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THE PRACTICES OF NEWS AND SOURCE USAGE IN ETHIOPIAN TELEVISION

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the practices of news and source usage in Ethiopian Television (ETV). It assessed news and source selection criteria of the media organization. The study also focused on the major source of news and speakers in the news. Besides, factors affecting news and source selection was also another objective of the study. The study used mixed research method. As a result, quantitative content analysis and an in-depth interview were used as tools of data gathering. It employed purposive sampling to select key informants for the study. For the media content sample, the study focused on ETV's prime time news at 8:00 PM. The findings of the study showed that the major criteria of news selection in ETV were based on the value of the news in building the image of the government. Sources of the news were government officials. The majority of the speakers in the news production by ETV staff reporters were government officials, especially those found at federal level. It was also found that there is lack of journalistic independence in the media. Journalists were influenced to report the positive sides of government and conceal the wrong doings of government officials. Therefore, in the way to the truth as diversified views are very crucial, Ethiopian Television should take the necessary measure to treat various views in its news stories.

Key Words: Ethiopian Television, News, Source

INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of a news organization is to gather, describe and transmit the news to the large public. To do this, media professionals rely on sources. The media do not simply report something newsworthy as it is. News is the final product of various processes. MacDougall (1968) explains this: At any given moment billions of simultaneous events occur throughout the world... all of these occurrences are potentially news. They do not become so until some purveyor of news gives an account of them. The news, in other words, is the account of the event, not something intrinsic in the event itself.

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

One of the most basic questions about the value of a work of journalism is the nature of its sourcing. Gans (1979: 80) defines sources as "the actors whom journalists observe or interview, including interviewees who appear on the air or who are quoted in articles, and those who only supply background information or story suggestions." There are a lot of possible sources of information about an issue or event for journalists. Keeble (2001: 41) argues, "At the heart of journalism lies the source; becoming a journalist to a great extent means developing sources. How deep are the sourcing, what are the ranges of views offered, and how much can the audience decide for itself what to think about the story? These are the essential elements in trying to assess the quality of reporting (Annual report on American journalism, 2005). Therefore, to increase the value of journalism and quality of reporting, it is inevitable that news and its sources are at the heart of the profession of journalism. Hence, media practitioners are supposed to consider their news and sources very meticulously.

Statement of the Problem

As to many scholars, for instance, Defleur and Dennis, (1981:325), news is the most powerful media outlet that can make a significant contribution to building a democratic society by depicting a reasonably true picture of what is going on, creating what should be a close correspondence between the 'world outside' and the 'pictures in our heads' Moreover, Hatchen argues that "A democratic society requires a diversity of views and news sources available – marketplaces of ideas from which the public can choose what it wishes to read and believe about public affairs" (1998: 37). So, for the reflection of diversity of views in news production, giving special emphasis for sources of news is most important one.

As mentioned already, news and sources are the two big players in journalism; they have an impact on its practice. Mwaffisi (1994:161) avows, without news, journalism would not exist. And Keeble (2001: 41) avers, at the heart of journalism lies the source. In line with this, it is vital to conduct a study on the practices of Ethiopian Television in news and source usage.

Objective of the Study

General Objective

The general objective of the study is to investigate the practices of news and source usage in Ethiopian Television

Specific Objectives

1. To identify news and source selection criteria in Ethiopian Television (ETV)
2. To find out the major source of news and speakers in the news in ETV
3. To find out the factors that affects the selection of news and source in the media organization.

Research Questions

1. What are the criteria of news and source selection in Ethiopian Television?
2. What are the major sources of news and speakers in the news in the media organization?
3. What factors do affect the selection of news and source in the media organization?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research questions and accomplish the objectives of the research, both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies (mixed methods design) have been employed. As a result, the study employed quantitative content analysis and in-depth interviews as data gathering tools. The study employed purposive sampling to select key informants based on their experiences. The main purpose was to get detailed data from key informants of the media practitioners. For the media content sample, the study focuses on ETV's prime time news at 8:00 PM as it is the time most people come back to their home and watch the news. The researcher believes that a sample of one or two month's prime time news of whatever issues can serve the purpose of the study. Accordingly, the study examined the first two weeks of each of the three months: December, 2012, January and February, 2013. This also has its own reasons. Firstly, the researcher believes that ETV's news broadcast of any times can serve the purpose of the study. Secondly, in order to create variety, it is important to see news that was broadcast at different times.

