**Exploring The Northern Ethiopian Humanitarian Crisis: A Cross-Media Approach (2020-2022)**

**Abstract**

*The present study aims to analyse the coverage of humanitarian crisis news in the context of the 2020-2022 Tigray conflict as depicted in the coverage of AI Jazeera and CNN. A content analysis approach was employed. A total of 365 news stories were collected from both media websites, of which 144 news articles focused specifically on the humanitarian crisis associated with the Tigray conflict. Findings indicate that both Al Jazeera and CNN predominantly utilised attribution of responsibility, human interest, and conflict frames, while giving less attention to the moral and economic frames. Regarding the use of sources, both media relied heavily on news sources from NGO/International Organization, Government, and civilians albeit with nuanced differences between them.*

Keywords: Media coverage, humanitarian crisis, framing, news sources, Tigray conflict

**Introduction**

Humanitarian crises, particularly during armed conflicts, pose a significant threat to human life, health, and overall well-being. The Horn of Africa, for example, has experienced compounded crises due to conflicts, extreme weather conditions, and the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in millions of people in Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia requiring humanitarian assistance (United Nations News, 2022). The Tigray war in Ethiopia, specifically, has precipitated a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, marked by war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and allegations of genocide in the Tigray region and surrounding areas (Ibreck & de Waal, 2022; Weldemichel, 2022).

In the context of such crises, international media outlets like CNN and Al Jazeera play a crucial role in shaping global perceptions and informing the responses of international organisations and the public. Media framing during humanitarian crises significantly influences how these events are understood and acted upon, making it vital to analyse how different media outlets cover such crises (An & Gower, 2009; Coombs, 2006b). Despite the importance of this issue, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the comparative analysis of how CNN and Al Jazeera frame the humanitarian aspects of the Tigray conflict.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring how these two major international media outlets differ in their coverage of the Tigray humanitarian crisis. By examining the framing strategies employed by CNN and Al Jazeera, the study will shed light on the broader patterns of Western versus Arab media coverage of African humanitarian crises, offering insights into the role of media in influencing international responses to such events.

**Research Questions**

**RQ1**. How do CNN and Al Jazeera differ in their framing of the humanitarian aspects of the Tigray conflict?

**RQ2.** What is the proportion of humanitarian crisis-related news stories within the overall coverage of the Tigray conflict by CNN and Al Jazeera?

**RQ3.** How do CNN and Al Jazeera differ in their use of sources (e.g., government officials, NGOs, victims) when covering the humanitarian crisis in the Tigray conflict?

**News media and Humanitarian crisis**

A humanitarian crisis emerges when there is a large-scale threat to human life, health, and overall well-being. Such crises intensify during armed conflicts, leading to increased humanitarian needs, and violations of basic human rights. The consequences are far-reaching, including displacement of populations, widespread damage to societies and economies, and significant loss of life (OHCHR, 2024). Consecutive disturbances, including conflict, extreme weather conditions, climate change, desert locusts and COVID-19 pandemic have significantly impacted the horn of Africa. This results in approximately three, five and seven million people in Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia, respectively in humanitarian crises (United Nations News, 2022).

According to Escola Cultura de Pau (2010) to consider a country as being in crises, it must exhibit ‘outstanding values’ in at least three of the four considered indicators: severity of food crises, number of in­ internally displaced persons by violence, number of refugees, and amount of funds requested by the United Nations for addressing the situation. In the pursuit of countering authoritarian countries and protecting people of a certain nation, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was adopted in 2005 by the U.N. It states timely and decisive action will be taken when national authorities of other countries manifestly fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity (United Nations 2005). To apply this in practice, the UN has four types of intervention methods: action—assurance (provide reassurance and support to vulnerable society through emphasising preventive measures), diplomatic engagement (mediate conflict and encourage peaceful resolutions using diplomatic approaches), military involvement (deployment of military force to protect the civilians), and intimidation (threat of force to the warring parties to reconsider the actions) (Beardsley 2012).

Media plays a significant impact on the civil wars (Minear et al., 1996; Tita, et al., 2016), humanitarian actions and genocides (Franks, 2006; Spencer, 2005; Minear et al., 1996; Cooley et al., 2013, Greussing et al., 2017). A study by Alozie (2005) on the Mail & Guardian Online found that both media were helping the humanitarian crisis through urging the international community such as the United Nations, African Union, Arab League, United States, and the industrialised world to find a solution. Media also significantly boosts psychosocial wellbeing by fostering connections among affected individuals, making victims feel less isolated and instilling a sense of hope. The media stands out as a vital tool in emergency response efforts, connecting people, supporting their wellbeing (BBC Media Action, 2019).

