulted in loss of life, injuries, and property damage. The regional government is placing special emphasis on healing and recovery within the affected community. (SRTA, April 10, 2022).*

This story only focuses on the military group's attack and does not mention the underlying conflict between Kore and Guji. It also fails to discuss the root cause of the conflict and does not include the perspectives of the victims and conflicting groups. Additionally, it mentions the deployment of security forces and ongoing discussions with the Oromia region and federal government as part of the regional government's approach to resolving the issue. Therefore, the story does not provide an understanding of the reasons behind the conflicts between these groups.

## **B. Muddying Technique**

Another common technique often seen in collected news stories is burying, where important issues or information are deliberately placed in a less prominent position within the story. This might involve placing it towards the end of the article or covering it with other topics. Another tactic is covering multiple significant issues under a single story. To further clarify this point, let's consider an example from two media outlets:

**An explanation is given regarding the security situation in the southern region,**

*The Southern State of the Southern region continues its efforts to promote the well-being of the community both domestically and internationally. We are committed to addressing the challenges of poverty and ensuring stability for our citizens. However, there are ongoing threats that pose obstacles to our progress. The regional government remains dedicated to maintaining peace and security. ....*

*In the Amaro Woreda and West Guji Zone of the Oromia region, the enemy forces have caused significant harm to the local population and their property. The government is actively collaborating with the people to find a solution to this problem. Both the regional government and the federal government are working together to address the impact of these hostile activities. Unfortunately, these actions have resulted in loss of life, injuries, and property damage. The regional government is placing special emphasis on healing and recovery within the affected community. (SRTA, April 10, 2022).*

The story discusses various conflicts in the region, starting with the statement, "Accordingly, we have made it public that there are security problems in Konso Zone, Ale, Derashe, and Amaro Special Woreda in the region." However, the body of the story presents multiple conflicts, creating complexity that may cause viewers or readers to struggle to understand and identify the relevant information. If one only focuses on the initial part of the story, one might assume that the second event mentioned is more newsworthy than the first or that one piece of information overshadows the other important details.

In addition, the news broadcasted by VOA on July 15 2022 lead says,

***People were killed in the attack by the militants.***

*Residents and families of the victims said that four people were killed and five others were injured in an attack allegedly carried out by armed groups in Burji Special Woreda of Southern Region. Gebrewold Hido, the head of the Woreda Government's Communications Affairs Office, announced that in addition to the killed and injured farmers, more than 50 cattle were stolen. They blamed the attack on a group of militants who claimed to have a stronghold in Suro Barguda.*

*A farmer was killed in an attack by the same armed group in Amaro Woreda, the Head of Peace and Security of Amaro Woreda told Voice of America. Our efforts to get a response from the West Guji zone of the Oromia region, where the armed group is said to be operating, were unsuccessful. Mr. Oda Terbi, who claims to be the spokesperson of the Oromo Liberation Army in the United States, denied the allegations when asked about the attacks in this area in the past.*

This story discussed two different conflicts: the Burji-Guji conflict, which started with Shene's attack on Burji Woreda, and the Kore-Guji conflict, which involved Shene's attack on Amaro Woreda. Inappropriately, the second conflict was overshadowed by the emphasis on the first one. It would have been more beneficial to produce separate stories for each conflict, providing an in-depth analysis of their causes and implications. This approach would have allowed for a clearer understanding of both conflicts and their respective contexts.

Moreover, the news broadcasted on April 4, 2022, by SRTA started by the lead says,

***It was announced that the regional government will continue to work with the people to ensure peace and development***

*The government of the region continues to work with the public to ensure peace and development, as announced by the Southern Regional State Communication Affairs. The office, represented by Ms. Senayit Solomon, addressed current regional issues and engaged in conversations with the public in various regions to address their needs and questions. ...*

*Regarding security, the regional government has dedicated special attention to maintaining public safety. Efforts have been focused on fostering peace and security in areas such as the Konso Zone, Ale Special Woreda, and Dirashe Special Woreda. The government is working closely with local populations and collaborating with the Oromia regional government and Federal Government to address security challenges, particularly in the highly insecure Amaro Special Woreda.*

The story briefly mentions the deployment of security forces and ongoing discussions with the Oromia region and federal government, which are part of the regional government's approach to resolving the issue. However, toward the end of the story, there is a discussion about the Amaro (Kore-Guji) conflict. It highlights that the Amaro Special Woreda is one of the areas facing significant security problems in the region. While this issue is crucial in terms of human security, it is presented at the end of the story. It would be more effective if these conflicts were reported separately, as it holds significant importance.

Therefore, the above and other stories showed that the most important facts were buried and discussed at the end of the stories, many issues were discussed in one story, and the story missed the headline, where many viewers or readers, especially those who have not read or viewed the story fully, may not get the second as well as the issues presented at the end of the story.

### C. Withholding the Information/Relevant Facts

In reporting the events in the media, sometimes they may not report or present the event soon after it has happened, especially the conflict issue; hence, this process is called withholding relevant facts.

