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Human Rights Violation Reporting in Amhara Mass Media Agency: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

Inspired by Critical Theory and Human Rights Journalism as a conceptual dimension, this study aims to examine the media discourse genres produced from the larger set of language use on how and with what purpose in mind, Amhara Mass media Agency (AMMA) reporters were reporting human rights violations enacted in Ethiopian institutions. Particularly, it explored the discursive strategies reporters deployed to achieve their communicative goals, examined the representation of human rights violations actors and their actions, and unveiled underlying ideologies of the media or reporters which led them to categorize the actors. To achieve these objectives, the study critically examined news and program texts produced by Amhara television and Bekur Newspaper. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed as the analytical framework of the study. The finding revealed that five discursive strategies (slanted and/or vague headlines, negative/positive labeling, evidentially, victimization, hyperbolism, and depersonalization) were mainly used to construct polarity as well as social inequality in the texts. Besides, analysis of macrostructure, local meanings, and collocation in the reports of human rights violation indicated that there was ideological positioning which was in favor of actors who belong to the Amhara ethnic group and disrespect the role of others. There was bias in reporting as the reporters aligned themselves towards favoring their in-group while emphasizing the misdeeds of out-groups, such as TPLF and OLF.

Keywords: /CDA/ Human Right/Language Use/Media/

1. Introduction

Language use of journalists which is used in the construction of meaning has been the concern of media scholars for a long (Carvalho, 2008). Analysis of media language should be recognized as an important element within research on the contemporary process of social and cultural change (Fairclough, 1995b). Media discourses are always socially situated, thus analyzing those requires the concept of text linguistics, social settings, and contextual circumstances (Fowler, 1991). As Richardson points out "these aspects of the study of the language of journalism remain the most underdeveloped" (Richardson, 2008).

In analyzing the language of media discourse, researchers can investigate the ideological stand of journalists, the power relations of participants, and identities constructed or deconstructed. Ideology is a proposition that figures as an implicit assumption in a text which plays a great role to produce or reproduce

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unequal relations of power. Journalists construct their ideological stance through the selection and use of words, the framing of a story, the sentence structure, and the use of modal expressions. Linguistic choices such as choice of words and sentence structure are powerful tools for reflecting and maintaining the society's constructed ideology and for establishing and constructing new ideological stances (Van Dijk, 1993; Busa, 2014). In addition, analysis of media language can show us the relationships set up between those involved such as reporter-audience, expert-audience, politician-audience, etc. Sometimes, the language use can implicitly show the positive self and negative other presentations. The mass media language could affect and could be affected by power relations within the social system. Media language also involves particular ways of representation of the world, construction of identities, and constructions of social relations (Fairclough, 1995b).

Amhara Mass Media Agency (hereafter called AMMA) is one of the state-owned media institutions functioning in the Federal Government of Ethiopia. The agency was first established in 1992 following the promulgation of the press law of the country basically to serve the Amhara[3] regional state. Recently, the agency has transmission of a 24/7 service expanding its capacity into various streams and departments in the electronic and print media.

Like other government media organizations in the country, the agency has mainly advocated development journalism as its primary mission for a long. It addresses development issues like health, agriculture, education, and other aspects of development issues. Particularly, issues of politics had been untouchable topics in the agency. There seems to be no time like the present ever in the history of the agency to entertain various political discourses pertaining to the 2017/18 political reform in the country. The agency seems to have made some sort of drastic reform and leeway to raise and entertain various political issues for discussion from different points of view.

Following the coming of Abiy Ahmed (the current Prime Minister) to power in April 2018, the mainstream media have begun to play a great role in becoming the voice to the voiceless or the marginalized group. In this regard, AMMA has produced various news texts, documentaries, programs on different controversial political issues such as human rights violations, federalism, ethnic conflicts, identity, etc. Departing from its long-established tradition of justifying the ills of the government, AMMA has become 'champions' in exposing human rights abuses committed in state institutions mainly prisons, police detention centers and intelligence interrogation process.

Though media need to produce objective news and other reports, media experts use language as a major tool in reporting an embodiment of ideologies, values, and beliefs. Language (particularly discourse strategies and linguistic structure) is often manipulated to represent events and actors based on the perceptions and ideologies of the reporters. Scholars such as Igwebuike (2018), Yazgan and Utku (2016), Barkho (2008) have conducted critical discourse studies on reporting identified media reporting of conflicts or war between two countries. They analyzed the discursive strategies the identified media used and attempted to address the ideologies of the media. However, the studies done so far did not attempt to address human rights issues. The studies locally done on media reporting so far, as to the knowledge of these writers, also did not address language use of human rights reporting issues. Thus, the proposed study attempts to fill this gap. It provides a critical discourse analysis of AMMA reports (news, articles, TV show program, and documentaries) regarding human rights violations. It seeks to delineate in particular on analyzing the media discourse genres produced from the larger set of language use to describe the discursive strategies reporters deployed to achieve their communicative goals, to examine the representation of human rights violations actors and their actions, and to unveil underlying ideologies if there is a dichotomous categorization of the actors.