The impact of the media on political decisions of international organisations, NGOs, and states to intervene in humanitarian crises has received significant attention from scholars. This issue, often referred to as “the CNN effect,” states the key role of the media in shaping foreign policy decisions in intervening humanitarian crises or armed conflicts. Robinson (2000) and Balabanova (2010) explored that policies are impacted by media coverage especially when the media empathetically frames the suffering of people in crisis situations and the policies are uncertain about the crisis.  Media coverage can significantly elevate the visibility of humanitarian crises, which is determined by several reasons including the intensity of media coverage (Olsen, et al., 2003). The analysis of The New York Times and The Guardian's coverage of the Rohingya refugee crisis by Lee (2021) demonstrates the media's capacity to bring global attention to issues that might otherwise remain underreported or misunderstood. By disseminating information on the plight of the Rohingya people, these media outlets can catalyse international support and aid, signalling the media's potential as an instrument for positive change. It influences the volume of emergency assistance by raising awareness, prompting responses from governments and organisations. Moreover, the attention given to the humanitarian crisis attracts political interest, impacting aid allocation and shapes donor’s decisions (Olsen et al., 2003; Autesserre, 2010). However, the framing of such crises can profoundly affect the nature of the response.

However, the news media tend to cover humanitarian crises that are associated with clear, dramatic imagery rather than humanitarian crises that are difficult to access and explain to the audience such as the Tigray conflict where journalists usually face difficulty accessing roads or witnesses Nieman, 2022). The study by Jahng & Doshi (2021) on the Syrian refugee crisis in US news outlets shows a tendency towards securitization, painting the humanitarian situation as a security threat rather than a moral or ethical issue that demands compassionate intervention. This form of framing risks skewing public and political perception, prioritising security measures over humanitarian aid and hindering effective response measures to the crisis. Moreover, media framing can also oscillate between humanising and dehumanising narratives (Xu & Zhang, 2023). While some outlets may employ peace journalistic frames that emphasise resolution, understanding, and the human impact of crises, others may fall into patterns of depicting victims in ways that strip away their agency and individuality. The mentioned example of UK and US media compared to Chinese authoritarian media underscores how different approaches to covering humanitarian crises can either foster empathy and support or serve geo-political agendas, influencing public opinion and policy in ways that may not always align with the best interests of those affected by the crises (Xu & Zhang, 2023).

 Media coverage of humanitarian crises is also impacted by the geopolitical interest and political strategies (Beardsley and Schmidt 2011; Choi 2013). Crisis in regions with strategic importance (e.g., proximity to major powers, remote regions for military or political arena) tend to receive more media coverage. In this matter, Africa tends to receive less media attention and is marginalised due to its perceived lower geopolitical importance (Balabanova, 2010). Furthermore, international media have been criticised for their stereotypes or biases towards Africa while covering Africa (Trlling, 2019). These mistreatment of media toward the crisis have significant impact on the level of emergency assistance to a certain crisis, since factors such as media coverage, donor interests, and the presence of humanitarian organisations determine the level of assistance in humanitarian crises (Olsen et al, 2003). International media, particularly western media, have been criticised for delaying international intervention to end the crisis in Ethiopia 1984 famine, Somalia of Operation Restore Hope, and Rwanda genocide (Shaw, 2007).

Scholars stated that there are clear correlations between the amount of news coverage a crisis receives and government aid allocations. A study by Van Belle (2004) found that the US foreign disaster assistance showed that additional news coverage of a disaster by the New York Times was related with an additional aid allocation of half a million dollars. Similarly, the humanitarian intervention, the swift political decisions made by U.S. foreign policy decisions in Somalia had been pressured by media coverage (Livingston et al, 1995). They argued U.S. news coverage in response to diplomatic and bureaucratic operations pushed the U.S. to intervene in the 1990s Somalia conflicts. However, they also argued that the media coverage of the crisis in Somalia did have an impact on the timing and nature of the U.S. intervention.

**The Tigray Conflict and humanitarian crisis**

In early November 2020, with the help of strong support from Amhara Region’s Special Forces, Amhara militiamen and Eritrean troops, Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed started an all-out war against the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). Between November 2020 and November 2022, the conflict in Ethiopia was marked by clashes between both parties. This all happened one year after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was granted the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize (PrizeLabzaé, 2022).

The Tigray region and parts of the Amhara and Afar regions suffered from this conflict (Gesesew, et al., 2021; Damtew & Ejigu, 2022; International Crisis Group, 2022). The conflict stands out as one of the most tragic conflicts of the twenty-first century globally so far. It caused many thousands of deaths, millions of displacements, and starvation due to the full blockade of humanitarian aid (Gebreyesus, et al., 2024). The cessation of hostilities agreement (COHA) between both parties was signed on November 2, 2022, in Pretoria, South Africa (Gebresenbet & Tariku,2023). Since then, efforts such as humanitarian aid are undergoing in northern Ethiopia.  “As of 10 March 2024, 1.1 million people of Tigray region (out of a 2.34million target) received 17,993.65 Metric Tons (MT) of food assistance across 56 districts in an ongoing monthly food distribution that started on 26 February 2024 (OCHA, 2024).