Withholding facts were observed in the selected media, especially SRTA, in reporting conflict. The collected data shows some of the broadcasted news stories are withheld or delayed as they happened, as well as reported during the regional government explanation or peace conferences. This means the information is released to the public through the media only after the conflict has passed or the officials have announced the conflict. If not, the issue may not be reported for a long time or be ignored.

The stories show that it was broadcasted by SRTA after a lot of delays, either months, years, or days, probably withholding all. For example, the story broadcast by SRTA on July 1, 2022, gives a good hint that they withhold the information; the story states that:

***It was announced that we should work together for the peace and unity of the people by countering the enemy's plot on a safe level.***

*Top officials from the South Region and Oromia region recently convened in Hawassa to address critical security matters. Ristu Yirdaw, the Principal Government representative of the Southern Regional Government, highlighted that the consultations aimed to establish a platform for maintaining enduring peace in both southern and Oromia regions..... Adisu Arega, the Coordinator of the Oromia Regional State and Urban Development, emphasized the need to eliminate internal and foreign threats to ensure the well-being of the citizens. Adisu mentioned a significant operation conducted in the area where ONG Shene was founded, to eradicate their influence and promote peace among the people. Additionally, he stressed the importance of securing the border between the two regions to facilitate ongoing development initiatives. ... The discussions among the high-ranking officials centered on the preservation of peace, unity, and security in the southern and Oromia regions. (SRTA July 30, 2022)*

As it implies, in the story there was a conflict between the two groups from Southern and Oromia Regional States. However, the media outlets (SRTA) did not report on the conflict while it was happening. Several reports (non-governmental organization reports) show that the conflicts in Gelana and around had continued for over six years, but the report was broadcast only when the two regional governments came to a peace talk. This implies that government officials and the

regional media were not interested in reporting this conflict. Because they were not reported, the conflict occurred. That makes the audience lose trust in the media, especially the conflict victims. They couldn't present it, and the fact is not represented by the media.

While the Voice of America (VOA) consistently provides timely reports on the conflict under the study, even in challenging circumstances. This outlet is known for its dedication to delivering timely and accurate reports on conflicts, regardless of the challenging situations they may encounter. By reporting on conflicts as soon as they happen, VOA ensures that its listeners and viewers stay informed about global events in real-time. Other similar stories were broadcast by the SRTA:

*Ato Alemayehu Baudi, head of the Southern Region Peace and Security Office, said that it is working in coordination with the Oromia region to destroy the OLF Shene. Ato Alemayehu stated that the regional government is working hard to ensure peace in Amaro's special Woreda. (SRTA) March 19, 2022*

As with the above story, this story was reported when the officials announced the issue, but before this, they had not broadcast about the conflict. Based on this evidence, the media are not interested in presenting the conflict issues as soon as they happen. The findings show that they report when the peace communication time and officials statements, the story broadcast by SRTA on January 10, 2022

***The Kore and Guji peoples will uphold their common peace together.***

*The two will consult today to resolve the breach of peace in the bordering areas of Amaro Special Woreda and West Guji Zone. The administrator of Amaro Special Woreda, Mr. Wegene Bizuneh, told the Southern Radio and Television Organization that the two communities have a united identity and that peace and solidarity are their only options. He mentioned that the negative activities of peace dew bodies that intervened have caused problems in the last 7 years, especially in the last 3 years, and said that the efforts of many parties to address the issue have yielded positive results.*

*Today's peace and unity public conference will be attended by elders of both sides, religious leaders, government officials, security agencies, and guests. The peace conference aims to restore the former unity of the Kore and Guji peoples. (SRTA, January 10, 2022)*

Hence, the media chose to withhold certain facts or neglect reporting on the conflict under the study while it was ongoing. This withholding of information is a common practice, particularly

among government-owned media outlets in Ethiopia. These media organizations primarily serve the interests of the government and tend to present a less critical perspective (Assefa, 2010; Skjerdal, 2012). This emphasizes the media's deliberate choice to withhold information rather than simply stating that they did not disclose the conflict. Additionally, it clarifies that this trend is more common among government-owned media outlets and provides references to support this claim.

#### **D. Discrediting the voices**

It is a way that undermines the voice of some groups involved in the issue or involved in the conflict. In some cases, the media undermine or ignore the voice of groups and the facts about them. Still, the sampled media in the sampled period, especially SRTA, ignore the voice of the groups, which means most of the stories in the sampled period undermine the victims or the group's voice, and they focus only on the official's voice. That is when they report on the voices of the conflicting groups. However, when we see the VOA, it is interesting that most of the stories present the motives, demands, and feelings of the groups.

For instance, the story broadcasted by VOA on January 27, 2022, presented a mix of voices from the groups in conflict and the official's voice.

*Residents and officials of the Woreda told Voice of America that the armed group, which the government has classified as a terrorist group and which the authorities call "ONG Shene" and calls itself the "Oromo Liberation Army", is carrying out "large-scale" attacks in the Gelana.*

In the above story and several others, the media presented the voices of groups, even if they did not disclose why they included the group's voices. Therefore, VOA clearly shows how the groups were portrayed in the media. In various instances, the media featured the perspectives of the groups without explicitly stating the reasons behind their inclusion. The VOA provided a detailed analysis of how each group's voice was presented, shedding light on the potential biases and agendas that may have influenced their portrayal.

