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EXPLORING MEDIA COVERAGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN EASTERN ETHIOPIA

The study explored the coverage of environmental protection in Harari Mass Media Agency. It used exploratory design focusing on quantitative content analysis and qualitative textual analysis methods. A purposive sampling technique was used to selectively gather data pertinent to the study's objectives. The findings of the study revealed that Harari Mass Media Agency has given little attention to problems of environmental conservation. This is due to the fact, that the media didn't focus and considered the importance of these in the contemporary media discourse. In addition, the study indicated that nature protection issues are not included and conspicuously absent in the editorial policy of Harari Mass Media Agency. In addition, the source of news in the above-mentioned media was mainly from higher governmental officials. The media highly prioritizing government official narratives over expert perspectives. Thus, this contributed to a distorted representation of environmental articles. The study found out that the limited diversity in news sources hampered the media's ability to portray and provide an impartial and comprehensive coverage of nature problems. Moreover, the study revealed that the media does not have professional journalist who can do it. This deficiency significantly contributed to the minimal coverage of environmental issues in the media reporting. The study acclaims that the media should provide adequate coverage. Lastly, the study strongly recommends that the media should take proactive measures to enhance environment coverage by revising its editorial policy to incorporate it as a key focus area in the media.

Key words: ecological balance, editorial guidelines, public authorities, The Harari Mass Media Agency, media reporting.

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Шығыс Эфиопиядағы қоршаған ортаны қорғау мәселелерінің бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарында жариялануын зерттеу

Бұл мақалада «Харари» бұқаралық ақпарат агенттігінің қоршаған ортаны қорғау тақырыбын қамту мәселесі зерттелді. Мұнда мәтінді талдаудың сандық мазмұндық талқылаулары мен сапалы әдістеріне негізделген зерттеу әдісі қолданылды. Зерттеу мақсаттарына сәйкес келетін деректерді жинау үшін мақсатты іріктеу әдісі пайдаланылды. Зерттеу нәтижелері Harari Mass Media агенттігінің қоршаған ортаны қорғау мәселелеріне аз көңіл бөлетінін көрсетті. Себебі, бұқаралық ақпарат құралдары қазіргі медиа дискурста бұл мәселенің маңыздылығына назар аудармайды және жан-жақты қарастырмайды. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу қоршаған ортаны қорғау мәселелері Harari Mass Media агенттігінің редакциялық саясатында қамтылмағанын және анық түрде жоқ екенін көрсетті. Агенттіктің жаңалықтар көзі негізінен жоғары мемлекеттік қызметкерлер болды. БАҚ арнайы сарапшылардың пікіріне емес, үкіметтің ресми хабарламаларына басымдық береді. Осылайша, бұл экологиялық проблемалардың бұрмалануына ықпал етті.

Зерттеу жаңалықтар көздерінің шектеулі болуы бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарының экологиялық мәселелерді бейтарап және жан-жақты қамту қабілетіне кедергі келтіретінін анықтады. Тағы бір айта кетерлігі, БАҚ-та экологиялық мәселелерді қамтитын кәсіби журналистердің жоқ екені де анықталды. Бұл кемшіліктер ақпарат құралдарында экологиялық проблемалар туралы материалдарды өте аз жариялауға айтарлықтай ықпал етті. Зерттеу бұл бағытта агенттіктің нақты экологиялық мәселелерді тиісті қамту керек екенін көрсетеді. Сонымен, авторлар бұл агенттікке қоршаған ортаны қорғауды БАҚ қызметінің негізгі бағыттарының қатарына қосу мақсатында,

редакциялық саясатты қайта қарау арқылы экологиялық проблемаларды жариялауды кеңейту бойынша белсенді шаралар қабылдауға кеңес береді.

Түйін сөздер: экологиялық тепе-теңдік, редакциялық ұсыныстар, мемлекеттік билік органы, «Харари» бұқаралық ақпарат агенттігі, БАҚ-та жариялау.