 Despite these efforts, the Tigray conflict already caused death toll ranging from 300,000 to 600,000 civilians and 100,000 to 200,000 fighters (Naranjo, 2023) and the breakdown of health infrastructure in Tigray which resulted in 86% of 853 health service units experiencing structural damage, with 71% of medical equipment partially non-functional (Gesesew, et al., 2021; World Health Organization, 2023). Similarly, in the Amhara region, some 116 health facilities have been destroyed, and 150 schools remain closed, impacting the education of over 57,400 students (OCHA, 2024). The projected cost of rebuilding the war-torn areas of Amhara region alone exceeds a staggering half a trillion birr (Addis Standard, 2023). Diseases associated with war, such as fistula and HIV, have become prevalent as the result of limited maternal care, malnutrition, and sexual violence. Consequently, it is anticipated that post-conflict trauma will persist in the foreseeable future (Gesesew, 2022; Weledegebriel, 2023).

**Media and Source selection**

Sources of news play a major role in news media. The way the media chooses its sources determines that some voices are heard and some sources are silenced (Entman 1993). Media acts as a crucial source of information, enhancing knowledge on key issues and dispelling common rumours in emergency situations. Major international media try to use credible sources to cover different aspects of the conflict and humanitarian crisis (Hallin, 1986, p. 186). This helps voices to be heard by international organisations and the public, which at the result may bring solutions (Entman 1993).

Researchers try to find patterns that could help them determine the correlation between media’s credibility and the type of sources being used by media networks. According to Gans (1979) the news media’s news selection process is determined by efficiency–- the optimal allocation of scarce resources in terms of space and time—and power (higher ranks and status) that journalists attribute to their sources. The more the media use high ranks and status the more credible they become (Zamith, 2014; Becker, 1967). Following this, media thrives to use official elite sources like institutional sources, experts, international organisations, NGO, and government official sources.

News stories pass through three categories of channels: routine channels, informal channels and enter- prise channels (Bashri et al., 2012). Routine channels are official and staged. It mostly includes press releases, press conferences, and speeches.  Informal channels are more like secondary sources which include background briefings, leaks and news reports from other news organisations. The enterprise channels are work of journalistic staff conducted by the reporter, with the reporter’s own analysis.  The utilisation of sources such as government, NGOs, international organisation, accounts of victims, to cover the humanitarian crisis, shape the narrative and reveal focal points of the coverage by the international media(Hallin, 1986; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Bennett et al., 2006).

For the purpose of this study, sources were categorised into three groups:

* Government sources: This group includes sources such as the Ethiopian government, Tigray regional administration, and foreign governments used by both media.
* NGO/International Organization: Includes human right groups or aid organisations and other entities operating on an international level.
* Civilians: This group includes eyewitnesses or victims, and other non-official individuals directly affected by the conflict.

**Theoretical framework**

***Framing Theory***

The use of framing as theoretical framework is essential to understand how the humanitarian aspects of the Tigray war covered by CNN and Al Jazeera. The Tigray media and the Tigray supporters tended to frame the incident in terms of public safety, emphasizing the danger posed to the people living in the Tigray region as the government was trying to control Tigray by killing innocent people. Government-affiliated media or government supporters, on the other hand, framed the armed conflict as a law enforcement success, praising the government’s quick capture of the region, and leading to a safer situation for people (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023; Woldearegay, 2022). In the meantime, CNN and Al Jazeera played an important role in informing public about the Tigray conflict especially, during the information blackout, where limited news was available in the region (Nigussie & Kiflu, 2024). Studying how CNN and Al Jazeera framed the humanitarian crisis aspects of Tigray conflict is vital, especially considering media framings show the reality to the international community, and human rights groups. A certain group’s, society’s, or individual’s thinking and perspective toward an issue are influenced by how the issue is framed in the media (An & Gower, 2009).

Chong and Druckman (2007) define framing as the cognitive process through which individuals construct a specific conceptualization of an issue or reframe their thoughts about it. Framing refers to the media's ability to create a focal point that shapes our understanding of events through the use of various linguistic devices, metaphor, hyperbole, irony, and narrative elements that aid in the framing of a story (Burgers, et al., 2016). According to Gitlin (1980) media can construct a frame by employing techniques such as filtering and shaping texts, or by selectively presenting a particular perspective of an event, thereby highlighting specific aspects of reality, which implies that issues are subject to interpretation, influenced by media, and can have can have a big impact on the nature of the event. Entman (1993) stated “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p.52).