On the other hand, the SRTA media outlets' stories show that some of the stories emphasized the government's voice. The evidence shows that the government uses the word peaceful process, as it assumes they are working for stability in the area and the whole country.

For example, the story broadcast by SRTA on March 19, 2022

*It is working with the Oromia region to eliminate Shene. Ato Alemayehu Baudi, head of the Southern Region Peace and Security Office, said that it is working in coordination with the Oromia region to destroy the OLF Shene.*

The story presented that one group (the government) was a peacemaker and the other (OLF) was violent. The story shows an “Us” and “Them” contrast in the story while discussing different groups in the conflict story. And it starts with the word “eliminate Shene.” If so, as a medium, why did they include these groups' voices as well as both conflicting groups' voices? Why not undermine or ignore them? It wasn't that they tried to include these groups' voices. These techniques are repeated in the media to propagate one group as a positive idea and take the other groups as a negative idea. The story may wisely stir the viewer or readers to act by demonizing one group and supporting one group. Therefore, the selected media in the sampled period on the selected conflict was openly using the government's voices and ignoring the conflicting group's voice or the feelings and motives of the victims. These techniques are commonly used in the media to promote one group as positive and demonize others. By presenting a comparison, the story may intentionally provoke viewers or readers to take action by vilifying one group and supporting another. Therefore, during the sampled period, the selected media openly favored the government's voices while disregarding the conflicting group's perspective and the experiences and motivations of the victims.

Moreover, it's concerning to hear that there is a lack of independent reporting and balanced coverage in Ethiopian media regarding conflicting groups opposing the government. To foster a democratic society, the media must provide diverse perspectives and present information without bias. If media outlets ignore certain groups (like the Oromo Liberation Army) or only focus on the government's perspective, it can hinder the public's understanding of the situation and limit their ability to form informed opinions. Journalists need to uphold principles of objectivity, fairness, and accuracy, allowing citizens to access a wide range of viewpoints and make informed decisions based on reliable information.

#### **4.4.2. Attribution of responsibility frame**

The attribution of responsibility frame highlights the role of groups or institutions as well as individuals in mitigating a conflict. It has been used in several studies since Iyengar (1990) first introduced it. Iyengar's attribution of responsibility frame is important for media analysis because it shows how media can influence audience perceptions of who is responsible for a problem and what actions should be taken. By framing the problem and solution in a particular way, the media can shape public opinion and policy decisions. In this study, the researcher used the second one, which means treatment responsibility, which the stories show by blaming others.

The attribution of responsibility frame is an important aspect analyzed in the conflict stories examined in selected media sources. This frame, along with the annihilation frame, has been extensively studied in media research ever since Iyengar introduced it. In Iyengar's work from 1990/1991, this frame was used to explore how audiences attribute the causes and solutions to social problems presented in the media. Later, Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) listed this frame as one of the five generic frames, and Mulatu (2017) also utilized it, albeit with a different approach. In this current research, the attribution of responsibility frame has been identified, and the researcher has employed the technique of 'blaming the other' from Mulatu to analyze the stories in the selected media outlets.

##### **A. Blaming others**

In many conflicts, various parties are blamed for the situation. It could be one group blaming the other group or several groups blaming each other. For instance, in ethnic conflicts, one ethnic group may blame the other for the conflict; in political conflicts, one political party or government may blame another party or government; in social conflicts, one social class may blame another social class; and in gender-related conflicts, one gender may blame the other. The blame could also be directed at individuals, such as leaders or specific individuals within the opposing group.

Blaming others is a common technique used to explain the causes of a conflict situation. It involves assigning responsibility for the conflict to another person or group. It can be caused by various reasons, including power struggles, lack of communication, prejudice, protection, and historical grievances. Understanding the reasons for blaming the other can help in finding ways

to de-escalate the conflict and find a resolution. Who is to blame when we see both media reports? Why are they blamed?

The conflict between the Kore and Guji has been ongoing for many years. The two groups have been fighting over grazing land, water resources, and political power. Various reports (Human Rights Watch, 2018; The Africa Report, 2019; Amnesty International, 2021) suggest that other ethnic groups, such as the Amaro and Burji, have been victims of the armed forces' brutality in the region. These groups have reported incidents of ethnic-based attacks and killings. Such attacks have sparked inter-ethnic conflicts, further worsening the situation in the region.

However, the media frequently blames the ONG Shane or OLF armed groups for attacking civilians. For instance, the new news headline broadcasted by the SRTA outlet on July 30, 2022

*It was announced that we should work together for the peace and unity of the people by countering the enemy's plot on a safe level. ....Adisu Arega, the Coordinator of the Oromia Regional State and Urban Development, emphasized the need to eliminate internal and foreign threats to ensure the well-being of the citizens. Adisu mentioned a significant operation conducted in the area where ONG Shene was founded, to eradicate their influence and promote peace among the people.*

The sentence has several messages. On the other hand, the two regions work together for peace and unity, countering the enemy's plot at a safe level. It begs the question, who is the adversary? Why couldn't the media try to include their perspective? In the body of the story, they completely blame the OLF Armed Groups. Other similar sentences blame some groups. April 10, 2022 (by SRTA)

*Enemy forces entrenched in Amaro Special District and bordering areas of West Guji Zone in the Oromia Region are inflicting heavy losses on people and property.*

However, it is important to note that blaming one specific group without proper evidence can further fuel tensions and conflicts. It is essential to investigate and present accurate information before pointing fingers and accusing certain groups. Media outlets should prioritize responsible and ethical reporting to ensure that their coverage does not contribute to the escalation of violence.