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[3] Ethiopia has endorsed ethnic- based federation system since 1995 in the constitution, and Amhara is the second largest ethnic group found in the country.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Critical Theory

Critical Theory is employed as one of the conceptual frameworks of the study. This offers to analyze the complexities and contradictions of marginalization and resistance in societies. Baran and Davis (2012) illustrate that mass media and mass cultures become a focus for Critical Theory. They link mass media and mass cultures to a variety of social problems. They criticize media for aggravating or preventing problems from being identified or addressed and solved. They believe that content production practices of media practitioners either cause or perpetuate specific problems. Zhen (2016) on his part argues that Critical Theory has greatly influenced the study of mass media and mass cultures.

In the contemporary society, as Griffin (2012, p.44) categorized, critical theorists consistently challenge three features of contemporary society. First, the control of language to perpetuate power imbalance is crucial. They condemn any use of words that inhibit emancipation. The role of mass media in dulling sensitivity to repression is another area. They argue that media products reproduce the dominant ideology of culture and distract people from recognizing the unjust distribution of power within the society. Finally, there exists blind reliance on the scientific method and uncritical acceptance of empirical findings. Mainly, in Critical Theory interpretation of texts, discourses, nonverbal clues, and rhetoric are made. This theory helps the researchers of this study to conceptualize the dominant ideology produced and the power balance made in reporting a human right violation in AMMA.

2.2 Human Right Journalism

Human rights journalism is often associated with the reporting of human rights abuses, especially against the victims of political violence, and sometimes with freedom of expression, also a fundamental human right, which is enjoyed, denied, or abused by journalists. It is rights-based journalism that is based on the human rights principles enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declarations of Human Rights to be enjoyed and respected by all human beings (Shaw, 2012). HRJ can be defined as a diagnostic style of reporting which offers a critical reflection of the experiences and needs of the victims and perpetrators of (physical, cultural and structural) human rights violations (Dente- Ross, 2006). It attempts to understand the reasons for these violations to prevent further violations and to solve the existing ones in ways that would not produce more violence. Moreover, it is journalism that challenges, rather than reinforces, the status quo of the dominant voices of global and national societies. It is, in other words, journalism without borders, based on human rights and global justice that challenges the political, economic, social, and cultural imbalances of the society at local and global levels (Lee & Crispin, 2005; Siegfried, 2015). HRJ adopts a global, long-term, proactive, and sustainable approach to news coverage as it provides a critical reflection of the experiences and needs of not only the victims, but also of perpetrators or offenders. In this way, it ensures the prevention or resolution of all forms of future or present violence. Hence, HRJ has the potential to complement Political Journalists' (PJ's) contribution to global, long-term, proactive, and sustainable just peace-building (Hartley, 2007).

The mass media–human rights relationship involves two different yet overlapping elements: first, the existence of independent and free media to communicate information to citizens, make them aware of certain human rights and claim them, and, second, the extent to which media organizations report on human rights situations such as cases of violation or protection. Human Right Journalism is conceptualized by Shaw (2012, p. 109) as violence orientated (proactive/ preventing direct violence), human wrongs orientated (exposes all

human wrongs), people/human-face orientated (Cares for and empowers all but is biased in favor of vulnerable people) and holistic problem-solving (for present problems now/tomorrow, and surface/hidden problems). Therefore, this conceptual framework helps the researchers to analyze whether the human rights reporting of AMMA meets the standard frame or not.

3. Methodology

To identify the discursive strategies used by AMMA and to explore the ideology it aligns with, this study critically analyzed the linguistic representations of the media texts (news and programs) and ~~strikethrough~~ the interview data collected from journalists and editors. Therefore, the corpora of this study were a collection of purposively selected news and TV programs produced by AMMA channels from May 2018 to December 30, 2019. This period was the heyday of the Ethiopian Political reform as many political prisoners were released. Moreover, a relative freedom of expression was realized and the media started to become the voice to the voiceless. Thus, a total of 20 news articles from Bekur newspaper and 25 news and 17 programs from Amhara television were identified purposively.

Critical Theory focuses on challenging the control of language to perpetuate power imbalance and the role of mass media in aggravating or preventing problems or in dulling sensitivity to suppression. As CDA emerged from Critical Theory, it also emphasizes interpreting how texts (in this study media text) are used to enact dominance. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed for analytical framework acknowledging that this analytical approach focuses on "the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (Van Dijk, 2015). Different scholars such as Fairclough (1995a, 2001, 2003), van Dijk (1993, 1997, and 2006), Wodak (1999, 2001) and Van Leeuwen (1993, 2008) have attempted to frame CDA as an analytical framework. These scholars share common strategies though they differ considerably in technical specifications. For instance, Fairclough (1992, 2001) relies much on the linguistic analysis of texts, whereas Wodak (2001) focuses on discourse historical approach and Van Dijk (1997) emphasizes cognitive and social resources and contexts. These in general terms can be grouped as micro and macro levels of social order (Van Dijk, 2006).