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Sources of the News and Speakers within the News

Based on the objectives of the study, it is fitting to look into the sources that dominate the news production and the major speakers in each of its news stories. Mwaffisi (1994: 161) described sources as the lifeblood of the news, which is the heart of constructing news. In the news making process, sources are the main factors that are taken into consideration at the early stage of news gathering. They are regarded as the output of the news.

Based on the content analysis of six weeks of ETV prime time news stories, the following major sources and speakers within the news were discussed.

Table 1: Results

<i>Speakers within the news</i>	<i>Sources of the news</i>							
	<i>ETV staff reporters</i>	<i>Ethiopian News Agency</i>	<i>Regional Gov't Comm.</i>	<i>Public relations practitioners</i>	<i>News media organizations</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Government officials at federal</i>	63	6	0	5	0	1	75	51
<i>Government officials at regional</i>	13	2	21	2	2	1	41	27.9
<i>Political parties</i>	3	0	1	0	0	0	4	2.72
<i>Community members</i>	8	2	2	0	1	0	13	8.84
<i>Scholars</i>	5	0	2	0	0	0	7	4.76
<i>Others</i>	3	2	0	2	0	0	7	4.76
<i>Total</i>	95	12	26	9	3	2	147	
<i>Percent</i>	64.62	8.16	17.7	6.12	2	1.36	100	

Table: Sources of the news and speakers within the news

The above table can be described in terms of three classifications: Firstly, the sources of the news; secondly, the speakers within the news and thirdly the emphasis that each source of news adopted for each of its speakers. Accordingly, each of them will be discussed below.

The table depicts that ETV uses different sources of news. Firstly, news which is prepared by ETV staff reporters and the others are from Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), regional government communication offices, public relations practitioners (PRs), different news media organizations and other sources. Out of 147 news items which were broadcast in ETV, 95 (64.62%) of the news was produced by ETV staff reporters. The regional government communication offices covered about 26 (17.7%) and ENA and PRs practitioners were used 12 times (8.16%) and 9 times (6.12%) respectively. Therefore, it is possible to infer the vast majority of the news in ETV is covered by the staff reporters. In addition, it can be deduced that the other sources of ETV's news were government sources. Secondly, as can be inferred from the above table, government officials at federal level were the main speakers within the news. They appeared in the news 75 times (51%) out of 147 news stories. The regional government officials accounted for about 41 (27.9%) of stories. The community members became speakers within the news about 13 times (8.84%). Scholars and varied political parties covered 7 (4.76%) and 4 (2.72%) of the total news stories respectively. This implies that government officials at both the federal and regional levels were given the highest coverage in ETV. On the contrary, different community members only received 13 (8.84%).

Thirdly, the findings of the above table also show that from the majority of news stories that were produced by ETV staff reporters, which is out of 147 news stories, 63 of the pieces derived from the words of government officials found at federal levels. About 13 news stories were from

government officials found at regional level. The others like community members and scholars were given scanty coverage by ETV staff reporters. ENA gave coverage for federal government officials about 6 news stories out of 12 news stories from the whole the total number of news which is 147 news stories. The regional government communication office gave the highest coverage, which accounts for about 21 news stories for government officials found at regional level out of the news stories originated from the regional government communication office which accounts 26 news stories from the total news stories, 147 news stories. And they gave little coverage for the others. The public relations practitioners also gave the highest proportion of coverage for federal government officials which amounts to about five of the nine news stories originating from PRs practitioners.

So, what one can deduce from the above table is that the majority of the speakers in the news production by ETV staff reporters were government officials, especially those found at federal level. Besides, it is possible to infer that the majority of news that came from different regions was beamed directly from government communication offices. This means ETV doesn't pay enough mind to sending reporters to the regional offices because of the access of information it has through them. What is more, the table shows that the news organizations that supplied news to ETV gave more coverage for government sources by emphasizing the views of officials of the government both at federal and regional levels. This shows as the government has different communication offices which supply information to ETV in different places. In relation with this point one informant said the following:

Informant: 4: When ETV aims to organize news, at the same time source of the news is planned together. There is an agreement established by ETV to utilize officers from different organizations, ENA, regional government communication offices and PRs.