Moreover, the stories broadcasted by VOA on January 27, 2022

*Residents and officials of the district told Voice of America that the armed group, which the government has classified as a terrorist group and which the authorities call "ONG Shene" and calls itself the "Oromo Liberation Army", is carrying out "large-scale" attacks in the Gelana district of the West Guji zone of the Oromia region.*

The sentences discussed said that both the government and the community blame the group for these military attacks on both sides. Interestingly, the media tries to include these groups' voices and views. Hence, the media tries to find out the cause of conflict, even if it were to succeed. In the same news stories, the media tries to strike a balance in that sometimes they try to include the voice of these blamed groups. This implies that international broadcasters broadcast independently. By including the voices of the armed groups, the media is also giving them a platform to share their reasons for the attacks, which may shed light on the underlying issues that are fueling the violence. Overall, the media's effort to present a multifaceted view of the conflict helps to promote understanding and support the search for a peaceful resolution.

Instead, they tended to focus on the violence itself, highlighting the victims, the damage caused, and the efforts of the military to restore order. This approach can be seen as an attempt to divert attention away from the underlying issues and shift the blame onto the perpetrators of the violence rather than the societal and systemic factors that contribute to it.

Furthermore, by failing to address the root causes of conflict, the media may be perpetuating a cycle of violence by ignoring the grievances and frustrations of marginalized groups. This can lead to a lack of accountability and a failure to address the structural issues that fuel conflict in the first place.

In general, the media has a crucial role to play in promoting peace and resolving conflicts. However, their tendency to avoid discussing the root causes of violence can hinder progress toward sustainable solutions. As such, the media need to adopt a more critical and nuanced approach to reporting on conflict, one that takes into account the complex economic, political, and social factors that drive it.

#### **4.5. Discussion of the Findings**

This study focuses on conflict reporting in SRTA and VOA, specifically regarding the Kore and Guji conflict. Three objectives have been identified: Firstly, assess the extent of media coverage. Secondly, to determine the sources of information used by both media outlets. Lastly, to identify the types of framing used by the two media outlets in conflict reporting. The study employed two media theories: agenda setting and framing theory, to guide the research and present the data analysis. The findings of the study are discussed as follows:

Based on the quantitative results, during the sampled period, SRTA covered 11 stories, accounting for 41.2% of the total, while VOA covered 14 stories, accounting for 58.8% of the total. Both media outlets broadcasted a total of 25 stories about the Kore-Guji conflict, in the sampled period. It is important to note that despite the severity of the conflict between the groups, the coverage was found to be limited. The quantitative analysis provides insights into the number of stories covered by each media outlet, but it is also crucial to assess the quality, depth, and context of the coverage to gain a comprehensive understanding of the conflict.

The key informants share that the reason for this limitation in coverage is the lack of access to the conflict zone, which makes it difficult to gather accurate and up-to-date information. Conflict zones are often dangerous and sensitive, making it challenging for journalists to operate and report on the ground. The safety concerns and logistical difficulties can restrict the flow of information and limit coverage. Additionally, censorship can play a role in the lack of coverage of the conflict. Censorship can lead to self-censorship by journalists or direct suppression of information, resulting in a lack of comprehensive coverage of the conflict. Journalistic media often give significant coverage to certain issues such as conflict or violence, leading to the perception that these issues are more important than others. The more attention an issue receives in the media (known as issue salience), the more significant it appears to audiences, according to Rothman (2000), a conflict theorist.

Some studies support the argument that conflict issues in Ethiopia receive less media coverage due to strong censorship from media leaders and journalists themselves. Skerdjal (2008) and Mulatu (2017) have pointed out that various silencing techniques are employed, leading to a lack of coverage. A quantitative content analysis revealed that the media gave less priority to

covering the situation, indicating that they did not effectively inform the general public about the case. These findings suggest that the media did not fulfill their role in providing information on the sampled conflict. Considering the distribution of coverage by month, it was found that March 2022 had the highest coverage by both media outlets. This indicates that during that specific month, there was more attention given to reporting on the conflict by SRTA and VOA. The reasons behind this peak in coverage during March 2022 could vary and may be influenced by specific events, developments, or news angles that emerged during that time.

Regarding the types of news stories, SRTA outlets broadcasted a higher percentage of soft news stories (54.4%), while VOA outlets broadcasted 85.7% of hard news stories during the sampled period. Hard news is often seen as more objective, informative, and engaging, especially for viewers who are interested in the events happening in different parts of the world. VOA seems to focus on the conflict in hard news for their global audience.