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Аспекты освещения в СМИ вопросов охраны окружающей среды в Восточной Эфиопии

В данном исследовании изучена практика освещения темы охраны окружающей среды в агентстве массовой информации Harari Mass Media. Авторы сосредоточились на исследовательской концепции с акцентом на количественный контент-анализ и качественные методы текстового анализа. Для точечного изучения и выборочного сбора данных, соответствующих целям исследования, использовался метод целенаправленной сегментации. Результаты исследования показали, что агентство Harari Mass Media уделяет недостаточно внимания вопросам охраны окружающей среды. Это связано, по мнению авторов, с тем, что СМИ редко фокусируют внимание аудитории на важности вопросов охраны окружающей среды в современном медиадискурсе. Кроме того, исследование показало, что вопросы охраны окружающей среды не включены и явно отсутствуют в редакционной политике агентства Harari Mass Media. Кроме того, источником новостей в агентстве Harari Mass Media становятся, в основном, высшие правительственные чиновники. СМИ чаще отдают приоритет официальным сообщениям правительства, а не мнениям экспертов. Таким образом, формируется некорректное представление о реальном положении дел в сфере экологии.

Исследование также показало, что ограниченное количество источников новостей препятствует СМИ беспристрастно и всесторонне освещать экологические проблемы. Кроме того, в ходе исследования выяснилось, что в СМИ Восточной Эфиопии нет профессиональных журналистов, освещающих экологические проблемы. Этот недостаток в значительной степени способствовал минимальному освещению экологических проблем в СМИ. Исследователи подчеркивают, что СМИ должны обеспечить адекватное освещение данных проблем. И наконец, авторы рекомендуют СМИ принять активные усилия по расширению освещения экологических проблем путем пересмотра редакционной политики с целью включения охраны окружающей среды в число основных направлений деятельности СМИ.

Ключевые слова: экологический баланс, редакционные рекомендации, органы государственной власти, Агентство массовой информации Harari Mass Media, освещение в СМИ.

Introduction

Precipitably, environmental issues has become the concerns of every country nowadays. According to Roba (2012), people should have a common understanding of reducing environmental deterioration. Everyone has a responsibility of protecting the environment through cooperation and active participation in making the earth pollution-free. The media have a social responsibility in establishing and crafting an agenda on environmental issues, and they should pay attention to raising awareness among people and saving lives. The main function of the media is as a tool for public information and awareness. It plays a crucial role in promoting public opinion and policy on issues that have a significant impact on people's lives (Teklesilase, 2015).

Nowadays, it is known that every country in the world is affected by environmental problems. Most advanced countries became prosperous at the cost of the environment. Thus, the issues of environmental protection needs action at the global level. These countries' concerted efforts to pursue sustainable socio-economic development through the protection of the environment are integrated at local, regional, and international levels (Roba, 2012). They also highlighted that discussion about global warming, deforestation, and pollution of the oceans is disturbing attitudes related to economic growth and development at local, national, and international levels.

This study aimed to address the gaps within Harari Mass Media Agency, particularly focusing on the obstacles in media coverage of environmental protection issues. Henceforth, this study to answer the following research questions:

- What are the primary challenges faced in reporting on environmental protection?
- Has the Harari Mass Media Agency set environmental protection issues as one of the major topics on the public agenda?
- Has there been sufficient attention devoted to environmental protection issues in media coverage?

Literature review

In Ethiopia, the mainstream media has not given due attention to environmental protection issues (Teklesilase, 2015). Teklesilase further states that the quality and quantity of media coverage on environmental protection issues seem under expectations. For instance, Content analysts typically find gaps in media coverage due to episodic coverage of dramatic events, and to focusing superficially on human interest and economic impacts, while overlooking systemic concerns. Shanhan (2011) notes that media coverage of environmental issues remains disproportionately low compared to the scale of the problem. Scholars in Ethiopia claims that there is insufficient representation of environmental issues in grassroots media and community outlets. In addition, there is a lack of research investigating the media's role in raising environmental awareness, unlike studies on other development and political topics. Even though, the media have a significant role in disseminating environmental information and creating public awareness, little is known about their contribution and impact mainly in Ethiopia. Therefore, investigating the coverage of environmental issues in media warrants attention.