Considering the nature and objectives of the study and the type of data generated this study selected two interrelated CDA models of analysis: the Fairclough's (1995a, 2003) Model, which heavily relies on Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistic and Van Dijk's (2006) Socio-Cognitive Model which emphasizes the cognitive interface between discourse structures and social structures. As a result, this paper critically examined human rights violation reports of AMMA, in Ethiopia by specifically addressing the ideologies propagated in the human rights violations reports, major discursive strategies used, how different actors are represented, and how power and dominance are enacted between the actors.

4. Data Analysis

The study analyzed the major discursive strategies used by reporters in AMMA while reporting human rights violations to realize the polarization and/or social inequalities, and the ideological alignment of the media. To achieve these, analyzing the context first is crucial for the readers to understand why and how the media used the discursive strategies and the ideological positions.

4.1 **Context Analysis**

According to the International Crisis Group (2009) report, frequent clashes have been reported between ethnic groups and between the people and the government. Particularly, from 2016 to 2018 there were intensified anti-government protests in Ethiopia. Thus, many political party leaders, journalists, bloggers, and

protesters were taken to jails, police detention centers, and intelligence interrogations. These acts have led to tremendous human rights violations including injury, harassment, death, and displacement of citizens.

The time frame of this study was the period that comprehensive political reform has been undertaking following the long, prevalent, and intensified anti-government protests in the country. This reform, especially after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took power in March 2018, involved revising and repealing laws that narrowed the political space, releasing political prisoners, promoting media independence, and signing the land mark peace deal with Eritrea. Besides, corrupt officials and human rights abusers were accused, and the notorious federal crimes investigations unit in Addis Ababa, commonly known as Maekelawi, was closed.

At this juncture, following the new media space, the public media which have been blamed unwaveringly loyal to the government for long started to expose the malfunctions of the government practice. In this regard, Human Rights Watch (2019) ascertains that "Departing from their long-established tradition of justifying the ills of the government, they become champions in exposing human rights abuses committed in the state institutions mainly in prisons, police detention centers, and intelligence interrogation processes"(p.7).

In the same fashion, AMMA has been recently reporting human rights violation issues inviting victims for a discussion on their studios. Based on the underlying assumption of figuring out the discursive practice of AMMA in reporting human rights violation, this study has taken instances from Amhara TV, and Bekur newspaper from May 2018 to December 30, 2019.

4.2 Analysis of Discursive Strategies

A media organization could use a number of discursive strategies in news reports to construct polarity as well as social inequality and bias. Van Dijk (1995) mentions a few of these strategies as slanted headlining, negative labeling, evidentiality, number game, hyperbolism, victimization, depersonalization, euphemism, polarization, and metaphor. This study examined the following six discursive strategies that AMMA used to construct polarity and/or social inequality in reporting human rights violations in Ethiopia.

***Slanted and/or vague headlines*.** Reporters use headlines and lead statements for ideological manipulation and evaluation in news reporting. Connected to this, Van Dijk (1995) states headlines in newspapers indicate the semantic macrostructure or the gist of a news report that may convey ideological content. In reporting human rights violations, it was evident that Bekur newspaper deployed poorly crafted and slanted headlines. The syntactic position and semantic role of participants in the headlines lead to favor the in-group and polarize the out-group.   The following instances of slanted headlines were translated from Amharic as deployed by the Amharic newspaper-Bekur.

A. ***Criminals*** *should be taken to International Criminal Court (Bekur, 18 November 2019)*
B. *Instigators of conflict among brothers must be taken to court* (Bekur, 15 December 2018)

C. *Over 250 innocent civilians displaced due to ethnic identity ((Bekur, 18 March 2019)*
D. *Could measure be taken on the **criminals***? *(Bekur 13 April 2019);*

The group of people who are qualified as 'criminals' as they caused the casualties in headlines 'A', and 'D' are not clearly mentioned who they are. These headlines deployed a judgmental lexical item 'criminals' which is emotive. As a court, the reporters passed judgment on an unidentified group of people as criminals. Besides, in headline A mentioned above, the magnitude of the 'crime' was amplified and the court 'criminals' should be on trial for the crime committed was dictated. Likewise, in the fourth headline, using the interrogative modal auxiliary 'could', the newspaper discredited the Ethiopian justice system by reflecting its strong doubt on whether local trials could deliver a fair guilty verdict on violent groups. In headline two, the blame for the conflict of two ethnic groups is given to third parties that were not explicitly presented who they were.

The proper sequence of the three Whs rule (who does what and to whom) is essential for the neutrality of a headline or lead. When there is uncertainty about agency, there is vagueness about who does what and to whom (Fowler, 1991). In this regard, since the sentence structure of all the above headlines is passive, they do not clearly indicate who did what and to whom.