SRTA might have different priorities, such as promoting the government's policies or presenting a positive image of the region. However, the fact that conflict is happening between two regions is considered. Hard news stories are typically focused on current events and are often seen as more objective and informative than soft news stories. They are often used to provide viewers with a better understanding of what is happening in different parts of the world and can be particularly useful for those who are interested in global events. While, soft news stories, on the other hand, are often focused on human interest stories or other topics that are not directly related to current events. While these stories can be entertaining and engaging, they may not provide viewers with the same level of information or insight as hard news stories. Consequently, media outlets need to provide a balance of both hard and soft news stories to their viewers. By doing so, they can help to provide a more complete picture of what is happening in the world and can engage viewers with a variety of different topics.

The source of the stories witnessed in both media outlets appears to be that the SRTA relied heavily on government officials as sources for the stories included in their news contents, with 11 (50%) out of 22 sources being sourced from them. Key informants provided some reasons why the government voice is often relied on: that conflict reporting on the spot is difficult and risky, with situations where the reporter is afraid, and further limiting access to direct problem areas. For these and other reasons, they use only the official statements.

The reliance on government voices in conflict reporting can be attributed to several factors, including the difficulty and risks associated with reporting on the ground, fear among reporters, and limited access to direct problem areas. These reasons contribute to a situation where official statements from the government are often the primary source of information for news outlets and the public.

In addition, the key informants agree that the conflicts have escalated in the area, leading to violence, displacement, and loss of lives. In such sensitive situations, journalists face the risk of physical harm or even death while attempting to gather information or report from the ground. This risk factor makes it challenging for independent journalists to provide accurate and timely coverage of the conflicts.

Given these challenges, news outlets often resort to relying on official statements from the government as a means of obtaining information about ongoing conflicts. Government statements are seen as a relatively safe and reliable source, particularly when independent reporting is scarce or unavailable. Official statements are typically disseminated through government-controlled media outlets or press conferences, allowing news organizations to report on the conflicts without exposing their journalists to unnecessary risks.

However, relying solely on official statements can have its drawbacks. Governments may have their agendas or biases, leading to the manipulation or distortion of information. Official statements may be used as a tool for propaganda or to control the narrative surrounding the conflicts. This can result in a lack of independent and critical analysis, limiting the public's understanding of the complexities and nuances of the conflicts.

On the other hand, stories produced by VOA, which were sampled, were sourced from victims of the conflict, accounting for 13 (45.5%) of the total stories. Government officials were the second most common source of stories, accounting for 11 (35.4%) of the stories produced. The variety of sources and perspectives helps to ensure that VOA's reporting on the conflict is thorough and balanced, providing audiences with a more comprehensive understanding of the situation.

In this regard, studies have indicated that in Ethiopia, the media tends to heavily rely on the government's perspective and voice. Several studies on the conflict in Ethiopia, including works by Ameha, (2010), Kebede, (2008), Gudeta, (2012), and Afework, (2013), highlight how

government control of media outlets may limit the diverse representation of voices in journalism. Government officials are often the main sources of news in Ethiopian media, which may be due to political influences, economic pressures, and lack of access to alternative sources of information. This may result in limited coverage of critical stories and reduced diversity of perspectives. The ethical code of journalism demands a balanced and thorough investigation of all information regardless of its source.

Regarding the types of generic frames, the attribution of responsibility frame takes the highest share of the news stories broadcasted by SRTA outlets, with 10 news stories (38.5%). Also, the conflict frames were ranked second in six news stories (23%). Similarly, for VOA, the attribution of responsibility frame takes up the highest share of the news stories, which focus on the causes and solutions for the conflict and are made up of 12 news stories (32.4%). The conflict frame and human interest frame were found in the second rank, which counts for 21.6% of the total (in 8 news stories).

Both media outlets under this study seem to focus on the attribution of responsibility frame in their news stories. This could be because this frame helps to identify who is responsible for a particular event or situation, which can be useful in understanding how to prevent similar events from happening in the future.

The conflict frame is also commonly used in news stories because it helps to highlight differences between two or more parties involved in a situation. This can be useful in understanding why a particular event or situation occurred and what can be done to resolve it. The use of generic frames such as the attribution of responsibility and conflict frames can help to provide context and meaning to news stories in both media outlets under this study.

In terms of the dominant frame, it is concerning to hear that media sources downplayed or excluded certain aspects of the conflict and portrayed it as an attack by a militant group, avoiding open discussions about the conflict's details, such as the parties involved and the root cause. The selected media outlets (SRTA) do not clearly state in the collected news stories the ethnic groups involved in conflicts.

Additionally, both selected media outlets in this study, use the technique of burying information or important issues in their reporting. This technique of burying important information or

covering different important issues in one story should not be used by professional writers and journalists. SRTA has been withholding or delaying the broadcast of news stories, especially those related to conflicts.

In this regard, the scholars argue that presenting stories in such a way is not advisable, for such a type of narration is less likely to be in line with the professional way of writing the facts, which is descending order, and if the issue is a different important issue, it should be narrated separately (Pottker, 2003; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Muddying the facts and causing confusion was widely observed in the sampled stories in the selected media outlets while they were reporting the Kore-Guji conflict. In SRTA, in particular, some of the stories were found to bury the important facts of the conflict. Some studies conducted in Ethiopia, especially on print media suggest that it presents issues in a more cautious manner and at the last of the story (Assefa, 2010; Beyene, 2012).