Griffin (2006) suggests that the media plays a significant role in shaping our perceptions of importance by emphasizing certain issues over others. As a result, audiences often prioritize these highlighted issues, considering them more significant due to the influence of the media. Additionally, the media constructs the meaning of these issues by presenting a framework for interpretation, which involves choosing, highlighting, omitting, and expanding on specific aspects of the news content. The media's role is not only to report the facts but also to frame them in a certain way. In addition, Griffin noted that media affects how people perceive some issues as more relevant than others. In addition, people pay more attention to those issues and consider them more important because the media influence our thinking. It is stated by various researches that the media has not given due attention and neglected the environmental protection issues. Although certain media are

covering environmental issues, the contents of the media lacks of thorough investigation (Wyss, 2018). According to Teklesilassie (2015), the media portrayal of environmental concerns in Ethiopia are susceptible to personal opinions and bias. A recent research conducted by Gerrath et al. (2024) notes that message warmth virtual influencers are more reliable sources to promote pro- environmental and sustainable behaviour.

The use of the Agenda-Setting Theory in this research aids in establishing a robust perspective on the influential impact of mass communication and the media's role in setting agendas. McCombs and Shaw (1995) stated that the mass media determines what is important in people's minds. The agenda-setting theory suggests that the prominence of issues in the mass media can influence the importance attributed to those issues by the media audience, such as newspaper readers. It implies that audiences may perceive issues with the same level of significance as portrayed by the media. This theory posits that the media indeed have a cognitive impact. The media can tell the public what to focus on. People with higher education levels are more prone to the agenda-setting effect (Craig, 1995). People who have a high need for orientation on a certain topic are also more likely to be affected by the media. The media may also influence each other, as well as be influenced by public relations and public opinion. The interactions between media, the public, and policymakers are characterized by mutual influence across various channels. The public impacts both the media and policymakers, while policymakers influence policy, the media, and the public. This dynamic interplay underscores agenda-setting as a social phenomenon involving active, simultaneous, and multidirectional roles of policymakers, news sources, media platforms, and the audience. The relationship between media and society is very immediate and widely discussed. Trivedi et al. (2018) highlighted that the media has been seen not only in influencing political opinions but also it also works on environmental concerns and attitudes. And, this study explores the effects of agenda setting on environmental protection issues and how the media influences public opinion regarding environmental protection issues.

Research methods

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches including content analysis, audio textual analysis, and interview instruments were used in a step-by-step progression, which is

termed a sequential approach in mixed methods (Morse 2010). First, the researchers collected and analyzed the stories from the selected recorded audio through content analysis used quantitatively. Then, by setting some criteria, the researchers continued to select some stories from those already collected from the recorded audio by using the nested sampling technique in which the samples are a subset of those participants chosen for the other investigation in the same study (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2007 & Moges, 2017). This step was undertaken to conduct audio and textual analysis.

Finally, the researchers interviewed four editors and senior reporters who have experience in reporting and editing environmental issues in the Harari Mass Media Agency. Using different instruments in a single piece of research makes both the data collection and analysis strong, and it narrows the limitations of each method used across the study (Tashakkori, Teddlie, 1998). These scholars have reasoned that employing a single method alone may be both broad and thorough. There are other advantages when using multiple research methods. "All methods have inherent biases and limitations, so the use of only one method to assess a given phenomenon will inevitably yield biased and limited results" (Greene et al, 1989).

In research conducted on assessing the scope of coverage regarding environmental protection in Harari Mass Media Agency, content analysis was employed to count the breadth of coverage concerning environmental protection. It did not give answers to questions about how the stories were framed and why this extent of coverage was given to the issue in content analysing. Of course, this is the drawbacks of content analysis. Also, it does not tell how and why something is covered (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). To address these gaps, audio-recorded analysis examined how stories were framed, while interviews with key informants from HMMA aimed to explain the framing and coverage. These interviews were crucial for understanding how environmental protection stories were crafted in the selected media. By using multiple instruments, the study aimed to complement each method's limitations, ensuring a comprehensive analysis. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data offers a thorough understanding of environmental protection reporting in HMMA.

Content analysis is a method used to evaluate how environmental protection issues are covered in HMMA. It primarily involves analyzing the media reports within the study. Berelson (1952) asserts that content analysis focuses on what is being

communicated rather than the subjective nature of the content or people's reactions to it. This means that the content analyst codes the stories only as they appear, not as what they are intended to be or what they are intended to mean. As one of the first steps in this study is identifying what was reported in the selected programs, content analysis becomes very important.