Topics or themes are mostly intentional and consciously controlled by the (powerful) speaker. For that reason, they influence other structures of discourse. Furthermore, because the topics are under the control of powerful speakers, they also have 'effects on the recipients, and hence on the process of reproduction that underlies social power and dominance' (Van Dijk, 2000, p. 7). In this regard, one of our interviewee reporters clearly presented that the lexical choice and the structure of the sentences (passive and question forms) of the above headlines were intentional. The question form in headline-4 was used deliberately 'as the government was reluctant to take measure on the violent groups'. Likewise, the passive construction in others was 'to foreground the victims'.

Negative/positive labeling. Positive or negative labels are designated to a certain group of people based on the perceived social attitudes associated with them. Positive labels favor their activities and ideologies while negative labels decry such activities and criticize their ideologies (Igwebuike, 2018). The news and program reports of Bekur and Amhara TV about human rights violations in Ethiopian prisons deployed intergroup polarization-favoring the in-group and negatively labeling the out-groups many times. The following instances mention the negatively labeled groups:

A. *Though prisons were built to correct criminals, they have been used by* **destructive forces** *as torture centers and no one could stop them…. and no one questioned when* **torture and killing** *become the major duties of the* **security officers** *(Bekur, 18 November 2019).*

B. *There was actually serious human rights violation as the* **suspected political prisoners** *were placed with wild animals, were hung on a cross, were bitten brutally, experienced electric shock, castrated, mutilated their genital organs. These are evil acts committed on human beings. According to [Mr. X] those who did these* **brutal acts** *[seem to refer to the* **national security** *and* **police officers***] should be taken to the International Criminal Court. (Bekur, 18 November 2019)*

C. *EPRDF which has fought for a long to avoid the suppression of the Dergu regime has rather become the* **suppressor** *and has turned the past 27 years into darkness…. The* **so- called freedom fighters** *have been violating the human rights by limiting freedom instead and didn't make any difference than the previous (Am. TV)*

In samples A, and B above, the national security forces/the police officers who were obtaining intelligence are negatively labeled as 'destructive forces', 'brutal', and 'criminals'. The negative adjectives *'destructive' and 'brutal'* explicitly explain how fierce the government security forces were. The way in which the degree of human rights violations committed on the suspected political prisoners reported in B such as 'placed with wild animals', 'were hung on a cross', 'were bitten brutally', and 'experienced electric shock' strengthen the negative labeling of the security forces.

In the same manner, the ruling party EPRDF is negatively labeled in 'C' with 'pseudo positive' tag 'freedom fighter' and negative labeling 'suppressor'. The phrase 'so-called freedom fighter' represents the ruling party's presupposition during the time of struggle, but the word 'suppressor' represents the de-facto after EPRDF came to political power and began ruling the country. Semantically this negative labeling indicates that there was an apparent system failure to protect human rights violations.

This same kind of labeling was also exhibited in the reports of human rights violations in interethnic disputes inside and outside Amhara regional state. The negatively labeled groups were implicit in some

instances while some groups were explicitly mentioned in other reports. Instances of such news reports are as follows:

A. *… because of a conflict organized by **extremists**, people sacrificed their life, were injured, lost their properties, faced displacement and received social and psychological disorder…. The conflict is attributed to the **conspiracy** of those who **hid behind the curtain** and interfered with **evil motive** (23 December 2019).*

B. *TPLF and its fabricated Qimant committee are **destabilizing** Gondar. TPLF was the first party which gave press release when the conflict arose. … It was a kind of warning. …*

C. *The participants said the **reluctance** of **the national defense force** under the pretext of waiting the chain of command to stop the bloodshed was incorrect…. the government is **reluctant**. The regional and the federal governments and the defense force need to protect the displaced Amharas People …. Yet Eye witnesses complain and reflect their doubt on the fairness of the defense force…. Instead of protecting innocents, the defense force was **supporting the invaders**.*

D. *The residents said it is the **OLF militias** who **invaded** us…. They had been taking military trainings around Kemisie …The source of the problem was emanated from **fanatic nationalists** who claim everything for themselves.*

In sample text 'A', negatively labeled groups are not explicitly mentioned who they are, but they are characterized as violent, deploying such words and phrases as 'extremists*'* 'evil motive', and 'conspiracy'. However, in sample texts 'B, C, and D' different actors are negatively labeled explicitly mentioned by name. For instance, in sample B Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) a member of the ruling Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the committee of Quimant people are characterized as chaotic using the phrase 'destabilizing Gondar'. Likewise, the national defense force and the federal and regional governments in samples 'C' were labeled as 'reluctant'. The fairness of the defense force was questioned in the reports as the eyewitnesses mentioned it works in support of the invaders. In the same manner, the Oromo Liberation Front *(OLF) militias* were negatively labeled as violent using the phrases 'fanatic nationalist' 'groups who claim everything for themselves' and 'invaded us'.