When this context is seen with what Schudson (1995:28) says is that journalism serves as a common carrier of the perspectives of varied groups in society. According to Schudson, various perspectives can be entertained through media. It is the role of media in allowing people to voice their opinions. So far, it is also indicated that media are seen as crucial to the promotion of democratic values reflecting society in all its complexity and with many view points as possible, as discussed in the text (Allan, 2005: 55). The argument shows the role of media in democracy by inviting various perspectives. When we compare this with the experience of ETV, the findings show something different. It is possible to argue ETV is a medium in which the voice of the government officials is being heard and the voices of the others are being given less mind. This leaves in jeopardy the democratic process Ethiopian has begun to adopt because for democracy to exist, different viewpoints should be incorporated. In this regard, when we see community members and various political parties, they appeared as information providers in 13 and 4 news stories respectively. It is evident from this that diversified views were void in ETV's coverage.

As Holmes (1920) stated, media are a place where different ideas are entertained. The findings of the study appear in conflict with this point because the practice of ETV indicates that stories

were presented from one angle in which officials propagate their agenda by dominating the media.

News Selection Process in ETV

The media do not simply report on something newsworthy. As discussed, news is the final product of various processes. Several scholars proposed different criteria for news selection, Golding and Elliot (1979) proposed on three things for news value: the audience, accessibility and fit. Here, the researcher looks at news selection based on audience interest in ETV. Accordingly, the researcher asked the informants their criteria of news selection. The following is said by informant I:

ETV selects news based on the mission of the ruling party. There is choice of news to be transmitted through ETV considering its content having to evaluate the impact posed against any official beginning from lower level up to higher official on federal level. We have given up much valuable and high intensity news for the above reason; silence is all we do for not covering the news broad cast, we neglected to give attention several times for such kinds of news. In ETV selection of news is done in command when officials from different departments like from finance department in the media come to the newsroom and order us to shape or to select news according to their interest.

From the above passage it is possible to infer that the selection of news in ETV is based not on audience interest. Rather, news is selected if it aligns with the interest of the government. Journalists are selecting news not according to the principles of journalism, but on the basis of their boss. Journalists are working to please their overseers not the public at large. The extracted text also indicates as there is a pressure on journalists on news selection. Journalists are not free to select their own news something that may benefit people. It is also possible to understand from the passage that news is valueless if it negatively raises the name of government officials at different levels. This means the media is working to build the good image of the government by hiding the negative coverage, even if it is true information that the public has the right to know. This runs in direct opposition with Kovach and Rosenstein, 2001 “Principles of Journalism” which say journalism’s first obligation is to the truth and public’s right to information. On the same question, (ETV’s criteria of news selection) informant 6 and informant 5 share common ideas. Their responses have been presented below respectively.

Above all, our primary objective is to achieve successful implementation of the strategic plan of our country, which intern is the basic for the choice of news. Though ETV is responsible for the house of people’s representative, it works to implement the strategy and policies of government. Currently, our focus is playing decisive role in implementing the five years Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) through selected news that relates and supports the plan.

The major criterion is the focus on the advantage that the news has to deliver to our country, I mean, based on the value of the news in alleviating poverty and promoting democracy. In order to achieve the goal, our purpose is providing information that plays a role in this regard. So, most of the news is chosen if it has any relevance in dealing with the success of our country. Similarly, when we take news from the international news agency like BBC, we take into consideration the benefit of the news towards our country. No matter the source of the news, we can reject news that ruins the image of our country. For example: Britannian's news agency, BBC doesn't work against demolishing the reputation of British and the same works for ETV. We try to attract investors from different parts of the world to come and invest in Ethiopia, success stories help to build a better image in creating good reputation for the country. Whether we like it or not news plays the major share in creating awareness for attracting investors from all over the world by building the image of our country. What defined Ethiopia as a poor country still today is the poverty that had happened in Ethiopia (the 1977 E.C).