Scholars have argued (Weber, 1990 2010; Wimmer & Dominick, 2006) that content analysis can help to offer broader implications to given content and can reach valid results that are based on the observed values. This may be the best instrument used to collect broader data quantitatively. Henceforth, with an interest in collecting broader data systematically and making general inferences, the content analysis tool was employed here. The researchers followed the ensuing steps to manage the content analysis of environmental protection stories, code them, and process the data) and to collect the relevant data from HMMA within a specific sampling time and systematically. These, in turn, became useful in maximizing the reliability of the data. The data were gathered within three months, from the time May 1, 2020- July 30, 2020.

The primary aim of this research is to assess both the volume and caliber of environmental topics addressed within HMMA. However, due to constraints such as time and resources, it isn't practical to analyze every Eastern Ethiopian media outlet. Consequently, HMMA was chosen as a key focus of the study. This decision was based on its substantial audience reach within the West and East Hararghe Regions, as well as its extensive geographical coverage. The study involved the participation of four individuals, including two editors and two senior reporters from HMMA.

Archived radio news files and newspapers were used as the main sources. A coding book was prepared to collect relevant data used for the study. Coding was carried out by the researcher and one reporter from HMMA. Besides, in-depth interviews were held with editors and reporters working in the newsrooms of target media outlets to gather qualitative data used to back the findings of the quantitative data. Content analysis of in-depth interviews were held with editors and reporters.

In the content analysis, the themes, subjects, or issues to be studied can be categorized into different subcategories. In this study, the researchers have defined categories to analyze significant content. This is because every unit should not be analyzed unless it has some sort of importance or relevance to the aim of the research. Based on this technical

assumption, the researchers have developed a coding sheet consisting of 7 major content categories which were applied for the coding of sample news editions in general and environmental stories in specific, too. The content-coding categories are enumerated and explained as follows.

Kinds of Environmental Theme(S) the News Story Deals with- this content-coding category was meant to gather data used to know about the thematic focus of news coverage by the media studied regarding various environmental issues categorized as:

- News stories categorized under “Environmental problems/Challenges” pertain to topics discussing the causes or consequences of environmental issues, such as deforestation, soil erosion, pollution, and global warming/climate change.

- “Environmental Protection/Conservation” content category encompasses news articles concerning activities aimed at preserving the environment, such as tree planting initiatives, river basin development projects, and soil and water conservation practices.

- “Environmental events & campaigns” content category comprises news articles covering environmental initiatives or celebrations, such as World Environment Day or World Biodiversity Day ceremonies and campaigns.

- Environmental Research Findings, Innovations & Solutions: This category encompasses news articles highlighting recent scientific discoveries, technological advancements, and innovative solutions related to environmental issues, such as projects focused on green energy development.

- Others: This category includes environmental news stories that do not fit into any of the predefined environmental issue categories.

- Placement of environmental stories: This coding category examines where environmental issues are positioned within news editions. It aims to gather data on the level of attention, significance, or priority given to environmental stories by the media. For radio news, this is categorized as either among major news stories or among common/inside-page news stories. For newspapers, it refers to whether the stories are featured on the front page or inside pages.

- Origin of Environmental News Stories: This content-coding category is designed to track the origin of environmental news stories covered by the media. It categorizes stories as either originating from local/domestic sources or from foreign sources.

- News sources: This content-coding category is utilized to collect information regarding the primary

sources relied upon by the media for environmental stories. These sources can include government officials, community members, NGOs, experts, documents, conducted research, internet sources, etc. Understanding the predominant sources used by the organization aids in assessing source diversity and credibility. News sources are categorized as Government officials, Experts/scholars, Community members, Environment Groups/NGOs, private companies, Press Releases, and New Research Findings/Reports.

- Nature of environmental news stories: This content-coding category is employed to gather data about the characteristics or types of environmental news stories covered. These stories are categorized as investigative when they are well-researched and delve deeply into environmental issues with high-quality reporting, or event-oriented when they cover meetings and related programs focusing on environmental issues. Additionally, stories are classified as either solution-oriented or problem-oriented, and can also be classified as advocating, informative, or both advocating and informative.

- Major types of environmental protection efforts in Ethiopia include: Soil conservation, tree planting initiatives, water pollution control, air pollution mitigation, noise pollution management, etc.