In times of humanitarian crisis or conflict, media framing plays a crucial role by either highlighting the urgency of the situation or shifting focus to other aspects of the conflict. Media are useful tools “if they make sense of relevant events, suggesting what an issue is, the degree of urgency, the degree of importance, and the extent of official and public involvement”(Otchere, 2020, p. 14).  In a study on humanitarian interventions in Ethiopia, Somalia and Rwanda, Show (2007) found that media use of historical frames led to skew perceptions of distance of wars and delayed international intervention, reinforcing the elite-dominated news frames of ‘their crisis’ and ‘not ours'.

The concept of framing theory given by Entman, (1993), Gitlin, (1980), Goffman, (1974) are crucial in the study of media framings. Especially the categories of framing: defining problems, identifying causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting solutions are useful in identifying frames (Entman, 1993, p. 52).  This study focussed on five generic frames, including human interest, conflict, morality, responsibility, and economic consequences (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p. 94).

**Methodology**

***3.1. Sample***

This study investigated news coverage of the humanitarian crisis by CNN and Al Jazeera during the Tigray conflict between 2020-2022 through a content analysis. The news articles for this study were manually collected using Google as the primary search engine. all stories mentioning the name Tigray or/and Ethiopia in their headlines were identified. This approach allowed for the retrieval of articles from a wide range of reputable news sources that covered the Sudan war. We first selected all news stories that were published in CNN and Al Jazeera websites and 365 news articles from both media, 99 and 266 news articles, respectively. And then the study filtered out the proportion of humanitarian related news articles, 45 from CNN and 99 from Al Jazeera were found. The unit of analysis was the individual news articles. All articles that were published about Tigray were analysed regardless of the number of words or paragraphs. First, aAnd from that, we selected news stories that only treat humanitarian crises. Stories that did not deal with the Ethiopian-Tigray conflict issues as the main topic were excluded.

Humanitarian crises were defined for this study “as an event or series of events that represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security or wellbeing of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wide area”(Concern worldwide, 2022).

**Coding procedure**

In the first phase, after excluding non-humanitarian crisis news stories, I coded all selected humanitarian crisis related news articles to know what sources both media used for every news article. And for the second phase, another coding was conducted to measure to the extent to which certain frames; conflict, responsibility, human-interest, economic, and moral frames appear in the news stories. To measure one of the five news frames, a series of 15 questions to which the coder had to answer yes or no, were implemented based on the coding scheme from Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Types of frames used in this study are as follows:

*Attribution of responsibility*: Does the story suggest that some level of the party/fighter is responsible for the issue/problem? Does the story suggest that some level of party/fighter  can alleviate the problem? Does the story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue? *Human interest:* Does the story provide a human example or “human face” on the issue? Does the story employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy or compassion?  Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?  *Conflict frame:* Does the story reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries? Does one party-individual-group-country reproach another?  Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the issue/problem?  Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem?  *Moral frame:* Does the story contain any moral message?  Does the story make reference to morality, God and other religious tenets?  Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?  *Economic frame:* Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?  Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved? Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?

All selected news stories were analysed to determine the presence or absence of frames. Coders assigned the following values: 0: The answer to the question from the item is ‘no.’ Therefore, the text does not sug­gest or mention the aspect or issue to which the item refers. 1: The answer to the question from the item is ‘yes.’ The text suggests or mentions at least one aspect or issue to which the item refers. One story could be placed in more than one news frame.

The coding instrument consisted of the name of the website, all news stories, humanitarian crisis related news stories, source of the news article, and the type of frames the news story (only from news stories that were categorised as humanitarian crisis related) placed among five frames. Quantitative data, including a list of news articles related to the study, were initially organised using Google Sheets. Each article was catalogued with key attributes such as publication date, source, headline, and relevant coding categories for the frames used in the analysis. This structured approach in Google Sheets facilitated the systematic categorization and coding of the data, enabling clear identification of patterns and trends.

Once the data organisation was complete, the dataset was exported from Google Sheets in CSV format. This CSV file was then uploaded into a Python environment using Jupyter Notebook for further analysis.

**Statistical analysis**

To evaluate the distribution of categorical variables and compare the observed frequencies of frame usage between the two news websites, a chi-square test of independence was selected as the appropriate statistical test.

The analysis was conducted using Python programming language within a Jupyter Notebook environment. The following libraries were utilised:

* **NumPy**: Utilised for numerical operations, particularly in managing arrays and creating the ranges needed for positioning the bars in the bar chart.
* **Matplotlib**: Employed to create visual representations of the data, specifically bar charts, which illustrate the comparison of news frames used by Al Jazeera and CNN.
* **SciPy**: Utilised to perform the chi-square test of independence, providing the chi-square statistic and p-value directly from the observed data.