The responses of the two informants above serve as evidence for ETV's criteria for news selection. ETV focused on the value of the news in contributing its role in the process of the development the country began. The findings show that ETV selection of news is based on the role the government is playing in development. Moreover, sources of the news are used only if they shed light on the positive developments of the country. This means the activities of the government, in the development aspect are prioritized by ETV. Generally, the angle of news selection in ETV is from government interest point of view, not from the public's interest.

Source Considerations in ETV

There are a number of factors journalists take into account when selecting sources in their news production. Gans (2004) identifies six major source considerations: past suitability, productivity, reliability, trustworthiness, authoritativeness and articulateness. Based on this, as the study in the above table indicated ETV journalists' sources and speakers of the news were found to be government sources and officials of government at different levels. One of the most basic questions about the value of a work of journalism is the nature of its sourcing. How deep is the sourcing, what are the ranges of views offered, and to what extent can the audience decide for itself what to think about the story? These are the essential elements in trying to assess the quality of reporting (Annual report on American journalism, 2005). One of the ways in which the quality of reporting can be seen is when a story is taken from various sources. The value of a work of journalism is seen when different views are entertained by different sources. From the news stories conducted by ETV staff reporters, a majority of them are derived from the speech of government officials at different levels. Official sources, such as government officials are often preferred by journalists, not only because they are more easily accessible for interviews but also because journalists and their editors believe that official sources have important things to say

(Paletz and Entman, 1981). Therefore, interviewing an official source makes journalists' jobs efficient by concentrating on individuals with important things to say and by eliminating the need to double and triple check facts (Hackett, 1985). Journalists gave a little emphasis to the other sources. Information was presented from the angle of the government officials. Informant 2 said the following in reference to claims that certain sources are given special priority in ETV's stories: 'This is because we are serving government and giving special priority for government sources. When a certain event is organized, our known reporting culture is to cover the statement made by a certain government official using people as background information provider. So, for us a big news value is the statement given by government official'. As this extract shows, the journalists of ETV are giving special attention to the speech of government officials. Information reliant on the public or different community members is regarded as supplementary. Regarding the criteria of ETV's news source selection, the following informants had the following to say:

Informant 3: As much as we can, we see all available sources, but we select and use them thoroughly with great attention. We make use of those sources that go with government plan and reject the ones which opposes the strategy of the ruling party.

Informant 4: Our premium focus is not on the source. We look if the news is concerned with our country's development, and the role the news plays in keeping the national interest. This is the angle from which we approach the source. With regard to international sources like Reuters, CCTV and others, we do not directly copy and use them; thoroughly investigation will be made for the impact after we broadcast to the large public.

Informant 1: ETV uses every available source. The criteria is not the source, but what the content of news is the focus. If the news negatively affects the attitude that the public has towards government, it won't be accepted. If the news focuses on building the reputation of the government, without considering the source of the news, it will be accepted and transmitted.

The excerpts show that ETV is not playing the watchdog role of journalism, but rather is acting as an exhibition for positive portrayal of the government. Other viewpoints are simply rejected. This means news is presented in ETV the way it serves the government. This diminishes the big principle of journalism: 'journalism's loyalty is to citizens and it must serve as an independent monitor of power'. In contrast with these principles of journalism, ETV's primary practice, its loyalty is to government because those who received coverage on the channel are the government officials at different positions, rather than the citizens. It is the government who is monitoring the media, not the media is monitoring the government.

From the three key informants above it is also possible to understand that ETV's criteria for news source selection is based on the content of the news rather than where the news came from. Whatever the source is if the news focuses on the positive development or constructive actions of the government, it has the chance to be covered. If not, whatever the source, coverage cannot be given. This indicates that ETV is playing its role in presenting daily the good side of the government where as it is rejecting the other sides of the story. It is possible to relate the above arguments with what Moloney (200:65) said in chapter two. He argues that a public relations is about power and manipulation against democracy because it is so often used to support government and commercial interests at the expense of other interests. Generally, in ETV, institutionally affiliated sources typically dominate news discourses. As a result, news comes to reflect government interests. Herman and Chomsky (1988:23) stress the symbiotic relationship between journalists and agents of power. Preferred meanings that are structured into news discourses are overwhelmingly 'those that are functional for elites'. As a result in ETV, sources playing to the interests of the government are favored and dominated while other sources were ignored.