Following data collection, researchers conducted an analysis tailored to the methodology employed. Quantitative data pertaining to most topics were subjected to analysis using descriptive statistics and percentages. Qualitative data, acquired through interviews, underwent analysis by interpreting participant responses within the framework of theories concerning the factors influencing media coverage of environmental protection efforts.

Result and discussions

The study was mainly intended to investigate the coverage of media on environmental protection news in the HMMA. The description has been made on the quantitative and qualitative news coverage of environmental issues of the selected media: HMMA. A total of 90 days of news editions from May 01, 2020, to July 30, 2020, were collected from Radio programs. A total of 266 news stories produced with different issues have been found from the news editions of the radio. The task of content analysis begins first by sorting the environmental issues from the other news content issues. By finishing the sort of environmental issues, 47 news stories were found to be environmental. These news stories were also analyzed to gather data used to answer the rest

research questions pertinent to the quality or nature of the news coverage that the media studied gave to environmental issues.

First, the quantitative data would be considered as the main data of the study which are presented in the tables displaying figures of frequency and percentage. Second, their results are described and substantiated by the qualitative data gathered from in-depth interviews that were made with editors and senior reporters.

The extent of the media content on the coverage of environmental protections

Under the specific objectives, the study identified the amount of environmental news coverage that was

given attention by the media. And every news story found in the sampled daily news editions has been collected and categorized into the issues they dealt with. The result of the data collected concerning news coverage given to environmental stories is presented as follows:

The coverage of news stories about environmental protection issues within three months in the media.

The study has assessed three months of media coverage on environmental protection. In this section, it is intended to show how much the media has emphasized it within these three months. See the table below:

Table 1 – The rate of news about environmental protection issues in the media within three months

Name of Media outlet	Frequency	The coverage of news about environmental protection issues within three months made in the media.			Total
		May	Jun	July	
Harari Mass Media Agency	Number	7	14	26	47
	Percentage	17.07	34.14	47.89	100%

According to the above table, 47 percent with a frequency of 26 was the coverage of news about environmental issues in July, 34.14 percent of environmental news was made in June, and in May, only 17.07 percent with a frequency of 7 news of environmental issues were covered. According to the above result, in July the media gave gross attention.

In general, the study understands that the HMMA did not give enough coverage to environmental protection issues relative to the quantity of news stories covering other topics, how many news stories related to environmental issues were broadcasted in the mass media over the past three months. This finding is similar to the study conducted by Teklesilase (2015) on Ethiopia Broadcast

Corporation (EBC). The assertion is at odds with the country's policy and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) Proclamation No 9/1995. The proclamation empowers the Environmental Protection Authority to develop environmental protection policies and legislation, as well as to establish directives and frameworks essential for the assessment and oversight of the environmental impacts of socio-economic development projects. Additionally, the EPA is tasked with monitoring and supervising the implementation of these initiatives.

Prominence of environmental stories

The data were gathered to identify the prominence of the environmental protection issues stories in their main headline news editions. The data are presented below:

Table 2 – The prominence of environmental protection coverage

Name of Media	Frequency	Prominence of environmental news		Total
		Main Stories	Inside stories	
Harari Mass Media Agency	Number	9	38	47
	Percentage	19.15%	80.85%	100%

According to the result of the above data, 80.85% of the stories (inside stories) were not found to be a prime time, it was in the inside stories. Only 19.15% (main stories) of the stories were given on the daily prime time. Based on the quantitative gathered data environmental protection issues were not given priority in the daily news. On the contrary, based on the document analysis, the media house does not have any articles that mention environmental issues and does not inculcate environmental protection. Besides, based on the response of editors, both Ed1 and Ed2 there is no attention given to environmental protection issues.

According to above data, environmental protection issues received less priority in the media compared to other topics. This does not correlate with the Ethiopian government's policy and strategies that follow the policy of green legacy and the Ethiopian government strongly supports environmental issues protection. In addition, the

constitution established by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) mandates both the government and the citizens of Ethiopia to uphold responsibility for conserving natural resources and sustaining ecological equilibrium. Moreover, various proclamations and accompanying regulations have been enacted to enforce environmental protection and management, aligning with the fundamental principles outlined in the Constitution (EPA, 2008 cited in Gessesse, 2010)).

Types of news stories of the environmental protection

The data were collected to show which environmental protection issues have gotten attention. It has been focused on mainly planting trees, soil conservation, and water pollution issues, based on the context of the media.