Jupyter Notebook facilitated an interactive and iterative workflow, allowing for the dynamic calculation of statistics and immediate visualisation of results.

A graph of blue and orange bars

Description automatically generated

Figure 1. Chi-square of independence

***Intercoder Reliability Test***

To ensure reliability, an intercoder reliability test was implemented. 40 stories were coded (20 from each news outlet). The researcher and one coder from outside came to agree on 35 news articles and disagreed on 5 (2 from Al Jazeera and 3 from CNN). Differences in coding were computed using Holsti’s (1968) formula:  2(C1.2) divided by C1+C2 Where: C1.2 = number of category assignment agreed on: C1+C2 = total number of category assignments made by both coders: 2(35)/40+40= 0.87.

**Data Presentation**

**Proportion of humanitarian crisis news stories**

During the two year (2020-2022) Tigray conflict, both media outlets published 365 news articles

A graph of a chart

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

*Figure 2. Extent of the coverage*

total, comprising 99 news stories from CNN and 266 news stories from Al Jazeera. Subsequently, the proportion of news stories related to humanitarian issues which were pertinent to this study were identified, resulting 45 news stories from CNN and 99 articles from Al Jazeera

**Framing**

 Figure 1 illustrates the framing of the Tigray conflict by Al Jazeera and CNN. The data revealed differences and similarities among the two media outlets. Al Jazeera frequently used the human interest frame in 44 of its stories, accounting for 44.4% of its coverage, which indicates a strong emphasis on human faces and personal experiences of individuals affected by the conflict. In contrast, CNN used the human interest frame less frequently, in 18 news stories or 40% of its coverage, resulting in less attention to human experience in the Tigray conflict.

A graph with red and blue bars

Description automatically generated

*Figure 3. Number of news articles devoted to each frames*

On the other hand, CNN implemented a greater emphasis on the Responsibility frame, using it in 53%(24) stories of its coverage. This suggested that great attention was given on accountability and responsibility of actors involved in the conflict. Al Jazeera also used this frame significantly, using 42.4% of its coverage, to a slightly lesser extent than CNN.

Both media outlets gave less attention to the economic and moral frame, with Al Jazeera higher than CNN, using 10(10%) stories and CNN used insignificantly with 3(6.6%) of its coverage. However, CNN used more news stories for moral frames compared to Al Jazeera, employing 13.3%(6) for CNN, 3(3%) for Al Jazeera respectively, which is insignificant attention by both media.  The use of the conflict frame was somewhat received similar attention by both news websites, with Al Jazeera including it in 27 stories (27%) and CNN in 10 stories(22.2%).

**Sources**

The figure shows what news sources both media used during the northern Ethiopian Humanitarian crisis coverage.

A pie chart with numbers and a number of people

Description automatically generated

Figure 4. *Usage of sources by CNN and Al Jazeera*

The sources were categorised into three groups: Government, NGO/International Organization, and civilians. From the data presented in the bar chart 3, it was revealed that NGO/International Organization sources were the most used by Al Jazeera with a count of 56 news stories, indicating a strong reliance on gathering their data, from these entities in the reporting. Civilians were the second most used source, accounting for 27 news stories followed by the government (15 news stories) for Al Jazeera. For CNN, a more balanced distribution  of sources was revealed, with NGO/International Organizations Sources being predominant, accounting for 21 news stories, and government and civilian sources used with comparatively almost similar frequency, at 13 and 11 news stories, respectively.

**Discussion**

The study sought to examine the northern Ethiopia humanitarian crisis caused by the two year long war (November 2020-November 2022) between Ethiopian federal administration and Tigray regional administration, aimed to explore the extent of the coverage they gave to the Tigray conflict and humanitarian aspects of the conflict. The study further analysed how the humanitarian crisis news stories were framed and what sources were used by both media.

The overall coverage of the Tigray conflict was surprising compared to both media outlets. Al Jazeera had given significant attention with 265 news stories published within a two year period compared to CNN with 99 news stories in the same time frame. Though we can not be sure of the exact reason, possible reasons can be mentioned for why CNN gave less attention to the Tigray conflict compared to Al Jazeera. As noted by Kinner (2005), Dalby (1993), and Okon (2013) CNN’s geographic proximity to the region and organisational focus on the African coverage affecting the depth and nature of the reporting. Additionally, CNN’s priority possibly shifted the attention to other aspects. For example, the USA had a national election when the Tigray war broke out and the Ukraine-Russia war also started when the Tigray conflict was still in an intense situation. However, CNN continued giving less attention to the Tigray conflict throughout the two years compared to Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera had possibly given priority to its news website while CNN focused on other means of media such as TV.