Factors Affecting Journalists News and Source Selection

Weaver (1998) argues that reporters work can only thrive and flourish in a society that protects its media from censorship and in a company that saves its journalists from the marketers. A majority of the informants have pointed out that they have different challenges on selection of their own news and sources based on journalistic principles. The extract below illustrates this:

Informant 1: There are lots of challenges we face. We can't run a story which we believe serve the interests of the public. We are framed according to the plan of government. Since the government plan is focus on development story, we are doing the same. We don't have the power to deal with critical story. Our boss gives us direction on what kinds of story should we focus or not. Even there are times when our editors cut out the core point of the news when we bring newsworthy issues to the newsroom. Most of the time, this happens due to the lack of adequate knowledge from our editors. Most of our editors are people who are not from journalism background and their working experience is below acceptable. They are given the position as a result of political affiliation. They cut the most important part of the news by assuming that it may ruin the image of the government which is not concerned with. So, the structure of the works like reporters, editors and editor in chief is given in our media institution not based on your journalism knowledge. This highly affected the news selection process inside ETV.

As can be inferred from the excerpt above, the big challenge for news selection is the lack of journalistic knowledge displayed by some media professionals. Those who are placed at different positions in the media are selected according to their political affiliation, not for their knowledge of journalism. This means that those high up in media management give editors enough power

only to serve the interest of the ruling party. In general, a lack of enough journalistic knowledge is hampering the profession; the government's role in appointing people of its interest at different positions is affecting the quality of journalism. As a result, most of the news stories were shaped to serve the government's interest. With regard to the challenge on source selection, the same informant said:

Most of the time before we live the media, we receive order. Then we act as a "dispatch order" that is going to address or receive a message for and from somebody. There is no time in which we plan by ourselves to go wherever we want and do whatever we like. This means that we do not have the authority to select our own sources.

From this it can be determined that ETV has already established its source of news. That is why it sends its reporters to gather news to its own sources. This affects the diversity of views that certain news addresses and becomes what Paletz and Etman (1982) argue. They assert that use of official sources would result in homogeneity of reporting.

Informant 2 also eagerly described the challenge of news and source selection in the media as follows:

There are lots of interferences on our job from government. We are not independent in selecting our own news and sources. We are working as per the government's plan. So, it is the government decision that would take place in news and source selection.

Informant 5 (editor) expressed extremely negative opinions regarding the point of the above informants. He feels that "I allow reporters to select and gather news. I cannot impede them, and others cannot interfere with my work. However, if it has a problem in damaging the image of our country, I will revise it." This shows that journalists enjoy freedom of selecting their own news story as far as it doesn't have a negative impact up on government. If they do, their bosses have the authority to interfere with their work; this implies indirectly what informant 1 and 2 said above.

ETV's practice shows that the media practitioners are working to portray the government's image positively. They act as image builders of the government due to the lack of editorial independence in their organization. As a result, they work as per the order of their bosses.

According to Gans (2004), while discharging lofty responsibilities, journalists use their power to determine what news story enters the symbolic arena. Dryly, MacManus (1954), Kovach (1990) and others claim that the move over the past ten years to 'market driven journalism' has fundamentally changed the daily role of journalists in making the news. The changes are characterized by a gradual and increasing lack of editorial independence within media organizations.

Almost all of the key informants of the study proved as it is so challenging to cover any critical stories on the government in ETV. The researcher asked the respondents to reason out their responses and said the following:

Informant 1: I do have about 23 years of work experience in ETV. All the way through these years, there is hardly any story which negatively disclose about the reputation of government or its official's. I remember the report of my coworker about a certain government organization. He challenged the government officials of the organization and made the report accordingly. Another government official called to our media and then ordered a reprisal to be taken on the reporter. ETV made another report to do a piece on the reporter by labeling him as "*yegili tikim abarari*" which means as the one who runs for self-benefit. Those who are on management position in ETV also took their own punishment up on the reporter. This shows as there is no right to cover news which may negatively hurts one of the government officials. If one of them is mentioned, it is taken as if all of them are damaged equally. So we keep our self-refrained from doing the same activity.