Table 3 – Types of the news Stories of environmental protection

Name of Media outlet	Frequency	Types of the news Stories of environmental protection			Total
		Soil conservation	Planting tree	Water pollution	
Harari Mass Media Agency	Number	6	39	2	47
	Percentage	13%	82.97%	4.25%	100%

The data collected from HMMA produced, 82.97% of news stories were about planting trees, 13% were about soil conservation and 4.25% of news was about water pollution. As shown from the data above most of the aired news about environmental protection is about planting trees. Even these are contrary to the governmental policy of Ethiopia which emphasizes on green policy. The informants, E1, E2, and R1 also stated that the media coverage on environmental protection is not enough even about planting trees. The media presents in news form. Most of the time coverage of news on planting trees is also presented by the invitation of governmental officials and experts in agriculture in the areas.

Media plays an influential role in assigning importance to public issues. Due to the agenda-setting function of the news media, audiences

not only learn facts about the "environment", but they learn too how much importance to attach to those facts based on the emphasis placed on them by the media. People must gain awareness and understanding of environmental protection to protect the environment from pollution and preserve it for the next generation. So, to make this awareness media must prepare programs that give information about what are the consequences of environmental pollution on human health and its surroundings, and how to prevent pollution. Continual awareness creation must be given to the people to protect and preserve the environment for the next generation.

Kinds of environmental themes of news stories dealt with

The table below shows four thematic environmental issues on how HMMA amplify awareness of environmental issues.

Table 4 – Kinds of news coverage given to different environmental themes and issues

Name of media outlet	Frequency	Kinds of environmental themes issues				Total
		Environmental problems	Environmental Protection	Environmental Campaigns	Environmental Research Findings, Innovations & Solutions	
Harari Mass Media Agency	Number	5	16	26	0	47
	Percentage	10.63	34.04	55.31	0	100%

As the above data presented, from the total number of 47 environmental issues, 55.31 percent with the frequency of 26 news were focusing on environmental campaign issues. Approximately 34.04% of the news focused on environmental protection matters, while the remaining 10.63% addressed environmental problems. The data suggests that the majority of news stories pertaining to environmental issues revolve around topics such as environmental protection efforts and campaigns. Especially it only focuses on protecting trees from cutting for different purposes for household services and fire.

On the other hand, environmental problems and environmental research and findings did not get attention. Teklesilase (2015) emphasized that the above points, climate change, and ozone depletion are often reported using traditional reporting

styles, surfacing as specific and discrete events, rather than gradually connected developments. This emphasis on the event and not the underlying issue undermines the importance of the issue, while simultaneously implying an infrequency that is simply untrue. Today, journalists who report on environmental issues encounter difficulties in adjusting conventional reporting approaches to suit the beat. They face constraints such as limited space, tight deadlines, and other demands while striving to meet the expectations outlined by Bourassa et al. in 2013, as referenced by Teklesilase in 2015.

Main news sources of the media on environmental protection issues

This research is also aimed to highlight the origins and affiliations of the chosen media outlets in sourcing and disseminating news and information concerning environmental matters.

Table 5 – Main news sources of the media on environmental protection issues

Name of media outlet	Frequency	Sources							Total
		Government officials	Experts/scholars	Community members	Environment groups/NGOs's	Private companies,	press releases	new research findings/reports	
Harari Mass Media Agency	Number	27	13	3	1	-	4	2	47
	Percentage	56.25	27.08	6.25	2.08	-	8.33	4.11	100%

The above data shows, that 56.25 percent of the frequency of 27 environmental news sources of the media were from Government officials. 27.08 percent of with the frequency of 13 the news from experts, and the remaining from NGOs, press releases, community members, and new research findings.

The informants also agree with the result of the quantitative data. From the in-depth interviews conducted with reporters and editors, it became evident that a significant portion of their environmental coverage, especially stories centered around events, predominantly feature key messages from senior officials. During the interviews, they

expressed frustration over the difficulty of securing cooperation from experts and obtaining current research data in the field. The proper source of information is very significant for any media in creating awareness of the societies on environmental issues. Several researchers examining environment journalisms in various geographical contexts also reflect that powerful political and business interests

exert influence on environment news coverage, particularly at the national level (Teklesilase et al, 2015).