Source selection plays a vital factor in shaping the media agenda and public perception (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The sources were categorised into three groups: Government, NGO/International Organization, and Civilians.  Overall, there was reliance on NGO/International Organization sources such as Amnesty international, Human Right watch, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Crisis Group, International Rescue Committee, World Health Organization, World Food Programme, and UN by both outlets.  This underscores the importance of third-party entities in providing information for news comparing government officials and civilians. Al Jazeera used 56 news stories from its total 99 news stories NGO/International Organization, while CNN used 21 news stories for it. Both Al Jazeera and CNN used government officials as their second most used sources of their coverage, accounting 27 and 13, respectively.

Several studies, including those by Damanhoury & Saleh (2017), Barkho (2011), Bashri et al. (2012), Bossio (2013), Gerhards and Schafer (2014), Musa and Yusha’u (2013), Youssef (2009) have found differences between the coverage of Arab news media, mostly Al Jazeera channels, and western media outlets such as CNN. However, contrary to these studies, this study found more similarities than differences. Notably, both media sources revealed similar patterns. Their main sources were NGO/International organisations, and government officials, and civilians respectively for both media.

Additionally, the result is different from prior research, indicating that most news media used government and military officials for their coverage. This study understood that in the matter of humanitarian crisis the sources are usually NGO/International organisations as aid providers or human right protection groups are active in crisis times. This is expected as the scenario in conflict times usually involves investigations by international organisations and actions are being taken by aid groups. This can be supported by existing literature, where news outlets usually use NGO/International organisations due to their on-ground presence and conceived neutrality in conflicts(McPhail, 2006; Harp, Loke, & Bachmann, 2011).

The second most used source by Al Jazeera and CNN was Government officials, employing 27 and 13 news stories respectively.  Considering the government officials or fighters from both sides would release statements for every movement or action they made, it is not surprising to see this source used significantly. Additionally, both media gather their news from civilians who were suffering in the conflict. They have used civilians' eyewitness and personal experience through directly interviewing them. Al Jazeera published 15 news articles out of its total 99 news articles from civilians which is a little higher than CNN, accounting 13 news stories in its coverage out of the total of 45 news stories.  Both media outlets utilised routine channels rather than enterprise as a primary source of their news content. However, comparing both media, Al Jazeera used routine channels higher than CNN, employing 56 percent of its coverage while CNN employed 43 percent of its coverage. CNN was higher in prioritising enterprise news which are reporters’ own work by using civilian sources in its 24 percent news coverage while Al Jazeera used it for 15 percent of its coverage.

Regarding the use of frames in the coverage of the Tigray humanitarian crisis, this study showed, across the two news websites, Al Jazeera and CNN, revealed distincting and contrasting patterns in their framing. Both media gave similar treatment to the selected frames used in this study. A Chi-square test of independence was conducted to compare the use of five different news frames—Human Interest, Responsibility, Economic, Moral, and Conflict—in the context of crisis news reporting by CNN and Al Jazeera. The observed frequencies were as follows: for Al Jazeera, Human Interest (44), Responsibility (42), Economic (10), Moral (3), and Conflict (27); for CNN, Human Interest (18), Responsibility (24), Economic (3), Moral (6), and Conflict (10).  The test produced a Chi-square statistic of 6.5956 with 4 degrees of freedom. The associated p-value was 0.1588. Given that the p-value exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.05, the distribution of frames used by the two news organisations in their crisis reporting does not significantly differ.

They prioritised human interest, responsibility, and conflict frame respectively among the five frames.  However, in comparison, Al Jazeera appears to employ a significant emphasis on the human interest aspect, while CNN gave more emphasis on the responsibility frame. Both media outlets gave relatively less attention to the economic and moral dimensions of the humanitarian crisis of Tigray conflict. There is a noteworthy similarity in their use of conflict frame, suggesting a shared recognition of its importance in contextualising the Tigray crisis within broader geopolitical dynamics. These observations shed light on the differing priorities and perspectives of Al Jazeera and CNN in their reporting on complex international events.

The most striking fact is therefore that even though the use of the conflict frame is common in political coverage (Ballesteros, 2015; de Vreese, 2005; Hertog & McLeod, 2001), it is different when the news focus is related to humanitarian crises of the war. The fact that this study filters humanitarian aspects of the coverage leads the focus or recurrent use of both media into human interest frame and makes the conflict frame less relevant. This study proves that most humanitarian crisis stories have a tendency to generate human faces or feelings of outrage. The finding aligns with the previous studies that stated international media use audience-centred strategies to elicit human sympathy and spread compassion (Dhanesh & Rahman, 2021).