The above extract revealed that journalists practice of self-censorship due to the pressures from government in selecting news story. This means that in order to survive within the profession of journalism, the journalists should work for the good name of the government. According to Solomon (2005:11), journalists practicing self-censorship often favor government authorities over other groups with different views in a number of ways. For instance, information could be suppressed in such ways as choosing safe-side, avoiding sensitive issues or giving responsibilities to faithful bosses, suppressing the stories in favor of politicians in power, giving emphasis for official speeches over other significant events and unquestioning the news worthiness of events where government authorities involve. It can be inferred from this that those journalists commit self-censorship serve the interest of those few people in government power. They become the activist of the government.

Informant 6: Sometimes we can do critical stories in ETV, but not in the way the name of government officials is negatively raised. For instance, last time, what we have seen on one Sugar Factory project called '*Tendaho Kasem*' project is too nauseating work when you see the finalized project in comparison with the allotted budget for the project. Here, it is the role of journalists to challenge the concerned body about the budget and the quality of the project. However, we had not done anything. I feel we should work hard, but it requires not only the media practitioner's commitment but also the political commitment leadership too.

What can be deduced from informant number six is that leaving out negative stories about the government is taken as a working culture within ETV. The culture in the newsroom is also one of the factors that affect news production process. As a result, journalists select stories which fit

what has been said in editorial meeting. Underwood (1993) states that editors who need to allot space in the news pages well in advance prefer stories that are predictable, and fit the preconceptions that have already been discussed in editorial meeting. As can be deduced from the above view, government pressures on media practitioners resulted in self-censorship. It can be argued that self-censorship became the culture of the news room. However, one informant said this from another angle:

Informant 5: in ETV, I don't think that there is a challenge on journalists not to cover critical stories. Journalists censor themselves. Nobody asks them if they do it by substantiating their data by different evidences. In ETV on "*Aynachin*" program, different problems of government official are raised and government takes its own judgment. What is more, on the program called "*Yegna Guday*", the same thing is done. On these programs, different people raise various problems of their social environment then the government takes remedial solutions for the problem. Generally, as far as my knowledge is concerned, the government doesn't order them do this and not to do that. However, the problem is on the media itself. The trend we have experienced doesn't allow us to do an investigative journalism. There is no brave journalist who breaks through and engages himself/herself on such activities. As far as the past trend continues, the same activity will continue.

According to the above response, the journalists have censored themselves due to the problems that had been in the media. The informant claims that there is no pressure on journalists currently. According to the informant, journalists are free to cover critical stories of their own, but the effect of the past trend brought self-censorship. The same informant blames the media as follows:

The problem is not from the government. Though ETV is working about critical stories on certain program as I told you earlier, on news, ETV should work hard in covering the problems of some government officials so that the other officials learn from them. This helps others to correct themselves. Covering such kinds of issues doesn't have any concern with government.

However, one informant has a point of conflict with the above argument.

Informant 3: In Ethiopia the problem is the way the meaning of development journalism is interpreted by government, which focus on success stories only. Almost all of the news deals with the positive actions of the government, in the production of news, those assigned in core positions of the media are assigned directly by government. These people work to keep the interest of the government. These people work to entertain the voices of the political elite. If there is a controversial point, they want to handle the issue by themselves. They do not allow and encourage journalists to do an investigative work and journalists

are responsible to do what their boss orders them. There is no chance for journalists to cover critical stories even if they get the opportunity; they pass over such stories because we are looking journalists who are punished by their salary and other vigorous punishments. This is why ETV's tone of news is positive most of the time.

So, most of the informants do agree that due to the order they receive from their bosses, they are not able to focus on investigative reporting. The people on positions in ETV are assigned to serve the interest of the government. Due to this, journalists select stories that meet their bosses' expectations. What they do is to meet the interest of the government. Hence, in ETV journalists are not independent in selecting their own news and sources. Most news stories were presented from the government's point of view. As a result, the media practitioners engage in news stories that promote government positive image and ignore critical stories that may affect the government reputation.