Media outlets need to report on conflicts in a way that is transparent and informative. By downplaying or excluding certain aspects of a conflict, media sources can create a distorted view of events that does not accurately reflect reality. This can be particularly problematic when it comes to conflicts involving different ethnic groups, as it can contribute to tensions and misunderstandings between these groups. The technique of burying information or important issues in reporting is also problematic because it can make it difficult for readers to understand what is happening in a particular situation. Professional writers and journalists should strive to present information clearly and concisely that is easy for readers to understand.

Withholding or delaying the broadcast of news stories related to conflicts can also be problematic because it can prevent people from getting accurate and timely information about what is happening in their communities. This technique is prevalent in regional media outlets/SRTA, this can contribute to confusion and misunderstandings, which can make it more difficult to resolve conflicts. Media outlets need to report on conflicts in a way that is transparent, informative, and accurate. By doing so, they can help promote understanding and dialogue between the groups who are involved in a conflict.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion, and Recommendations

#### 5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher identified and presented a summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

#### 5.2. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research delved into the nuanced landscape of conflict reporting within SRTA and VOA, particularly scrutinizing the Kore-Guji conflict. Three pivotal objectives guided the study: gauging media coverage extent, discerning information sources employed by both outlets and identifying framing types in conflict reporting. Grounded in agenda-setting and framing theories, the findings illuminated multifaceted facets of media portrayal.

The quantitative results indicate that both media outlets provided limited coverage of the Kore-Guji conflict, with VOA broadcasting a slightly higher number of stories. The findings suggest that the selected media outlets, SRTA and VOA, faced significant challenges in covering the conflict due to limited access and censorship. Also, VOA provided more extensive coverage of the conflict, with a focus on hard news. While SRTA provides minimum coverage of the conflict, which means that as a regional media outlet, the stories covered are limited, it also seems to prioritize soft news. Despite the conflict's gravity, coverage was constrained, underlining the challenge of accessing conflict zones for accurate information. Safety concerns, logistical hurdles, and potential censorship were cited by key informants as factors limiting comprehensive coverage.

The finding suggests that, in terms of sources (witnesses), SRTA relied heavily on government officials as sources, possibly due to limited access to the conflict zone. VOA sourced stories from victims of the conflict and government officials, as well as diversified sources and various perspectives, providing viewers and readers with a more comprehensive understanding of the situation. The reliance on official statements, particularly by SRTA, underscored the difficulty and risks associated with on-the-ground reporting. While government statements offer a seemingly safe information source, the drawbacks include potential biases and manipulation,

raising concerns about the completeness and objectivity of coverage. VOA, diversified its sources, incorporating narratives from conflict victims. This approach fosters a more comprehensive understanding, countering the prevalent trend in Ethiopian media, as highlighted by various studies, of heavy reliance on government perspectives, potentially limiting diversity and depth in reporting.

Framing analysis showcased a predominant focus on attribution of responsibility, indicating a quest to identify blameworthiness for events. The selected media outlets used some news frames, such as the attribution of responsibility frame and the conflict frame, to cover the conflict. However, VOA provided a more balanced perspective by also including the human interest frame. Additionally, concerns surfaced regarding selective reporting, as certain aspects were downplayed or excluded, potentially distorting the conflict's true nature. The practice of burying crucial information in reporting observed notably in SRTA, raises ethical concerns. Such techniques contribute to confusion and hinder reader comprehension. Professional journalistic norms call for transparent and informative reporting, a standard often compromised in regional media outlets. Also, both media outlets have been using various techniques to downplay or exclude certain aspects of conflicts. These techniques include burying important information, delaying the broadcast of news stories, and blaming specific groups without presenting accurate information.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

In essence, this study underscores the intricate challenges media faces in conflict reporting, urging a balance between safety considerations and the imperative of delivering accurate, transparent, and timely information to the public. Striking this equilibrium not only fulfills the journalistic duty but also contributes to fostering understanding and dialogue amidst conflicts. Based on the study's findings and to offer suggestions for future action, the following recommendations have been outlined for both media outlets:

#### **Recommendations to both media outlets**

- Both media should diversify their sources of news stories, drawing on a broad range of perspectives and voices, including those of conflict victims, experts, and community

leaders. This will ensure that news stories are comprehensive and reflect the complexity of the conflict as well as the diverse experiences and needs of the communities affected.

- Both media outlets should adopt a more critical and reflective approach to their reporting by avoiding simplistic and one-sided narratives that assign blame or oversimplify the root causes of the conflict.
- Additionally, both media outlets should play an important role in promoting peace and reconciliation by highlighting examples of successful conflict resolution and highlighting the shared humanity and common interests of different ethnic groups.

To ensure that news stories do not rely too heavily on government officials, **SRTA should**

- SRTA should increase on-the-ground reporting and prioritize the safety of their reporters by providing them with adequate resources and training to deal with the challenges of conflict reporting. This will ensure that news stories do not rely too heavily on government officials and that reporting is balanced, thorough, and reflective of the perspectives of all parties involved. Also SRTA should avoid withholding or delaying the broadcast of news stories on conflicts, as the public should have access to accurate information promptly.