On the other hand, in 'E' and 'F' the people of Amhara and Quimant are positively labeled as a unified one using the phrases 'relatives' and 'inseparably tied'. The effort to separate the two people was characterized as impossible as in a phrase like '*enabling a man to live without a soul'* depicted.

E. *An attempt to separate the people of Amhara and Qimant who have been **relatives** for long is just like **enabling a man to live without a soul**.*

F. *The Amhara and Quimant people are **inseparably tied** as they live in very close geography integrating with culture and religion; they spent decades forming marriage ties.*

Evidentiality/ victimization. "Evidentiality is the use of evidences or proofs to make opinions, or points of view more plausible, reliable and credible in news reports" (Igwebuike, 2018, p.159). While using evidentiality as a discourse strategy in reporting human rights violations in Ethiopia, both Amhara TV and Bekur used evidence from victims or eyewitnesses to validate the in-group's good deeds and out-group's negative acts using discourses about 'Us' and 'Them'. The texts below which were taken from participants in

the Amhara Television program are good examples to portray evidentiality. The participants were victims of human rights violations in police detention centers and intelligence interrogation rooms.

A. *'I was in the middle of the **day's prayer** time when the **intimidators** brought me to the usual interrogation room. They **harassed me severely.** Later, when they were about **burning my body** with the hot iron, Commander Teklay appeared and brought them for an urgent meeting. Thanks to God, I was saved, and they did not come again. Finally, they **put me in a dark room for 4 months** which made me to have a **serious sight problem now**.' (Amhara TV program, Victim A called H A)*

B. *Lots of things happened upon me. First, they **imposed** me to stand carrying a table for four hours; later they **hung my head down and whipped** me with the computer socket jack for the next four hours. Finally, covering my face, they brought me to a room where I was **tortured.** While they were interrogating me, they were smoking and **putting hot ash on my belly**. You can see the scar left here in my belly (Showing his belly to the Journalist and camera) (Amhara TV program, victim B).*

C. *.... Later they brought me to room 48 where there were senior officers for the interrogation. One of them pointed his pistol at me and the other one acted as a mediator and lobbying me to tell them what was going on there. He told me that my friends confessed that I took part in the terrorist act of organizing and supporting the rebels. When I refused that I was not engaged in the alleged act, they fiercely whipped me with an electric wire. In sum, we faced a tremendous physical harassment and psychological disorder (Amhara TV program, victim C).*

In (A) the first victim described the crimes of the police officers and intelligences and his awful sufferings using words and phrases like *'harassed' 'put me in a dark room'* and *'burning with…hot iron'*. He also attempted to describe his helplessness in praising God when the interrogation was interrupted immediately before the worst torture appeared. Likewise, the second victim in (B) explained the physical and psychological harassment he faced using expressions like '***i**mposed me to stand carrying a table', 'hang my head down and whipping',' putting hot ash on my belly'*. In (C) even the senior intelligence officers did not respect the rule of law and harassed the helpless prisoner.

The strategy of evidentially was also used in Amhara media texts to reveal the negative actions of political parties such as theTigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the context in which innocent Amhara people suffered from the conspiracy of these groups. There was a view among TPLF and OLF members that "Amhara people were the oppressors" and this view is substantiated with the view that the eyewitnesses 'displayed'. To mention instances of eyewitnesses stated in the newspaper:

D. *Dansha Town residents said they are **displaced** from their home town by Tigray region special police forces only because they belong to Amhara ethnic groups (Bekur 19, March,2019).*

E. *According to Colonel 'X' the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) who **instigated the division** between Qimant and Amhara and perpetuated conflict between them using the old Italian system, which they should stop **interfering among us** (Bekur, 23 December, 2019).*

F. *...Dawit who is an instructor at Debre Berehan University on his part said the **brutal** act was committed by those who are **extremist nationalists** who think everything belongs only to them (Bekur 23 December, 15,2019).*

The evil acts of TPLF were evidenced as 'instigating division' 'displacing innocent Amahras' and 'interfering' between two ethnic groups. Likewise, the actions of 'extremist nationalists' troops were presented by the eyewitnesses as 'brutal' and they were represented as 'extremist nationalists'. The use of such pieces of

evidences has the power to be easily imaginable as episodic mental models (Van Dijk, 2006). Thus, AMMA has utilized evidentially/victimization as a strategy to depict the people from Amhara decedents as victims and in-group while others including the government police, intelligence groups, and political parties (TPLF and OLF) as out-groups.

Hyperbolism. Hyperbolism as a discourse strategy could be used by a media organization in representing 'self' and 'others' to magnify positive self-impression formation and negative deeds of others. Certain hyperbolic expressions are used in constructing the preferred mental model which tends to emphasize the negative deeds of the other party. It could be used for ideologically biased polarization of 'us' and 'them' (Igwebuike, 2018).

Hyperbolic expressions were used by the reporters of Amhara TV and Bekur Newspaper while reporting human rights violations. Some instances are as follows.