Origin of Environmental News Stories

The data was collected in an attempt to show the proportion of domestic environmental protection stories in comparison with the foreign ones.

Table 6 – Origin of Environmental News Stories

Name of Media outlet	Frequency	Origin of Environmental News			Total
		Local	National	International	
Harari Mass Media Agency	Number	40	5	2	47
	Percentage	86.9	10.8	4.2	100%

According to data gathered from the above table indicates, the majority of the origin of environmental news 86.9 percent with a frequency of 40 was from local news, and 10.8 percent of environmental news was from national news. The remaining 4.2 percent of the news is from international. Therefore, we can understand that from quantitative data results, HMMA gave more coverage to local environmental protection. Moreover, the majority of local stories focused on environmental preservation efforts, specifically activities like tree planting, soil conservation, and addressing water pollution. Allocating more coverage to both proximity and relevance to the audience's interests is crucial, as these are key principles guiding news selection in the media. However, both national and international news also play a significant role in raising awareness among

the audience. In Ethiopia, a substantial portion of news stories revolved around topics such as greenhouse gas emissions, global warming/climate change, and their impacts on Earth's ecosystems, including the melting of polar ice caps and rising sea levels etc. In this study, how much the medium would emphasize the local news? All respondents (E1, E2, R1, and R2) stated that the strong part of their organization is balancing both sides of the stories that were covered by the medium. Most importantly, they would give focus to the coverage of local news.

Environmental news stories and functions

The key principle of the media is to produce and disseminate news to people. Therefore, it is intended to show how the environmental issue news was gathered and disseminated to the audiences.

Table 7 – Functions of environmental news stories

Name of Media outlet	Frequency	Functions of environmental news stories						Total
		Investigative	Event Oriented	Solution-oriented	Problem-oriented	Advocating	Informative	
Harari Mass Media Agency	Number	1	36	7	1	1	1	47
	Percentage	2.12	76.59	14.90	2.12	2.12	2.12	100%

According to the data gathered, the majority of the nature of environmental issues was event-based. 76.59 percent with a frequency of 36 were from event-based news natures. 14.90percent of

the nature of environmental news stories were solution-oriented. And, the other nature of news was very limited, and almost a minimum of them from it.

R1 and R2 informants gave responses as follows: “Most of the news sources were from higher officials. As a result of this, the news stories lack an explanation of the issues of environmental they dealt with. Even, if they were not sourced properly, they lack credibility and substances.”

The study understands that the natural sources of environmental news are officials and governmental bodies. This and other reasons were affecting the quality of the news. This might affect the credibility of the news medium. On the other hand, if there is an intervention of government highly, experts in the fields might be excluded. As a result of this, the contents of the news lack an audience. Buell (2005) supports the preceding arguments by noting that environmental news reporting often lacks detailed scientific explanations and fails to provide proactive environmental mobilization information. Instead, it tends to focus on crises and events.

Challenges encountered in reporting on environmental protection issues within the Harari Mass Media Agency

There are no professional journalists who took training on environmental protection issues and working with them. Because of this, most of the journalists including me, do not have the concept of doing on the issues of environmental news. Also, to report on this issue, there needs to be art and training continuously. The other thing that I have been faced is lack of commitment and interest in (Ed, Jul 25, 2020, 1,). Correspondingly, Ed 2 added in our media, there is no concern about issues of environmental coverage. Even though environmental protection is very sensitive and critical for our country, no one gives attention and concern about environmental problems, solutions, and camping. Even, in our editorial policy, no article can state it. The other remaining two senior reporters (R1 and R2) explain that HMMA, they are working by planning and no one goes out of plan. They just run to fulfill their plan, and no one can give up on the issues of environmental problems. The issues by itself are not interesting. The other thing, they are facing is the coverage is more event-based. As a result of this, they might not have included it in our daily tasks and included in our plan. Besides, they did not have training on this issue, and because of this, they are not confident to develop stories on environmental issues. Even, our editor did not appreciate us in covering environmental issues.