Both CNN and Al Jazeera had almost similar percentage news stories which was near to quarter of their coverage on the responsibility frame, which implies their keenness to point fingers to the perpetrators for what they have caused to the people affected by the humanitarian crisis that happened in northern Ethiopia. This finding aligns with previous comparative study on Al Jazeera and CNN (Al-Majdhoub & Hamzah, 2016). The fact that they had a significant percentage of civilian sources may have contributed to the publication of more stories emphasising justice's issues. The outcome was expected due to the prevalence of reports on famine, hunger, displacement, and murders and other related human right violations. Media can get firsthand accounts of the impact of such atrocities, pushing news media to prioritise news that seeks justice for those affected by the conflict.

Moral and economic frames received relatively less attention by both media, which they deemed less salient or newsworthy in the context of the Tigray humanitarian crisis. The immediate humanitarian concerns and accountability issues may have overshadowed the use of morality and economic consequences of the conflict. This finding is consistent with the previous studies related to the use of frames during politics and conflict (Gronemeyer & Porath, 2017; Damanhoury & Saleh, 2017).

**REFERENCE**

Al-Majdhoub, F. M., & Hamzah, A. (2016). Framing the ISIL: A content analysis of the news coverage by CNN and Aljazeera. *Malaysian Journal of Communication*, *32*(1), 335-364.<https://doi.org/10.31274/etd-180810-4233>

Autesserre, S. (2010). *The trouble with the Congo: Local violence and the failure of international peacebuilding* (Vol. 115). Cambridge University Press.<https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511761034.004>

Balabanova, E. (2010). Media power during humanitarian interventions: Is Eastern Europe any different from the West?. *Journal of Peace Research*, *47*(1), 71-82.<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343309350005>

Barkho, L. (2007), ‘Unpacking the discursive and social links in BBC, CNN and Al-Jazeera’s Middle East reporting’, *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research*, 1:1, pp. 11–29.<https://doi.org/10.1386/jammr.1.1.11_1>

Bashri, M., Netzley, S. and Greiner, A. (2012), ‘Facebook revolutions: Transitions in the Arab world, transitions in media coverage? A comparative analysis of CNN and Al Jazeera English’s online coverage of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions’, *Journal of Arab and Muslim Research*, 5:1, pp. 19–29. <https://doi.org/10.1386/jammr.5.1.19_1>

BBC Media Action. (2019). *How media helps people cope | Communication is aid*. BBC Media Action.<https://commisaid.bbcmediaaction.org/how-media-helps-people-cope/>

Beardsley K (2012) UN intervention and the duration of international crises. *Journal of Peace Research,* 49(2):335–349.<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343311431599>

Beardsley K, Schmidt H (2011) Following the flag or following the charter? Examining the determinants of UN involvement in international crises, 1945-2002. *International Studies Quarterly,* 56(1):33–49.<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2011.00696.x>

Becker, H. S. (2017). Whose side are we on?. In *Sociological work* (pp. 123-134). Routledge

Bennett, W. L., Lawrence, R. G., & Livingston, S. (2006). None dare call it torture: Indexing and the limits of press independence in the Abu Ghraib scandal. *Journal of Communication*, **56**(3), 467–485.

Bossio, D. (2013), ‘How Al Jazeera reported the Arab Spring: A preliminary comparative analysis’, *Media Asia Research*, 40:4, pp. 333–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2013.11689986>

Choi S (2013) What determines US humanitarian intervention? *Conflict Management Peace Science,* 30(2):121–139.<https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894212473916>

Coombs, W. T. (2006). The protective powers of crisis response strategies: Managing reputational assets during a crisis. *Journal of promotion management*, *12*(3-4), 241-260. <https://doi.org/10.1300/J057v12n03_13>

Damanhoury, K. E., & Saleh, F. (2017). Is it the same fight? Comparative analysis of CNN and Al Jazeera America’s online coverage of the 2014 Gaza War. *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research*, *10*(1), 85-103.<https://doi.org/10.1386/jammr.10.1.85_1>

Dhanesh, G. S., & Rahman, N. (2021). Visual communication and public relations: Visual frame building strategies in war and conflict stories. *Public Relations Review*, *47*(1), 102003.<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.102003>

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of communication*, *43*(4), 51-58.<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>

Gans, H. J. (2004). *Deciding what's news: A study of CBS evening news, NBC nightly news, Newsweek, and Time*. Northwestern University Press.<https://doi.org/10.2307/2149642>

Gebresenbet, F., & Tariku, Y. (2023). The Pretoria Agreement: mere cessation of hostilities or heralding a new era in Ethiopia?. *Review of African Political Economy*, *50*(175), 96-106.<https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2023.2196714>

Gerhards, J. and Schafer, M. (2014), ‘International terrorism, domestic coverage? How terrorist attacks are presented in the news of CNN, Al Jazeera, the BBC, and ARD’, *International Communication Gazette*, 76:1, pp. 3–26.<https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048513504158>

Gronemeyer, M. E., & Porath, W. (2017). Framing political news in the Chilean press: The persistence of the conflict frame. *International Journal of Communication*, *11*, 24.