A. ***Very shocking crimes*** which is ***more than one can imagine*** happened to the prisoners in Ethiopian prisons. It is beyond ***genocide*** when they placed humans with wild animals (Bekur, 18 November, 10 2019)
B. Those ***outrageous Brutal cases*** happened to the prisoners shall be seen under the international court of justice (Bekur, 18 November, 10 2019)
C. ***The number of citizens*** who were killed and displaced were an accounted for; their houses, properties and farms were burnt (Amhara TV, 23 December 2019).
D. **Not even one** human right was respected ….Committing human rights violations to those prisoners who were not able to defend themselves is equated to committing human rights violation on children ….The violation was very much, difficult to list (Amhara TV journalists view program)

In the first two examples (a) and (b), the hyperbolic elements 'very shocking', 'more than one can imagine', 'genocide', 'outrageous and brutal cases' are utilized to emphasize the negative deeds that had happened to the prisoners. The media even calls the violation should be brought to the international criminal court. The expression "***The number of citizens*** who were killed and displaced was an accounted for" in (c) is also used to magnify the situation. In a program presented in Amhara Television called "Journalists' Views", we may trace some hyperbolic elements used by the journalists in their discussion. Talking about the human rights violations in the country, they employed hyperbolic expressions like "Not even one human right is respected and committing human right violation on prisoners is equated on committing human rights violation on children" in examples (d).

Depersonalization. Depersonalization as a discourse strategy addresses implicit generalization of self's view by inhibiting the real advocates of the opinion. In this strategy, 'there is no explicit inclusion of precise references to the doers or speakers of a particular discursive action or opinion. Thus, the speakers or doers are suppressed while their opinions or actions are foregrounded' (Igwebuike, 2018, p.165). This is intentionally done to get the readers' attention and to convince them that they are 'experts' who have drawn conclusions on the events while at the same time injecting personal views. AMMA reporters in this regard, exploit a depersonalization strategy to generalize self-opinions while reporting human rights violations.

E. *Lots of farm plots where Amhara farmers' were displaced in Benishangul Gumuz regional states remained uncultivated. Residents whom we talked to witnessed that the good values are derogated because of some unidentified anti peace, emotional and self-centered agents (Bekur, 25 June, 2019).*

F. *From the demonstrations conducted, one can notice that the question raised by the Orthodox Christians resides to the problems seen on the church are politically motivated (Am. TV).*

For instance (E), the personal view which states farmlands in Benshangul Gumuz are left uncultivated due to the displacement of Amhara farmers seems to make a dominate the entire readership. Moreover, the expression "Residents whom we talked to…" does not specify the exact agent, it was rather used as a depersonalization strategy. Likewise, in (F) the personal opinion is presented at the disposal of generalization. The reporter attempts to generalize the personal interpretation of the messages in the demonstration as if the problems in the church were politically motivated. Although he did not explicitly show the message, he interpreted it to readers to have a common understanding.

4.3. **Ideological Positions**

Exploring ideologies from discourses is not an easy task. It is not problematic to deal with the explicitly expressed ideological beliefs but, most of the time ideologies do not express themselves explicitly and are difficult to detect. An analysis of the discursive expression of ideologies requires a detailed study of various strategies and complex semantic analysis of various types of meaning called discourse structures (Döskaya, 2010, P.38). All discourse structures play roles in the expression and persuasive communication of polarized underlying attitudes and ideologies (Döskaya, 2010). The following are discourse structures that exhibit underlying ideologies propagated by AMMA in the reports of human rights violations in Ethiopia.

Topics. Topics tell us what discourse is about which is the most important information of a text (Van Dijk, 1999). These are unforgettable elements of discourse, so assigning these texts is subjective and liable to ideological control. Topics are expressed in titles, headlines, abstracts, conclusions, announcements, thematic sentences, changes of topic, and summaries. In CDA identifying topics is the primary task of semantic analysis since they show how the speakers/writers construct the events (Döskaya, 2010).

Headlines of texts identified for this study reflect the ideological positioning of the reporters or the media. As it is discussed in the 'discursive strategies' section, the headlines were slanted and in some instances vague. The slanted headlines and leads were manipulated to create polarity of in-group favoritism and out-group marginalization. In this vein, positive self-representation like 'innocent' and 'brothers' was made to different actors who belong to the Amhara ethnic groups in the headlines mentioned below.

Over 250 innocent civilians displaced due to ethnic identity (Bekur, 18 March 2019)
Instigators of conflict among brothers must be taken to court (Bekur, 15 December 2018)

Negative labeling was given to political parties which represent other ethnic groups like TPLF and OLF. Institutions for justice and police officers, intelligence, and the national defense force seem to be labeled negatively as they are against the Amhara people. On the other side, the headlines had agentless passive constructions that may be aimed to capture attention on the victims but it is confused as perpetrators were not clearly stated in various cases.