The FDRE Constitution stipulates that the government shall endeavor to ensure a clean and

healthy environment as an objective and recognizes the right to a clean and healthy environment as a basic right of the Ethiopian people (Art 92.1 and 44.1, respectively). In order to guarantee the entitlement to reside in a pristine environment, it is imperative that the populace is educated about environmental conservation, as they are the primary contributors to pollution. A key focus for the Ethiopian government is the implementation of the Climate-Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) strategy, aimed at fostering the country’s development by mitigating greenhouse gas emissions within the business-as-usual scenario by 2030. The CRGE strategy revolves around four main pillars: enhancing agricultural practices for increased food security and farmer income while minimizing emissions, preserving and restoring forests for their economic and ecological benefits, including carbon sequestration, and scaling up renewable energy production to meet domestic and regional energy demands. To accomplish the governmental strategy people, have to get awareness through different media.

Environmental issues are neglected and excluded from most media. Shanahan (2011) highlights that despite the magnitude of environmental challenges, media coverage of environmental issues remains disproportionately low compared to other topics. Environmental reporting is marginalized within news coverage. Additionally, Banterer (2002) concludes from their global study that while lip service may be paid to environmental concerns, the breadth and seriousness of these issues are often not adequately addressed. This superficial acknowledgment detracts from the overarching focus of reporting, which tends to be one-sided and minimally focused on environmental matters. In my view, journalists working in the media should actively address these challenges and factors. Environmental issues are fundamentally about the survival of humanity of earth. Conversely, editors hold sway over reporters in determining which news stories to cover. As noted by Shanahan (2011), numerous journalists express a desire to cover climate change topics but encounter difficulties persuading their editors of the newsworthiness of such stories. Moreover, Shanahan points out that many editors perceive climate change as primarily an international issue, leading them to deprioritize local reporting. Consequently, they often rely on stories from Western news agencies or simply reprint press releases without incorporating any local context or additional information.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the Harari Mass Media Agency (HMMA) allocates minimal attention to covering environmental protection issues compared to other topics in the media. Additionally, HMMA's editorial policy lacks inclusion of environmental protection-focused issues, which contradicts Ethiopia's Environmental Protection Proclamation No 9/1995. Despite the proclamation emphasizing the joint responsibility of the government and citizens in maintaining ecological balance, the media fails to provide sufficient coverage of environmental issues. Moreover, the media lacks professional journalists dedicated to reporting on environmental topics. In addition to this, the study shows that journalists exhibit a deficiency in effectively portraying environmental issues. It underscores the importance of possessing skills such as comprehending scientific terminology and methodologies, being informed about past environmental occurrences, staying updated on environmental policy developments and the initiatives of environmental organizations, having a broad understanding of contemporary environmental issues, and being capable of communicating this information to the public in a clear and accessible manner, despite its intricacies (UNEP, 2006). The media also used government officials as main sources. Because of this and other factors, the content of the news they were shallow and not attractive since they were politically affiliated and not specialized in the field of environmental science. On the other hand, journalists did show an interest in the environmental issues. If journalists do not have an interest in covering environmental issues, they may distort the news content. Roba (2012) pointed out that discrepancies, distortions, and misinterpretations of data have the potential to impact how environmental issues are covered by the media.

Journalists of the Harari Mass Media Agency believe that the media does not pay attention to environmental protection issues. In this regard, Environmental depletion is one of the challenges Ethiopia is facing (EPA, 2008) and has been given little attention. It has the power to loom both physical and economic existence. The degradation of environmental resources in Ethiopia has the potential to diminish the capacity to produce biomass for food, feed, and household energy. Given that the livelihoods of rural Ethiopians are intricately linked to land, water, and biodiversity resources, the decline in these resources directly jeopardizes their survival, and the consequences of severe degradation of these resources are manifested through widespread food insecurity and poor quality of life. It also undermines prospects for fighting poverty and achieving sustainable development (EPA, 2008).

Recommendation

The following recommendations are forwarded to enhance reporting of environmental protection in the HMMA: The media should be concerned about the following points:

- Since environmental issues are the main agenda for the country, it should be prioritized by the media. The media should provide professional training for journalists about environmental science.
- The media should work collaboratively with the Federal Government of Environmental Authority and Non-Governmental Organizations which work on Environmental Protections
- The Harari Government should collaborate with the media and work on environmental protection issues.
- Harari Mass Media Agency should have a program on environmental protection issues.
- The media editorial policy should include articles related to environmental issue.

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Келіп түсті: 3 мамыр 2024 жыл

Қабылданды: 5 шілде 2024 жыл