Hallin, D. C. (1986). *The “uncensored war”: The media and Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing consent*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Hermida, A., Lewis, S. C., & Zamith, R. (2014). Sourcing the Arab Spring: A case study of Andy Carvin's sources on Twitter during the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. *Journal of computer-mediated communication*, *19*(3), 479-499.. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12074>

Ibreck, R., & de Waal, A. (2022). Introduction: situating Ethiopia in genocide debates. *Journal of Genocide Research*, *24*(1), 83-96<https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2021.1992920>

Jahng, M. R., & Doshi, M. J. (2021). Securitising an international humanitarian crisis: news framing of the Syrian refugee crisis in the US. *The Journal of International Communication*, *27*(2), 283-299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2021.1905681>

Labzaé, M. (2022). The war in Tigray (2020–2021): Dictated truths, irredentism and déjà-vu. In *Routledge Handbook of the Horn of Africa* (pp. 239-250). Routledge.<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429426957>

Lee, M. J. (2021). Media influence on humanitarian interventions: analysis of the Rohingya refugee crisis and international media coverage. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, *6*(1), 20. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00108-5>

Musa, A. O. and Yusha’u, M. J. (2013), ‘Conflict reporting and parachute journa- lism in Africa: A study of CNN and Al Jazeera’s coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency’, *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research*, 6:2, pp. 251–67.[10.1386/JAMMR.6.2-3.251\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/JAMMR.6.2-3.251_1)

Nigussie, H., & Kiflu, G. K. (2024). Framing the war on Tigray: The case of CNN and Al Jazeera. *Journalism*, 14648849241252017. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849241252017>

Bunce, M., Scott, M., & Wright, K. (2021, December 21). How news coverage influences countries’ emergency aid budgets – new research. [City, University of London](https://www.city.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2021/12/how-news-coverage-influences-countries-emergency-aid-budgets-new-research). <https://www.city.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2021/12/how-news-coverage-influences-countries-emergency-aid-budgets-new-research>

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2024, March 25). Ethiopian Humanitarian Update. *OCHA*.t<https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ethiopia/>

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2024, March 24). *Humanitarian emergencies and conflict situations* <https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/humanitarian-emergencies-and-conflict-situations>

Olsen, G. R., Carstensen, N., & Høyen, K. (2003). Humanitarian crises: What determines the level of emergency assistance? Media coverage, donor interests and the aid business. *Disasters*, *27*(2), 109-126. [10.1111/1467-7717.00223](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7717.00223)

Robinson, P. (2000). The policy-media interaction model: Measuring media power during humanitarian crisis. *Journal of peace research*, *37*(5), 613-633.[https://doi. org/10.1177/0022343300037005006](https://doi/)

Shaw, I. S. (2007). Historical frames and the politics of humanitarian intervention: from Ethiopia, Somalia to Rwanda. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, *5*(3), 351-371.<https://doi.org/10.1080/14767720701662071>

Trilling, D. (2019). *How the media contributed to the migrant crisis.* The Guardian.[*https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/aug/01/media-framed-migrant-crisis-disaster-reporting*](https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/aug/01/media-framed-migrant-crisis-disaster-reporting)

United Nations. (2022, April 4). *Sub-Saharan Africa: 43 million people facing food insecurity*. Retrieved from:<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1115922>

United Nations. (2005). World Summit Outcome.

<https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_60_1.pdf>

Van Belle, D. A., Rioux, J. S., & Potter, D. M. (2004). Bureaucracy, democracy, the media and foreign aid. In *Media, bureaucracies and foreign aid: A comparative analysis of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Japan.* Advances in Foreign Policy Analysis. Palgrave Macmillan.<https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403973481_9>

Weldemichel, T. G. (2022). Inventing hell: how the Ethiopian and Eritrean regimes produced famine in Tigray. *Human Geography*, *15*(3), 290-294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19427786211061431>

Xu, Z., & Zhang, M. (2023). How news media visually dehumanise victims of humanitarian crises through framing disparities: A quantitative comparative analysis. *International Communication Gazette*, 17480485231216583. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17480485231216583>

Youssef, M. (2009). Their word against ours: News discourse of the 2003 Gulf War civilian casualties in CNN and Al-Jazeera. Global Media Journal: Mediterranean Edition, 4(2),13-24.