Local meanings: Lexical study. In the study of exploring ideological positioning analyzing the local meaning of words and phrases is another crucial element. Thus, identifying the major dimension of discourse meaning controlled by ideologies is possible through analyzing lexicalization (Döskaya, 2010). Lexicalization is the study of words meanings that are chosen to express a concept. It is the dominant way of articulating, conveying, and influencing opinions, and it is the most widely used form of ideological expression in discourse (Ibid). According to Van Dijk (1998, p. 8), word meanings can be studied to identify the members of the out-group, and the in-group who deal with them, to describe properties or attributes, assigned to Us and Them or to describe the actions of the participants, as well as the relations between them. Thus, in this study, the focus lays on identifying word meanings that refer to in-group and out-group, and to describe the word meanings that

reflect the characters assigned to Us and Them. This was mainly done by making an analysis of reiteration and collocation.

A. **Reiteration.** Reiteration is the repetition of certain lexical items used either for the confirmation of the discussed idea or because they relate to the same lexical set of the discussed topic. It can be explicit when the same word/phrase is used in many sentences or implicit when synonymy, near-synonymy, or antonyms of the original items are used (Winter, 2001, p.46). In the reported texts of human rights violations of AMMA, there were several examples of reiteration. The reporters used both explicit and implicit reiteration to give prominence to the issue and to indicate their ideological positioning. However, most of the reiterations in the texts were implicitly expressed. The keywords which reflect the ideological positions of the reporters are selected taking 'frequency of words' as an important criterion. The researchers can say that the reporters in the agency describe the situation of human rights violation using keywords: 'violence', 'victim', 'actors' and 'negotiation'. Every keyword covers sub-concepts and the synonyms that show implicit reiteration was gathered and presented clearly in Table 1.

Table1- Implicit reiteration in human rights violation reports

NO	Key word	Implicit reiteration	Type
1	violence	Crime, harassment, intimidation, ethnic cleansing, brutal, invasion, hatred, bloodshed, tyrannize, torture, electric shock, put together with wild cats, hang on a cross, and mutilating genital organs	near synonyms
2	Actors (police officer, intelligence officers, army, EPRDF,TPLF, OLF)	criminals, intimidators, oppressors, evil men, distractive forces, extremists, fanatic nationalists, organized distractive forces, crooks	near synonyms
3	Victims	Sufferers, displaced, persecuted, tortured, harassed people, fatalities	near synonyms
4	negotiations	national consensus, reconciliation, settlement	near synonyms

The list of implicit reiteration of the keywords reflects the perception and opinion the producers have to while reporting the act of human rights violation, the victims, and the actors. The meanings of the lists of synonymous words employed for the keyword 'violence' show the severity of the act. Likewise, the meanings of words used to describe 'Actors' under number two in the table above are all negative words that show their fierceness while the meaning of words describing 'victims' is positive. Therefore, it was evident that the authors were in favor of the victims and against the actors.

B. Collocations

The word collocation is used to refer to the tendency of certain other words. The collocational analysis is done manually since the texts identified for such analysis were smaller in number and size (20 news articles from Bekur newspaper and 25 news and 17 programs from Amhara Television). This was made after the key

words in need of the analysis were identified. Mainly collocation patterns describing negatively labeled out-groups were emphasized.

Tabele 2: Collocation patterns in describing TPLF, OLF

Adjective	Noun	Frequency
Fanatic	Nationalist	13
Destructive	Forces	11
Violent	Groups	8

As it is apparent in Table2, the two political parties (TPLF and OLF) were frequently labeled as negative though OLF is implicitly expressed via 'fanatic nationalist group'. The reporters seemed to be unhappy on the acts of these groups. The tendency to use fanatic together with nationalist much frequently might strengthen the claim that the reporters' ideologies seem against ethnic based 'conservative' parties. The other two collocations also describe the negative representations of members of the two parties given by the reporters.

Table 3: Collocation patterns in describing the prisons, police detention centers

Adjective	Noun	Frequency
Hidden	prisons	6
Underground torture	Places	12
Torture	centers	22
Unaccountable	institutions	2
Punching	Quarantine	13

The list of collocations that were used to describe prisons and police detention centers in Ethiopia was worse (Table 3). While 'torture centers' was the most frequently used collocations in the reported text about the human violation reports, 'punching quarantine' was the second largest. Both phrases reflect the attitude and perception the authors had and claimed to share. Totally, these places were the most frequently described areas where human rights violated in a fierce manner.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that AMMA reports use discursive strategies such as slanted and/or vague headlines, negative/positive labeling, evidentially, victimization, hyperbolism, and depersonalization which are mainly used to construct polarity as well as social inequality in the texts. These findings are in line with the findings of Igwebuike (2018). Igwebuike's study reveals two more discursive strategies deployed in the reports. The similarity in findings of the two studies is expected to happen for the media owners in both cases are not neutral. That is to say, they are in favor of the in-group and polarize the out-group. The findings of the present study are not, however, consistent with Barkho (2012) in which BBC used lexis, transitivity, and nominalization discursive strategies to show social inequalities. What can be implied from the findings of the present study and other related studies mentioned is that mainstream media, though not stated in black and white, use various discursive strategies to describe inequalities in the reports.