To adopt a more critical and reflective approach to their reporting, **VOA should:**

- Refrain from obscuring or downplaying the involvement of specific ethnic groups and parties in the conflict; provide a clear and explicit account of their roles. By avoiding burying techniques and clearly outlining the ethnic groups and parties involved, journalists can prevent confusion and ensure transparency.

**In addition, the Government should:**

- The government should create an environment that promotes media independence, good governance, and democratic values, which is critical for fostering a diverse and balanced media landscape in Ethiopia.
- Promote press freedom and work towards creating a conducive environment that allows journalists to report objectively on conflicts. Avoid censorship and encourage journalists to report freely and objectively. Provide support to journalists who report on conflicts in terms of training, resources, and protection.

## **Future study**

Based on the findings of this study, there are several opportunities for further research on conflict reporting in Ethiopia. Firstly, future studies could investigate the impact of censorship on the media coverage of conflicts, especially in regions that are difficult to access. Additionally, further research could explore the impact of conflict framing on public opinion and attitudes toward conflict resolution. Lastly, future studies could also examine the perspectives of both ethnic groups on how the conflict has been portrayed in the media and the potential impact such coverage could have on long-term reconciliation efforts. The limitations mentioned in Chapter One (1.8) are significant and indicate a need for future research to expand the scope of media outlets and sample size while also considering the audience's perceptions and views on conflict reporting.

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## Appendix I

### Guidebook for Coding Stories

#### Coding categories of the quantitative and qualitative data

This guideline is designed to assist coders in understanding what they are coding and how to code stories about internal conflicts. The coding book consists of two parts: 1 to 4. These variables will provide an overview of the conflict stories broadcasted in both media outlets under study. They will help track the extent and prominence given to conflict story reporting in these selected media outlets.

#### I. The media, news broadcast date

1. Code No. \_\_\_\_\_

2. The media organization

SRTA	
VOA	

3. Broadcast month

January	February	March	April	May	June	July

#### II. Coverage: Watch/read each news story and identify the news stories, transmission time, and byline/reports

1. Types of News Stories

Hard news	
Soft news	

2. Reporter (bylines) of the story

The media staff reporters	
Government Communication Office	
News agency (local)	
News agency (international)	

**III. Source of the story: Read/watch each news story and decide what types of news sources are used**

<p><b>1. Victims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups or individuals who are displaced or face a challenge due to the conflict are attributed as a source of news.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. Gov't Officials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government concerns/officials from different government organs from Kebele, Woreda, Zone, regional, and federal levels.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. News Agency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other media organizations including local, national, and international media and journalists are attributed as a source of news</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4. Opinion leaders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elders or Community leaders, religious leaders,</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5. Others</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human rights organizations (International humanitarian organizations) NGO, are attributed as a source of news</li> </ul>	

**IV. Framing: Read (script text) and watch the full stories carefully and categorize them accordingly**

To measure the presence of the five generic frames identified by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), and Entman, (2001) a list of questions for each frame has been formulated. The questions are based on a questionnaire developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), and Entman, (2001) and adapted to analyze the news articles about the Kore-Guji conflict news from both media outlets. If a question can be answered with yes, it means that the frame is present. These questions were the leading thread in identifying the presence of the five most common generic frames: conflict frame, human interest frame, economic consequences frame, morality frame, and responsibility frame. After frame categorization, the rhetorical structure of news items will be examined with evidence based on Entman, (2007), which concerns how language is used to frame events or ideas to affect the way they are perceived.

<b>A. Conflict frame</b>		YES	NO
1.	Does the article reflect disagreements between individuals, parties, groups, institutions, or countries regarding the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict?		
2.	Does one individual, party, group, or institution reproach another?		
3.	Does the article refer to winners and losers regarding the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict?		
4.	Does the article oppose or criticize the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict?		
<b>B. Human interest frame</b>			
1.	Does the article provide a human face on the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict?		
2.	Does the article include adjectives that generate feelings of empathy, sympathy, or compassion?		
3.	Does the article include personal stories about the lives of the actors in the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict?		
4.	Does the article focus on how the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict affects the citizens?		
<b>C. Economic consequences frame</b>			
1.	Does the article mention financial losses or gains now or in the future regarding the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict?		
2.	Does the article involve a degree of expense regarding the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict?		
3.	Does the article refer to economic consequences, in either a positive or negative way?		
<b>D. Morality frame</b>			
1.	Does the article refer to religious/moral grounds, god, or other religious tenets regarding the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict?		
2.	Does the article include social prescriptions of how to behave?		
3.	Does the article promote the moral importance of helping citizens and victims?		
4.	Does the article mention the human rights of the citizens and victims?		
<b>E. Responsibility frame</b>			
1.	Does the article attribute the responsibility of the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict and its developments positive or negative to any individual, party, group, institution, or country?		
2.	Does the article suggest that the Ethiopian government or any other government can alleviate or solve the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict?		
3.	Does the article suggest a solution to the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict?		
4.	Does the article suggest that the Kore-Guji ethnic conflict requires urgent action?		