When the researcher asked the informants how they verify information for their report, most of the informants make reference to their news sources. According to the respondents, most of ETV news is event oriented. Due to this, their sources are government officials and public relations officers. Since most of their sources are government bodies. So, they revealed as they do not attempt to verify these sources in view of the fact that they are safe sources in ETV.

Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) aver that the discipline of verification is what separates journalism from public relations or propaganda. Woolever (2002:44) also advises journalists to verify information they get from one source says "Once you have the information in front of you, the next step is to decide if source is an appropriate" and he emphasizes that one sided nature of news which do not add the opposite, neutral views is poor argument or report. The informant of the study responded their verification system for their report in terms of the following.

Informant 1: Shares his extensive experience by saying:

Most of our news is based on government events. We go to the event and report what government has done. During this time, we get "*ready made*" information in which we need no investigation. For example, the event may be the inaugural ceremony of condominium, what you do this time is to report the statements made by the government officials. People you want to interview are also there who are pleased in getting the chance to live in this condominium. You cannot find people who raise grievances on the system of the lottery or who raise other complaints on government. Even you don't have time to contact different bodies because of the deadline pressure. ETV doesn't encourage us to make a report while the project was on progress. Our organization sends us to make a report only after the completion of the whole project. So, you don't know the ups and downs that the project passed through. Even if you know the problems with the project, they do not allow you to make a report on it. You simply say the government has done

this and that. Therefore, to me, in ETV there is no way for information verification especially if the info comes from government sources.

As the extract showed, it is possible to raise a number of reasons why ETV reporters often do not verify information, especially those of government officials. Firstly, due to the newsroom influence for deadlines. Because most of the news comes from government events, they copy what government officials said on the occasion. Secondly, government official sources are a safe story for most reporters. There is no need to verify if the information comes from government officials because they fit the agenda of the government and the media too. Thirdly, it is challenging to make an attempt to verify government information. In regards to the third claim, another informant had the following to say:

Though we do have the interest of verifying information especially the statement of government officials, the way to do it is closed. Sometimes when you do it and come up with different perspectives, our editors reject and present only the good version. So, we don't have the power to verify government sources (informant 2).

Almost all of the respondents agree that because the majority of their sources are government bodies, they do not worry about crosschecking their information, and even neglect to do so to satisfy their bosses. Due to the fear implanted in journalists' minds, they do not crosscheck from other bodies even if they question the information provided by officials. Scholars like Hadland (2005) recommend that journalists crosscheck every fact. Ironically, ETV journalist's present information from one side as a result of the pressures weighed upon them. Independence is a major journalistic ethical foundation that should be given emphasis. This is due to the fact that credibility is very crucial for building the image of a given media group in the eye of the public. Kruger (2004:13) states, our credibility is massively affected by any perceived or real conflict of interest. We are unable to work if audiences discount our reporting because they see it as influenced by considerations outside of journalism, such as any personal, commercial or political motives.

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding the source of the news and speakers in news stories reveal something about the station's practice of journalism. The findings showed that the government sources were the main sources of news in ETV. Similarly, the government officials both at federal and regional levels were the main speakers in each news stories.

In ETV, the major criteria of news selection were based on the value of the news in building the image of the government. The news that lauds the government actions was given coverage no matter what the source is. In contrary, the station neglected any news and its sources if they coupled with negatively affecting the government's actions/name.

ETV dominantly used government sources and gave coverage for the voices of the government officials. This finding concurs with Gans (2003) point. He contends that top-down coverage reflects the perspective of those who are powerful. Therefore, issues which are of priority to citizens interests were not covered in ETV.

Depending on the findings, it can be concluded that there are a lot of pressures affecting journalists' news and source selection in ETV. The journalists are not doing critical stories or investigative journalism. They act as the mouthpiece of the government. News can be selected and distributed only if it talks about the positive actions of the government. Even journalists are neglecting to verify information because the source selection is done by the media and journalists lack independence.

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