Ideologies control the construction of meaning in discourse, but this does not mean that uncovering ideologies from the discourse is easy. Analysis of the discursive expression of ideologies requires a detailed study of various strategies and complex semantic analysis of various types of meaning called discourse

structures. Discourse structures that exhibit underlying ideologies propagated by AMMA in the reports of human rights violation in Ethiopia are topics, local meanings (which are identified using the critical investigation of reiteration and collocation). Critical analysis of topics or headlines and local semantic analysis helped the researchers to express the general ideological principles of AMMA or their reporters. From the two analyses, it has been examined that Amharas were victims of human rights abuse by the powerful TPLF groups. The reporters' ideologies seem against ethnic based 'conservative' parties called TPLF and OLF. The finding of discourse structure in this section is in agreement with the findings of Döskaya (2010).

5. Conclusion

The general objective of this study was to examine what discursive strategies were used to favor 'one' and polarize 'other' groups and to uncover implicit ideological positions embedded in reporting human rights violations by AMMA. To achieve this objective, the study critically examined news and program reports produced by Amhara Television and Bekur –newspaper using CDA.

Thus, this article examined five discursive strategies that were deployed in reports of human rights violations to construct polarity as well as social inequality. Slanted /vague headlines and leads was the first strategy. There existed some headlines which were uncertain about the agency that made them vague about who does what and to whom- the proper sequence of the three Ws rule. On the other hand, the syntactic position and semantic role of participants in some headlines were slanted. It favored the in-groups of Amhara ethnic identity and polarized the out-group others. The out-groups were categorized as 'criminals' using judgmental lexis. The other discursive strategy deployed was negative/positive labeling. The national security forces, the police, and intelligent officers who conducted interrogation of prisoners were negatively labeled as 'destructive forces', 'brutal', and 'criminals'. Moreover, EPRDF and TPLF the then ruling parties were negatively labeled with pseudo positive tag 'freedom fighter' and negative labeling 'suppressor'. Justice institutions were also negatively labeled as 'unaccountable'.

On the other side, the people of Amhar and Kimant were labeled positively, as they are inseparable. Evidentiality or victimization was the third discursive strategy used to construct polarity. One-sided references to different personalities and pieces of evidence from victims to substantiate claims of human rights violation were deployed. Accordingly, pieces of evidences such as victims, elders, opinion leaders, religious fathers, social media activists, university instructors, and other ordinary individuals who were all considered to be the in-group Amhara ethnic group belongings were used as sources. References from the outgroups were not included to make a balanced report. The strategy of evidentially was also used to reveal the negative actions of political parties such as Tigrai People Liberation Front (TPLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the context in which innocent Amhara people suffered from the conspiracy of these groups. The use of such pieces of evidences is purposefully deployed to create a mental model on how the people of Amhara were targeted to the human rights violation. Hyperbolism and depersonalization discursive strategies were also deployed. Hyperbolic expressions such as 'very shocking', 'more than one can imagine', 'unaccounted for', 'genocide', 'outrageous' and 'no good news is heard' were utilized to emphasize the negative deeds of the out-group that had happened in the prisons. Similarly, depersonalization as a strategy was deployed to implicitly generalize self's view by inhibiting the real advocates of the opinion.

To identify the ideological position of the media, analysis of semantic macrostructures, local meaning, and collocation were made. Besides, the reporters' and editors' interviews on why the texts were structured in that way and on the lexical choices were analyzed. Though the results of reporters' and editors' interview data showed that the media had no ideological standpoint, analysis of macrostructure, local meanings and collocation in the reports of human rights violation indicated that there was ideological positioning. The majority of the headlines and leads were in favor of actors who belong to the Amhara ethnic group and disrespect the role of

others. Besides, the bad deeds of officials in Amhara regional state were hidden while the bad deeds of the out-groups were intensified using the reiteration and collocation of words.

Thus, based on the discursive strategies deployed, the analysis of macrostructures and local meanings the researchers come to deduce that the reports about human rights violations were motivated by underlying ideologies of patriotism. The reports showed loyalty and devotion to Amhara as a nation but displayed little concern for the suffering and welfare of others. Patriotism is evident in the news report by the positive presentations of Amharas. The texts were also deployed to create polarity of in-group and out-group ideologies; hence, they embody ideological prejudices of widespread positive self and negative other-representations.

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Authors' Contributions

Abebe Admasu Embiale has originated the research idea, designed and shaped the research, collected and analyzed data, shaped the first draft of the manuscript, and produced the final version of the manuscript. Mulugeta Yitayew, on the other hand, has critically commented on the data collection instruments, collected data, made significant contribution in the translation of data, and supervised the research.

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