## **Appendix: II**

### **Interview guide**

Interview questions for journalists

1. It is certain, that you are participating in reporting the conflict between the Kore and Guji ethnic groups
  1. How do you see the media's role in reporting the Kore and Guji conflict?
  2. How was the situation when you reported the conflict between Kore and Guji?
  3. Were they present at the time of the conflict? If yes, how? If not, why?
2. What procedures do you take to ensure that the coverage you offer is accurate and fair?
3. Who were your news sources when you reported on Kore and Guji's conflict?
  1. How do you choose news sources?
  2. When reporting on sensitive and classified topics, what approach should you follow?
4. How did you report Kore and Guji's conflict as a whole?
  1. What was the main focus of your media reports?
  2. Was there anything that compelled you to format reports in a certain way?
5. What challenges do you face when reporting conflict?
  1. Is there a body that directs/forces the journalist to report/not report the conflict?
  2. How did you solve the challenges you faced?

### **Separately**

In some reports, they analyze more than one conflict report under one topic, so why not prepare the report separately? (VOA)

Your media always present only the opinions and statements of government officials in your reports, why can't you include the victims? (For Southern Radio and Television)



Screen shoot from SRTA outlet March 21, 2022

# በአማርኛ በገላና ጥቃቶች መባባሳቸውን ነዋሪዎች ተናገሩ



ይቶ ፋይል:- የኢትዮጵያ ካርታ

በደቡብ ኢትዮጵያ ክልል የአማር ልዩ ወረዳና በአሮምያ ክልል የገላና ወረዳ ነዋሪዎች የመንግሥቱ ባለሥልጣናት "አኑግ ሸኔ" የሚሉትን አራሳቸውን "የአሮም ነፃነት ሠራዊት" ብለው የሚጠሩ ታጣቂዎች ያደርሱባቸዋል። የሚሉት ጥቃቶች አየተባባሱ መምጣታቸውን ለአሜሪካ ሩምቱ ገልጸዋል።

ነዋሪዎቹ "ኢሰብዓዊ" ያሉት ጥቃቶችና ጉዳቶች አየደረሱባቸው መሆኑን ተናግረዋል።

Screen shoot from VOA outlet (website) March 09, 2022

<https://amharic.voanews.com/a/6477180.html>



### በአማር ወረዳ የተፈጸመው ግድያ ጉዳይ



በሩባ ክልል አማር ወረዳ ለግድያ

ሆኖ — በሩባ ክልል አማር ወረዳ ላይ የአማር ወረዳ አስተዳዳሪውን ጨምሮ በሀገር ሽግግሎች ተባብሮ ከሞራሪ ቦታ ጋር ስለሮት ተቀምጠው በነበሩ በሃይማኖት አባቶችና በላቲን-ላቲን አራሳ ለራሳቸው ላይ በተከረተ ተኩስ ስድስት ሰዎች ሲገደሉ አራት ሲሾሉት ማቆላቸውን የወረዳው ሰላም ላይ ቁጥጥር አስተዳደር አስታወቀ።

ጥቃቱን ሊሰጠው በሆነ ማንኛውም የፈጸሙትን አንደተባባሪው በተጠናቀቀ ላይ የተባለው ሽግግር ላይ ለሆኑ የሞራሪ ቦታ ጋር ወረዳ ታገባቸው ማህንንም ይናገራሉ።

Screen shoot from VOA outlet (website) March 10, 2021

<https://amharic.voanews.com/a/amaro-killings-3-10-2021/5809398.html>

### ደቡብ ውስጥ አጥቂዎች ህይወት አጠፉ



አቶ ርባ ደርዳራ

ሆኖ — በደቡብ ክልል በሆነው በሞራሪ ቦታ ጋር ወረዳ ላይ የአማር ወረዳ አስተዳዳሪውን ጨምሮ በሀገር ሽግግሎች ተባብሮ ከሞራሪ ቦታ ጋር ስለሮት ተቀምጠው በነበሩ በሃይማኖት አባቶችና በላቲን-ላቲን አራሳ ለራሳቸው ላይ በተከረተ ተኩስ ስድስት ሰዎች ሲገደሉ አራት ሲሾሉት ማቆላቸውን የወረዳው ሰላም ላይ ቁጥጥር አስተዳደር አስታወቀ።

ባለፉት ሁለት ቀናት በግድያ ወረዳ 10 ሰዎች ፤ በአማር ወረዳ ደግሞ ባለሁለት ሁለት ሳምንታት ውስጥ 13 ሰዎች ማገዳለቻውን የላከባቸው የደቡብ አማር ወረዳ አስተዳደር አስታወቀ።

የክልሉ ርዕሰ ማስተዳደር በሚሰጡት መግለጫ ላይ ለአማር ወረዳ ላይ የተከረተ ተኩስ ስድስት ሰዎች ሲገደሉ አራት ሲሾሉት ማቆላቸውን የወረዳው ሰላም ላይ ቁጥጥር አስተዳደር አስታወቀ።

Screen shoot from VOA outlet (website) April 02, 2022